Cultural Translation in Classical Chinese Poetry from the Perspective of Intertextuality Theory

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Abstract: Intertextuality, a post modem view over text, was first put forward by Julia Kristeva. Intertextuality is a way of observing and analyzing texts;while translation is the reproduction on the basis of understanding the original text. Therefore, it is feasible to introduce the theory of intertextuality into translation studies. Many translation theorists at home and abroad have made valuable exploration into the problems of translation from the new dimension of intertextuality. While more efforts need be made to translation practice of intertextuality theory.So this thesis focuses on the translation of intertextual signs in the classical poems of Dream of the Red Mansion, as the cream of a language,is full of cultural elements—in this case an intertextual signs,which bring about a lot of complications in translation. However full consideration of intertextuality in translation can help the translator to effectively overcome the huge cultural obstacles and achieve more successful cultural exchange. This is further confirmed by the brief criticism on the two English versions of Dream of the Red Mansion, thus proving the importance of intertextuality in poetry translation and the transmission of cultural connotations. After comparative analysis of the cultural translation of the two English versions of from the perspective of intertextuality, conclusion arrives that poetry translation is largely a matter of cultural transmission and an intertextual approach provides a new viewpoint in translating poetry. The translator should try his best to build the intertextual context so as to transfer the intertextual effects in poetry.

1. Introduction

With the advent of the new century, translation research has taken another big step forward in terms of depth and width. Under the postmodern discourse, people's thinking paradigm has undergone a brand new change, and the field of translation has also experienced a pluralistic symbiosis with other disciplines of science. Intertextuality theory is one of the literary theories introduced into translation studies. The concept of "intertextuality" emerged in the 1960s and immediately became a turning mark term of postmodern and post-structural criticism. This postmodernist trend has greatly influenced the traditional translation theory, providing a new perspective for translation research and leading translation theory and practice to a broader world. Many translation theorists at home and abroad have devoted themselves to introducing intertextuality into translation theory research, but more efforts are needed in the cultural translation of this theory. Since classical Chinese poetry has a large number of intertextual sign features, this paper takes two representative English translations of the classical masterpiece Dream of the Red Mansion as a case study to explore the translation of intertextual symbols in its poetry and text signs, in order to prove that although intertextuality may bring many difficulties to cultural translation, proper handling of intertextuality can effectively overcome the great barriers of different languages and cultures, and thus achieve the transmission and communication of different cultures.

2. An Overview of the Theory of Intertextuality

Some critics regard intertextuality as a representative term of the postmodern criticism.Since

efforts in this thesis will be made on incorporating the concept of intertextuality into the studies of translating intertextual signs in literary works,the literary review of intertextuality will be presented in brief including its origins, development and representative theorists.

2.1. Origins of Intertextuality

Julia Kristeva's notion of intertextuality expands upon Bakhtin's idea of dialogism. Inspired by Bakhtin's theory of dialogue and polyphony, the French post-structuralist literary critic Julia Kristeva developed the conception of intertextuality as well as coined the word "intertextuality" in 1966 in her book *Semiotics* and developed it into a theory of her own. She believes that all texts are constructed by a mosaic of numerous quotations; any text is the "absorption and transformation of another". Here the"mosaic",no longer a text isolated from other texts,is a part of and contributes to the organic whole of a cultural discourse;it has some inseparable link with other texts and functions as a sign projecting other texts. So that the text is but an intersection of different textual signs, containing numerous dialogues at the written and cultural levels, and therefore the text is created in interactive dialogical relations with other textual structures. This intertextuality makes the understanding of various texts dependent on this interrelationship, because the meaning of each text arises as a result of its interaction with other texts, and this interaction is never-ending, thus constituting the past, present and future meaning of the text. But this must not be understood simply as a process of excerpting, cutting and pasting, or imitating, but rather as a process in which the semantic components drawn from given texts always to other texts. The fundamental concept is that no text is original and unique in itself;instead it is inevitably involved in reference and quotations from other texts. Accordingly, any text must be read in connection with other texts, providing an interwoven network through which it is interpreted in the process.

Kristeva believes texts cannot be separated from the larger cultural or social textuality out of which they constructed. By putting intertextuality under a broader background, considers it as the relationship between a text and all the knowledge, codes, and significations comprising the text,and all of the elements formed a boundless network.Therefore, Kristeva's view on this theory not only explores the interrelated relationship between texts, but also puts the text in the social context,emphasizing the mutual relationship between language, culture and society.

2.2. The Development of Intertextuality

In the 1960s and 1970s, structuralism and post-structuralism contributed to the rapid development of intertextuality theory. Following Kristeva, a number of literary theorists have elaborated on the concept of intertextuality. According to Roland Barthes, who observe intertextuality in a broad sense, thinks any text is a new tissue of past citation, it is the fact of intertextuality that allows the text to come into being. He regard "text" as "tissue", which is a new fabric constituted by "citations" from previous texts and puts forward that every text is inevitably inscribed in a chain or system within which it signifies all the other texts. In his *Death of The Author,* Barthes concluded the nature of intertextuality is to deny the originality of the author and to deconstruct meaning;and his theory gives the reader more freedom to enter the text by holding that every text is uncertain in meaning and open to various interpretations. Another French critic, Gerard Genette, a representative of intertextuality in narrow sense, considers that"intertextuality is a relationship of co-presence between two texts or among several texts and the actual presence of one text within another". In *Pamlipsests,* He produces a theory of "transtextuality" in which Allen explains as "intertextuality from the viewpoint of "intertextuality from the viewpoint of structural poetics". To Genette,the whole literature is transtexual and each text is the second structure above other texts. Jacques Derrida describes"text"'as"trace", which keeps referring to other "traces" and only by means of such inter-reference can it present itself.In his view, there is no end and no beginning in the process of infinite extension of meaning, because once a text is said to be fulfilled,it instantly becomes a knot in the illimitable integral grid, where the "trace" of each signification or text is involved with other distinguished"trace"at the same time of referring to itself. Fowler once vividly revealed the connotation of intertextuality: "Intertextuality is like parchment that has been scraped off the original text and then used again, with glimpses of the uncleaned

traces of the prior text still visible in the words of the new ink marks."

Intertextuality theory highlights the interaction between textual content and form, and places the text in a broad cultural context, highlighting the relationship between text and cultural representation practice, which greatly liberates the vision of translation research. The author believes that this is also the most distinctive and most significant contribution of intertextuality theory to translation theory, enabling translation studies to move out of the slightly closed shell and into a more open and expanded space.

3.   Intertextuality and Translation Studies

Intertextuality theory is a theory about the relationship between the given text and other texts in text construction and text interpretation, and translation is both to understand the source text and to recreate literature under the constraints of the source text, therefore it is feasible to introduce intertextuality theory into translation studies. The influence of intertextuality is mainly reflected in comprehension and expression. When two different languages and cultures are involved, this intertextual connection is often not known to people in the other cultural system because of the division between the cultural circles they belong to, and it becomes a barrier to understanding and communication in interlanguage transfer. Therefore, the translator inevitably becomes a mediator to connect and transmit the two cultures. On the one hand, the translator can only accurately understand and convey the socio-cultural information in the original work by connecting with the text authors' mind in the fields of time and space, and track the ubiquitous intertextual information of the original work. On the other hand, the translator has to adopt appropriate strategies to convey these culturally loaded intertextual information to the readers of the translated text, so that they can get basically the same feeling as the readers of the source text. In this process, translation itself can be regarded as a kind of intertextual activity, which is expressed in three stages: completion of the text, interpretation of the text, and rewriting of the text.

3.1.   Intertextuality and Completion of the Source Text

This is the first step during the translation activity. Before starting to translate the source text, the translator, as the readers of the source text,must read the source work and at the same time apply various intertextual knowledge to make dialogue with the author and the source text in order to interpret the text and find the exact meaning of the text because the source text is the main intertext of the translated text, only when the translator follows the pen of the author, can the translator understand the social and cultural information in the source text. According to the intertextuality theory, no text can ever be completely completed, because each new reader brings his or her own unique understanding into the reading process, and fills in the gaps of the text in the context of his or her own social era and cultural background as well as his or her own experience. To be precise, any reader including the translator can only complete the text relatively. Therefore,how the intertextual signs in the text are understood by the translator will often greatly, if not completely, affect the quality of the translation. Translators have to call their intertextual knowledge into full play to bridge the communicative gap between themselves and the author.

For example, Yang Xianyi and Hawkes translated one of the poems appeared in Chapter 34 of Hong Lou Meng into two different version:

Yang's version:
No silk thread can string these pearls;
Dim now the tear-stains of those bygone years;
A thousand bamboos grow before my window;
Is each dappled and strained with tears?
Hawkes' version:
Yet silk preserves but ill the Naiad's tears;
Each salty trace of them fast disappears.
Only the speckled bamboo stems that grow,
Outside the window still her tear marks show.

In the first line of this poem,there is an allusion telling a story about the Xiang Consorts---Ehuang and Nvying.They were the wives of the mystical ruler, Shun.Unable to bear the pain of their husband's death,they committed suicide in Xiang River."Jiuji"in Pinying refers to the tears of the consols, because the spots on the Xiang River bamboos are said to be the teardrops of the consorts. The Yangs adopt the way of paraphrasing translation and abstract the central meaning from the allusion,thus rendering it into "the tear—stains of those bygone years'';while Hawkes totally gives up the original image and changes it into another one. Because of his different intertextual knowledge,Hawkes considers "the Xiang Consorts"in Chinese myth as "the Naiad"---the Water Goddess in Greek myth. This may not be very proper in translation. "The Xiang Consorts" is not equal to "the Naiad". The reason that Hawkes adopts the method of domestication may be that he knows it is difficult for English readers who have different intertextual background to understand this kind of images if it is translated literally, or he just did not identify the allusion and misunderstood its meaning.

3.2. Intertextuality and Interpretation of the Source Text

Intertextuality theory requires the translator to grasp the source texts at a higher level and interpret it. Generally speaking, the interpretation of the source texts includes four aspects: 1) to say what the author has not said; 2) to change complexity into simplicity; 3) to change implication into explicit; 4) to abstract universal meaning, principles and rules from concrete details. All four aspects of interpretation require the use of intertextual knowledge. How the translator interprets affects the quality of the translation, and the translator's ability to reproduce the connotation behind the intertextual symbols and the cultural information conveyed in the source text in the translated language is the key to the success of the translation.

3.3. Intertextuality and Recomposition of the Source Text

The completion and interpretation of the source text is the completion of the comprehension stage, where "the translator weaves back and forth through the interwoven network of the text to obtain his or her own understanding and the product of that understanding - the meaning". After that, it enters the stage of rewriting the source text. However, translation is a special kind of rewriting different from any other writing activities. Since all aspects of language, such as words, phrases and sentences, also contain cultural accumulation, translation is not just a simple language conversion, but also a cross-cultural communicative activity and artistic re-creation. At this stage, regardless of whether the translator intends to do so or not, his vision will always be influenced by prior works or other intertextual factors, and thus what is translated will inevitably bear the marks of source works or the understanding of the translator's existing experience.

Thus, it can be seen that intertextuality and translation practice are closely related. On the one hand, intertextuality between texts is beneficial to translation practice, enabling translators to find materials that can be used as reference, corroboration and reference in the process of translation; on the other hand, it also brings a lot of difficulties to translation practice, thus putting higher requirements on translators. Poetry is always regarded as the highest artistic and aesthetic form that can cover the aesthetic essence of all literary styles among different ethnic groups. The artistic symbols in poetry, such as allusions and archetypal imagery, are full of expressive power and cultural fusion, and have rich intertextual characteristics. In this paper, the author will select classical Chinese poetry as an important element for introducing intertextuality theory into translation practice research.

4. Intertextual Signs in Classical Chinese Poetry and Translation

4.1. Intertextuality in Classical Chinese Poems and Difficulties in Poetry Translation

Poetry, according to the French poet Paul Valerie, is "a language within a language". These characteristics of poetic language may account for poets' frequent employment of devices such as allusions, references and archetype image etc in their composition, which make the poetic language

concise in form and expressive in meaning.These devices usually forms complex intertextual relationships with different poems or texts in poetry, especially in classical Chinese poetry. So the characteristics and devices pose serious problems for poetry translation. On one hand, the intertextual relationships in ancient poems are so complex that there is a danger that the culture—specific characteristics hidden behind the intertextual relationships may not be fully recognized,and translators isolate them from the textual networks,consequently they may fail in expressing the exact meaning of intertextual signs,or the original intention of poets may be distorted and the aesthetics of poem may be lost. On the other hand, even though translators cover all the aspects of the intertextual relationships as well as bring their intertextual knowledge into full play, it's difficult for translators to both convey the exact information in intertextual signs and remain the rich emotion and precise language as the original author does. As a result, poetic translation is commonly considered as the most difficult and controversial in literary translation.

4.2.　Manifestations of Intertextuality in Hong Lou Meng: Specific V.S.Generic

The cultural factors in poetry are actually intertextual signs. Intertextual signs in poetry stand out as specific intertextuality and genre intertextuality. Among the specific intertextuality, allusions and archetypal imagery are the most common intertextual signs, which is the focus of this paper with the help of the vehicle of the poetic dictionary in Hong Lou Meng. Therefore, this paper takes two translations by Yang Xianyi and Hawkes as case studies, focusing on the treatment of two typical intertextual signs by the two translators and summarizing their translation methods and cultural orientations. It is generally believed that Yang's translation focuses on the fidelity of the original work and tries to preserve the image of the original culture, thus reflecting the tendency of alienation in translation strategy and direct translation in method; Hawkes' translation emphasizes the traditional habits of the translated culture and the cognitive psychology and aesthetic characteristics of British and American readers, thus favoring naturalization in translation strategy and the method of meaningful translation under its guidance. The theory of intertextuality provides a good theoretical framework for interpreting the different translation strategies of the two translations. The two translators use the intertextual background of their respective cultures as a reference and make strategic choices by comparing them. Because of this, the translations present their own characteristics: from the perspective of the original, Yang's translation is faithful to the source text; from the perspective of the translation, Hawkes' translation is more easily understood and accepted. However, the purpose of this paper is not to argue about naturalization and dissimilation, but to demonstrate the importance of correctly dealing with intertextuality in the source text, grasping the phenomenon of intertextuality in translation, and revealing the relevance of intertextuality between different languages and cultures in translation, in order to improve the quality of translation and better convey the cultural meaning of the original work, with a view to applying the theory of intertextuality to translation practice.

5.　Conclusion

As discussed above, intertextuality theory is mainly a theory about text comprehension, while translation is "a practical activity of language transformation created by combining the power of reading and interpretation", so it is useful and feasible to apply intertextuality theory to the study of literary translation, and its theoretical basis is fundamentally compatible with translation research. The inspiration of intertextuality for translation is mainly expressed in the understanding and expression of the original language works. By placing the translation of poetry in the context of intertextuality, the translator can understand the intertextual signs contained in poetry in depth, which can enable translator to solve the cultural problems encountered in the translation of poetry more effectively and break down the cultural barriers in the translation process. Translators should strengthen their dual cultural cultivation so as to convey the cultural heritage in the original text to the target language readers.

Acknowledgements

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