

A Study on the Domesticating Translation of Poetic Sense in the Story of the Stone

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Abstract. Based on the translators' purposes and under the influence of English language and culture, the present thesis adopts the domestication theory in a tentative in-depth study on the domesticating translation of the poetic sense in *The Story of the Stone* and is aimed at digging out the values of the translated text for translation studies. Hawkes grasps the poetic sense, and adopts addition, imagery rebuilding and stylistic combination accordingly in the reproduction of the denotative and connotative poetic sense and the revival of the style.

1. Introduction

The poetry in *HLM* (abbreviation for *Hong Lou Meng*) is distinctive from other poems at the times appearing in the novel which seem inessential to the story and even can be deleted. While the poems in *HLM* are the organic constituents in the development of the story and the description of the characters. The author merges his emotions and weaves in the poems the relations to the story, the prophecys of roles' fortune and the hints of characters' personality. Besides, the degenerate feudatorial times is mocked through the poems.

There are in all two worthwhile translations: one is Yang Xianyi's *A Dream of Red Mansions*, and the other is *The Story of the Stone* translated by David Hawkes. In this thesis, the later one will be focused. Hawkes lay the emphasis on cultural communication, so he pays more attention to coherence.

This thesis will shed light on Hawkes' domestication in the poetry translation of *HLM*. The research will be concentrated on how Hawkes domesticates and what affect the translation methods, which provides with a dialectical way to analyze his translation and enlightens the following translators and critics that when dealing the translating of classical Chinese works, proper adaptation is necessary due to the cultural differences.

2. Theoretical Framework

Domestication refers to the translation strategy in which a transparent, fluent style is adopted in order to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for target language readers. E.A. Nida, a famous American translator and translation theorist, is generally regarded as the most influential representative of domestication, who emphasizes the equivalence that consists of stylistic equivalence, social-cultural equivalence and linguistic equivalence.

His view of functional equivalence implies different degrees of adequacy from minimal to maximal effectiveness on the basis of both cognitive and experiential factors. A minimal, realistic definition of functional equivalence could be stated as "the readers of a translated text should be able to comprehend it to the point that they can conceive of how the original readers of the text must have understood and appreciated it." A maximal, ideal definition could be stated as "The readers of a translated text should be able to understand and appreciate it in essentially the same manner as the original readers did." The maximal definition implies a high degree of language-culture correspondence between the source and target languages and an unusually effective translation so as

to produce in receptors the capacity for a response very close to what the original readers experienced. (Nida 1993: 118)

In translating *HLM*'s poems, Hawkes adopts domesticating methods in order to share the pleasure of reading *HLM* with English readers, avoid the cultural back-ups in their understandings and maintain the original beauty in the target text. Due to his efforts, *The Story of the Stone* has been warmly welcomed in the western world. It proves that domestication is of great use to some extent, but the detailed methods are of great need to be dug out. Consequently, it benefits the following translators to collect and classify Hawkes' domesticating methods in the light of the domestication theory.

3. Domestication in Poetic Sense

"All texts have connotations" and "all texts have an 'underlife', the denotations" (Peter Newmark 2001: 16). Denotation (conceptual meaning) is concerned with the relationship between a word and the thing it refers to. Connotation is used, opposite to denotation, to mean the properties of the entity a word denotes and is related to some additional, especially emotive meaning (Hu Zhuanglin 2006: 106).

As a responsible translator, he ought to figure out the two meanings the author desires to share, and revive them as much as possible. The same is true with re-emerging the author's style. *The Story of the Stone* is widely welcomed in the western world and a deep reading of it reveals traces of domestication tendency, which arouses a thinking why Hawkes' domesticated text firmly occupies the target market, where on earth the beauty of his translation lies in and how he rewrites the poetic sense in the above aspects respectively and whether the rendering is proper enough.

3.1 Domesticated-interpretation of denotative poetic sense through addition.

The poems in *HLM* is peculiar, and differentiated from other Chinese poems, because they function as the prediction of the story and the description of the characters. Hawkes grasps the trait, connects the poems in the story and lays the emphasis on the coherence of poetic sense communication. From this point of view, he fulfills the blanks in the poems and completely conveys the denotative poetic sense through addition.

3.1.1 Adoption of word addition.

There are lots of blanks in Chinese poems, such as no persons, no conjunctions and so on. So the translators need figure out the concealed relations and the hindered meanings in the original poems. In order to fill the blanks and achieve coherence in the translated poems, Hawkes puts in grammar words according to his understandings.

In *All at Odds*, there is one of the songs of *A Dream of Golden Days* and written for Miao Yu. "ren" and "shi" appear in the fourth line, but not in the third line. In fact, these two lines tell that Miao Yu dislikes the vulgar and extravagant living ways and considers herself as the superior to everyone else in the tacky world. Both "rou shi" and "qi lu" is the mainstream of the living way purchased by a large number of people at the times. Therefore, in order to fluently convey the poetic sense, Hawkes adds to "the world" and "its" in the third line.

3.1.2 Adoption of person addition.

With person in the text, readers have the ability to figure out the relationship between the storyteller and the statement objects. So it is important in affecting the works' expressive force and readers' cognitive intensity. However, classical Chinese poetry has no person in detail, while is different from English poems. Therefore, in order to achieve the coherence in denotative poetic sense, Hawkes adds person in the poems so that readers can get the hang of the meaning as soon as possible.

In the prelude of the twelve songs of *A Dream of Golden Days*, Hawkes utilizes "I" as the song composer. The added "I" points at the author, and makes up the vacancy in logicity. In this line "Adding a strange, contrary nature. That set **you** with the test at odds. (Hawkes 1981: 97)", Cao judges that Miao Yu's pride makes her behave strangely, and Hawkes clearly points out through the addition of "you" to fulfill the vacant logical expression.

Take *Husband and Enemy* for another instance. Jia Ying-Chun is married to Sun Shao-Zu who is a playboy and does not cherish her. She is not happy and has no idea because of the old rules that matchmakers introduce the husband and parents make the decision instead. As a Chinese traditional woman, she cannot say and strive for her own life. Even though she knows after being married that her husband is as wicked as possible, she is improbable to leave him behind and break through the annoying bondage. Cao scolds Sun as “zhong shan lang” and pours out his everyday crimes harshly. And in the poem he regards Ying Chun as a spontaneous girl and victim either, and connects her to “qian jin”, “yan zhi”, “fang hun” which in Chinese symbolizes a pure, noble and elegant girl. The sharp contrary between the metaphors of Jia and Sun forms a chain of reason and result in three phases which are respectively Sun’s turning on, pleasure-seeking and getting killed. It is the coherence in the discourse level. The translator ought to realize the same effect in the translated texts.

Hawkes’ title is *Husband and Enemy* which directly opens a way for readers to understand the poem’s main topic. And such kind of title is more acceptable in western countries. It plays a role in generalize the poem’s meaning.

In the body part, he selects “you” to refer “zhong-shan wolf” and adds “her” into the poem, which strengthens the expressive force artistically. At the same time, it solves the problem of coherence in poem’s structure on the whole and makes the sense consistently throughout the story development. Such changes compensate the person vacancy in classical Chinese poems and let the emotion flow constantly plus the title leading ahead. It satisfied western readers with the logical pattern they are familiar with, which is worthy learning.

Furthermore, generally speaking, apart from adding person in some poems, Hawkes mainly recomposes the poems in the angle of second person, which places readers in a face-to-face position with the characters and storytellers. In this way, it is convenient for readers to sight and sense in clearness and rap off the thoughts with the text as well as better expressive force and appearance.

3.1.3 Adoption of content addition.

HLM follows the examples of themes and creation methods in Tang Shi Song Ci, and its poetry contains a lot of stories related to historical people and events. It is hard to rewrite these historical stories and make them understood by English readers.

Lin Daiyu once wrote a poem to express her emotions through historical beauty Yu Ji, and re-emerges the historical scene that Xiang Yu is tramped by Liu Bang in Gai Xia and gets ready to accept the failure and ends up his life beside Wu Jiang. Before the sad happenings, Yu Ji has killed herself in front of Xiang Yu so that he will not be absent when faces to the fierce fight with Liu Bang. Lin Daiyu shows the sympathy for Yu Ji and her yearning to the loyalest and strongest love between Yu Ji and Xiang Yu.

Example:

Hawkes’ translation:

The very crows are grieving as they caw in the cold night air.

She faces her beaten Tyrant King with a haggard look of despair:

“Let the others wait for the hangman, to be hacked and quartered and rent;

Better the taste of one's own steel in the decent dark of a tent.” (Hawkes 1981: 1262)

Firstly, he explains the historical character Xiang Yu as “beaten Tyrant king”. The added word “beaten” exposes that Xiang Yu’s sight and look are utterly dissipated, and it seems that his heart is like dead ashes, “with a haggard look of despair”. What is more, English readers can be informed that Xiang Yu’s characteristics through “Tyrant” which is confirmed with the history.

Though Qing Bu and Peng Yue are not translated, Hawkes defines their results as “to be hacked and quartered and rent”. There is no excruciation in the western world like the ones in the ancient China, so he explains “hai” in detail. On one hand, he warns that a betrayer dooms to be die with no good result and reminds English readers of Yu Ji and Xiang Yu’s volition of dying rather than submitting. On the other hand, Lin Daiyu’s purity and decision of coming out of the dirty mud unsoiled are mirrored in the poem.

Secondly, Hawkes gets rid of “chu”, because the location and abbreviation can not be defined within one word in the poetry. It is difficult for English readers to understand “chu’s tent” in the Yangs’ translation. Hawkes replaces it with more detailed information, “decent dark of a tent”, and means it is no light inside but warriors who commit suicide there can leave away from the world with dignity.

In addition, Hawkes changes the third and fourth lines into Yu Ji’s monologue, which draws readers’ attentions to roles’ inner mental activities and realizes their understanding of the denotation and also connotation of the poem.

All in all, through the introduction of the historical characters and events, he adds to the content in the description, which arouses readers’ common sense and increases the aesthetic effect.

And, content addition also includes linguistic change. The difference in thinking patterns which control language’s birth and development is the important reason of the diversity in languages. The use of language displays the choice and creation of thinking patterns. Translation is not only the change in language, but thinking patterns (Lian Shuneng 2010: 283). It is yet formidable to transfer human thinking patterns. Translators transform language and acclimatize it to the target language hence. In this way, the translated works will never be too at odds in another country.

What’s more, there is a prodigious dissimilarity between English and Chinese in the language and regulations of poems. From the point of view, Hawkes leans a little bit to a pursue of English sense in translating *HLM*’s poems. Specifically speaking, he turns it into reality with the linguistic-reconstructing approach. In another words, he rearranges the word order.

Word order is a crucial grammar tool in English and flexible enough in virtue of inflections. In general, the subject is at the sentence-initial, but sometimes replaced with the predicate in the interest of special significance. However, the positions of Chinese subject and predicate can not be mutually-substituted with ease. Moreover, it is nearly impossible to gain the literal equivalence to Chinese classical poems in translation, on account of the trait of limited length but unlimited meaning. Therefore, it is necessary for Hawkes to make shifts in the word order, break through one line into several lines, and even separate the line with pauses.

For example, in *Red Duster* written by Lin Daiyu, She expresses her own emotion through sighing pretty and versatile girls in history like Hongfu who is not willing to bound up by feudatorial traditions and bold to chase her own freedom and happiness. The bravery is admired by Daiyu. Hawkes disorganizes the original lines, and based on Cao’s main topic, reconstructs them with new order and images (plan, clerk, and the essential Man), which confirms to English reading habits and thinking patterns. In the second line, he also illustrates the blurry “qiong tu”. He strives to seek poetic things beyond Chinese characters, or add some English things, which is full-filled with creativity and illumination.

3.2 Domesticated-visualization of connotative poetic sense through imagery rebuilding.

Image and artistic conception composed of various images are considered to be at the core of both traditional Chinese aesthetics and Chinese poetry fundamentals.

An image is the language that addresses the sense. The most common images in poetry are visual; they provide visual pictures of the poets’ encounters, real or imagined, with the world (Meyer 1967: 69). Perrine described the function of image: “.indirectly it (poetry) appeals to our senses through imagery, the representation of imagination of sense experience” (1969: 52).

An image is the representation of sense experience through language. All the images form into the meaningful whole in a poem, which is often called imagery. Imagery is closely culture-bounded and emotion-connected. The essence of the classical poetry lies in the arrangement of imagery (Zhu Hui 1996: 19), claimed by Hu Yingling.

Imagery is the soul of poetry, as Perrine stated that:

Since imagery is peculiarly effective way of evoking vivid experience and since it may be used by the poet to convey emotion and suggest ideas as well as cause a mental reproduction of sensations, it is an invaluable resource of poet. In general, he will seek concrete or image-bearing words in preference to abstract or non-image-bearing words. (1969: 54 - 55)

So the successful translation should produce the same or nearly the same effect as images do with the native readers. However, due to cultural differences between Chinese and English, it is difficult to resurrect the imagery in the translation. Considering the English readers and the press, Hawkes chooses domestication without hesitation. Accordingly, he employs different translation methods when he deals with the culture-loaded images in *HLM*.

3.2.1 Replacement with illustration.

With images in an inexhaustible variety and flexible combination, classical Chinese poetry is endlessly amazing. Applications of images demonstrate the merge of poets' emotions and external objects, and create the poetic context, so the poetic contents are expressed through various images.

There are abundant poems in *HLM* affected by classical Chinese poetry and implicated meanings into the images. But sometimes Chinese cultural image can not be found the proper equivalence in English. Grasping its soul and the true meaning it conveys, Hawkes illustrates the image, and reproduces its colourfulness as much as he can. The approach can be seen in the following example chosen from *All at Odds*.

Example:

The Yangs' translation:

By the dim light of an old shrine she will fade away,
Her powder and red chamber, her youth and beauty wasted, (Yang 2003: 151)

Hawkes' translation:

Sad it seemed that your life should in dim-lit shrines be wasted,
All the sweets of spring untasted: (Hawkes 1981: 95)

"hong fen zhu lou" means young lady in Chinese, and Cao says through "chun se lan" that the best time of the young lady gradually passes away.

The Yangs translate the former phrase directly word by word, and speak out the metaphor meaning of the latter one as an explanation, which seems queer and odd, in respect that English readers have no idea of "her powder and red chamber".

Hawkes replaces these two phrases with only one expression, that is, "all the sweets of spring". In spring, everything comes back to life again. Grass turns green and flower buds blossom. So spring symbolizes energy and vigour, and also the prime time of a beauty. "All the sweets of spring" means Miao Yu's full flowering lifetime. Consequently, Hawkes illustrates the cultural images instead of literal translations, which is easier for English readers to understand and accept.

Example:

Hawkes' translation:

Your stem grew from a noble lotus root
Yet your life passed, poor flower, in low repute.
The day two earths shall bear a single tree,
Your soul must fly home to its own country. (Hawkes 1981: 88)

Xiang Ling is Zhen Shiyang's daughter, Zhen Yinglian. In China, lotus symbolizes elegant, pure and tinged with a cleansing fragrance. Xiang Ling has all the above virtues but she is tormented by Jin Gui after married with Xue Pan. So "gu mu" is used to refer "gui" in the widow Jin Gui's name and means she is alone and social withdrawal. She is so cruel as to claim the life of Xiang Ling.

Hawkes translates "ling gen" into "lotus root", "he hua" into "flower", "jin" into "stem", and reverts these images, in order that English readers can imagine through the images and associate them with the pictures completely. Besides, he describes Xiang Ling's purity and her twisted fate with "noble" and "poor flower" to further illustrate the connotative meaning in the image group. While in the Yangs' translation, there are only "lotus" and "flower". Hawkes maintains the related images mentioned in the original text, and stimulates readers' imaginations, and explains the meaning far beyond the images with descriptive words to avoid readers from misunderstanding the content.

3.2.2 Recollection of new images.

In *All at Odds*, Cao compares Miao Yu's beauty and talents to the orchid and Xian. In Chinese, "lan" refers to a white flower which is simple but elegant and gives out a delicate fragrance. It has for

centuries represented the virtue, moral excellence, and refinement of the noble man whose character is like perfume. Cao not only praises Miao Yu's beautiful look, but also acclaims her purity and noble mind. Moreover, he implies in the poem that her odd loftiness spurned by the world indirectly causes her tragic loneliness. At the same time, he lampoons the lapsed and rotten times. "xian" is used to describe girls whose beauty or talents are very outstanding, not average, and even surprising and supernatural.

Example:

The Yangs' translation:

By nature fair as an orchid,

With talents to match an immortal, (Yang 2003: 151)

Hawkes' translation:

Heaven made you like a flower,

With grace and wit to match the gods, (Hawkes 1981: 97)

In English, though the orchid looks the same as "lan", it has no symbolization of purity and loftiness. As for "xian", the English gods are actually different from Xian in China. So it is hard to gain equivalence of the poetic sense in the translation.

Yang renders the two characters as "orchid" and "immortal". The former one loses the hindered function and meanings. And the orchid is very slim, which is not the aesthetic standard of a beauty in the western world. The latter one easily makes the readers imagine that Miao Yu is a great woman who has devoted herself to some great events and thus becomes immortal.

Hawkes recollects images to reproduce the original meanings. In detail, he compares Miao Yu's inner and outer beauty with the flower created by Heaven, and replaces Xian with "the gods". It is well known that Heaven in the western world is grand, holy and respective. Because people who are the christians believe that human beings are born to be sinful, they must suffer calamities in the world. Only through good deeds and devout endeavour, humans could gradually wash and save themselves, and then after death, will have the qualifications to be upgraded into Heaven. The girl created by Heaven means that she is so pure to be selected by Heaven and distinguished from the dirty humans in the world. The gods are also related to Christianity, and refer to the power controller in all sorts of fields, and are mentioned in Greek and Old Roman mythology, either. They are the embodiment of wisdom. So when English readers look at it, they can get the hang of the meaning that Miao Yu is very clever and gifted.

At this point, Hawkes revived the original image of Miao Yu in front of English readers. What is more, he collects the similar images in English and shortens the distance between Chinese *HLM* and English readers when confronted with cultural shock.

3.3 Domesticated-incarnation of stylistic poetic sense through combination.

It is universally acknowledged that every writer has his own literary style and such style is subtly and sometimes imperceptibly reflected in his writing (Zhou Ruchang 1999: 94). Style may be compared to the tone and voice of the writer himself, which is as much peculiar to him as his laugh, his walk, his handwriting and expressions on his face (Cuddon 1979: 663). Zhang Baohong also points out that the author's personality and inclination are also generalized as the essence of his style (2003: 242).

In the words of Theodore Savory: Style is the essential characteristic of every piece of writing, the outcome of the writer's personality and his emotions at the moment and no single paragraph can be put together without revealing in some degree the nature of its author. (Liu Zhongde 1994: 102)

Consequently, it is important to revive the original style in the translation text. *HLM* is endowed with a tragic colour through the unhappy result and the predications in the poems. Cao conceals the tragedy behind the superficial magnificence and ironically describes the temporarily enjoyable life. Hawkes conveys the tragic sense through his poems generally with some hints or prophecies of the story and the characters' doomed life under the circumstance of feudatorial times. However, he also adds to his own style due to his personality when he chooses the words and the ways weaving the words in the poems.

When Hawks translated the poems, he would like to write something interesting besides and imagines himself as the friends of the characters.

From time to time Hawkes writes little asides that capture something of his wonderful liveliness, his sense of humour, his ability to enter into the lives of his characters as if they were his own friends, or as if he were a theatre director helping his actors say their lines with the right nuances. (Hawkes 2000: xiii)

Hawkes is optimistic and humorous, and his personality also has an impact on his translation style. Although *HLM* is a tragedy and the poems should be tuned in a sad way, he interludes his lines with some relaxed tones. In that way, readers will never feel too oppressive all the time. Cao also weaves in the story some happy moment. In the prelude of the twelve songs of *A Dream of Golden Days*, Cao comes up with a question in the beginning, “shui wei qing zhong?” which functions as stimulating readers’ imagination and drawing their attentions as well as arousing the common feeling in their minds. Yang translates it into “Who sowed the seeds of love?” with no special emotions. While Hawkes renders it into “Tell me, how did love begin?” which soon catches hold of readers’ minds and sounds like easy-going, relaxed and simple.

4. Conclusion

In this thesis, examinations are carried out on the domestication in the poetry translation of *The Story of the Stone* and the new findings will be listed as follows.

Firstly, an in-depth analysis on text features of Hawkes’ translation reveals that the domestication of Chinese poetry to share the beauty with the western readers is in effect conducted on the basis of English language and culture. While assimilating the poems in *HLM* to English ones, *The Story of the Stone* retains the beauty of the original text.

Secondly, the impressive domesticating of poetic sense in *The Story of the Stone* demonstrates the traits of English poetic writings and the ways in the E-C and C-E poetry translations. Due to cultural differences, proper domestication is necessary on the condition that the source text is centred around.

Thirdly, the application of domestication theory in the analysis of Hawkes’ poetry renderings shows that Nida’s dynamic equivalence encounters backup in translating Classical Chinese poems. Thus it is further confirmed that the application of western theories in translation studies requires the conscientious help from Chinese traditional theories or beliefs about poetic writing as a guide of the study.

Fourthly, the perspective of judging Hawkes’ poems in *HLM* is dialectical and fair to him in the translation history. He has been scolded by some scholars for a long time due to the cultural loss of *HLM*, especially its poems in translation. However, if the angle is changed, people’s opinions will be different. According to domestication theory, Hawkes reconstructs the original beauty which is more easily accepted and loved by English readers.

This research about *The Story of the Stone* reveals its value and is anticipated to stimulate more profound studies.

Firstly, the length of this thesis prohibits in-depth comparison between Hawkes’ poems and ones composed by other English writers, as well as the systematical analysis and scientific classification of Hawkes’ translation methods in the poetry translation of *The Story of the Stone*. Successive researches can be conducted so that the influence of English language and culture in the C-E translation can be examined through time.

Secondly, there are a lot of other values in other aspects in *The Story of the Stone* worth being dug out in the light of domestication or from other perspectives, owing to its impact on the western world and *HLM*’s fame in China, for example the translation of characters’ conversation, unique Chinese culture-loaded words and the like.

Finally, the return to traditional Chinese poetic writings must have brought about undesirables in *The Story of the Stone*, so the studies on the sphere ought to build up a dialectical analysis on the translation and a proper attitude to the persistence on traditional culture.

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