



English Translation of Song Ci and the Construction of the International Discourse System for Chinese Literature

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Abstract— *As a part of China's international discourse system, the international discourse system of Chinese literature is of great significance to eliminate cultural misreading, reduce cultural misappropriation, deepen cultural cognition and reshape China's image. To construct the international discourse system of Chinese literature, we must translate and introduce Chinese literary classics properly at first. Song Ci is a literary classic with Chinese characteristics; thus, many experts and scholars devote themselves to discussing the translation methods of Song Ci from the aspects of form and sense. However, they, to a certain extent, ignore the national cultural spirit embodied in Song Ci. This paper discusses the translation methods of Song Ci from the perspective of constructing the international discourse system of Chinese literature. It aims at spreading the real value and cultural significance of Song Ci and looking for the translation methods of Song Ci that are more suitable for the international community and more beneficial to the dissemination of Chinese culture.*

Keywords— *International discourse system of Chinese literature; English translation of Song Ci; cultural significance; cultural transmission.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In 2013, Xi Jinping proposed at the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China to "strengthen international communication capacity and the construction of international discourse system" (Xi Jinping, 2013), and then the construction of international discourse system with Chinese characteristics became a hot theme. However, most scholars focus on the political discourse, and ignore the importance of the literary discourse. It is of great

significance to construct the international discourse system of Chinese literature for eliminating cultural misreading, reducing cultural misappropriation, deepening cultural cognition and reshaping China's image. Chinese literary works are the essence of Chinese culture, and the translation and dissemination of Chinese literary classics are important parts in the construction of the international discourse system. Song Ci, as a literary classic with Chinese characteristics, needs suitable translation methods to highlight its spiritual and cultural value, and provide reference for the translation and

introduction in the construction of the international discourse system of Chinese literature.

II. ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF SONG CI AND THE INTERNATIONAL DISCOURSE SYSTEM OF CHINESE LITERATURE

2.1 Discourse and International Discourse

The term "discourse" was first used in western philosophy, and then Michel Foucault (1981) linked discourse with the history of thoughts and suggests that "In every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality." Inspired by that, Chinese scholars who aim to enhance the country's discourse power and improve the country's soft power have realized the importance of constructing a "discourse" system.

For a long time, the international community lacks correct cognition of Chinese culture due to inappropriate discourse, by which the national image is often subverted. The construction of international discourse system with Chinese characteristics is a powerful measure to change the situation, because it "implies the function of shaping ideology" (Wu Yun, Jiang Mengying, 2018).

2.2 English Translation of Song Ci and the International Discourse System of Chinese Literature

Without doubt, the construction of China's international discourse system has a political mission, which is one of the reasons why scholars focus on the study of political discourse. However, literary discourse is a part that cannot be ignored in the international discourse system. Literature carries the wisdom of Chinese culture and is the soul of the international discourse system with Chinese characteristics (Wu Yun, 2020). The construction of international literary discourse is an important part of telling Chinese stories well (Gao Yuan, 2021). Among them, the translation of classics is an important component of literary translation, and the English translation of classics is an important part of Chinese culture going out (Wang Yan, Li Zhengshuan, 2020). As a national classic with Chinese characteristics, Song Ci is

one of the representatives of Chinese literature, and its English translation research should be paid attention to.

2.3 Current Research Situation

Currently, there is a lack of research on the construction of the international discourse system of Chinese literature. Searching on this theme, we found no master's thesis or doctoral dissertation directly related to it, but only 10 journal articles, of which 6 are published in the past three years. It can be seen that "international discourse system in Chinese literature" has been paid close attention to recently and still has research value in today's environment. Most scholars have theoretically and comprehensively sorted out the relationship between literary translation and international literary discourse system and provided implementation plans. However, few scholars have explored literary translation from the perspective of "international discourse system". And there is no study on the construction of international discourse system in Chinese literature through translation and introduction of specific literary types or literary works. On the other hand, there are many studies on the English translation of Song Ci, and nearly 100 journal articles can be found by directly searching the keyword. But most of them repeatedly discuss the "meaning", "form" and "sound" from the artistic point of view, and never raise it to the level of international discourse for discussion. Therefore, this paper will take Song Ci as an example to discuss how literary translation can serve the construction of international discourse system in Chinese literature.

III. ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF SONG CI AND INTERNATIONAL DISCOURSE SYSTEM OF CHINESE LITERATURE

3.1 Cultural Value of Song Ci

In the construction of the international discourse system in literature, the selected literary works should present China's national image and show the cultural demeanor of Chinese (Liu Kai, Yu Dengbing, 2021). Therefore, in order to explore the appropriate English translation methods of Song Ci, it is necessary to first clarify what cultural values the translator wants to convey to the international community in the English translation, and

what contents and implications are included in Song Ci to "show the cultural demeanor of the people."

First, demeanor of cities in the Song Dynasty. Song Ci is the product of urban economic prosperity in the Song Dynasty. Extolling the prosperous times is the mission of Song Ci. Song Ci reflects people's urban life in the Song Dynasty from multiple angles and levels (Dong Xiping, 2019). It reflects natural scenery, buildings, pavilions, urban gardens, street traffic, life culture, etc. (Yang Qingcun, Li Xinwei, 2018), and shows vivid prosperous scenes. These real historical lives and prosperous historical scenes are the values of Song Ci that need to be transmitted.

Second, the humanities of the Song Dynasty. The birth of Song Ci met the spiritual needs of the people in the Song Dynasty. In the rich life, the poets of Song Ci had different identities, and their feelings, lives and purposes of writing were also different. Wang Guowei (1970) has emphasized the lyrical function of Ci: "The Ci should have fine and subtle beauty, which can express what poetry cannot express, but it cannot fully express what poetry can express. The realm of poetry is broad, and the expression of Ci is long and profound." These profound realistic portrayals and the true feelings of the people are the values of Song Ci that need to be conveyed.

Third, the contemporary value of Song Ci. Song Ci can surpass poetry and become the representative literature of an era, because it has its own uniqueness and classics. Like poetry and prose, Song Ci, as an excellent literary and artistic work, is a long-lasting classic handed down from ancient times, and is full of the cultural details of the Chinese nation; On the other hand, Wang Guowei once introduced the "national cultural spirit" into Ci, believing that the true value and literary significance of Ci reflected the living cultural spirit of the Chinese nation for thousands of years, which ran through the spiritual world and life movement of a nation (Hu Ming, 1998). Reciting Song Ci, people can not only feel the catharsis of ancient people's emotion, but also experience the exchange of ancient and modern lives. The Chinese nation's thinking and philosophical consciousness about life since ancient times are the value of Song Ci that needs to be transmitted.

3.2 English Translation of Song Ci Serves the Construction of the International Discourse System of Chinese Literature

In order to serve the construction of international discourse system in Chinese literature, the target audience of the English translation of Song Ci are the readers of different cultures. The authors will discuss the above three different types of Song Ci themes and try to analyze the translated Ci that readers of different cultures can understand, accept and even love.

3.2.1 Expression Replacement

The differences between English and Chinese are reflected not only in vocabulary and grammar, but also in the expression habits of their literary works. Taking Song Ci as an example, it pays attention to rhythm harmony. Level and oblique tones, internal rhyme, end rhyme, long and short sentences crisscross to create the beauty of music. While English poetry has its unique poetic expression forms such as enjambment, alliteration and end rhyme, although it is different from Chinese poetry in pronunciation and form. If the two are converted reasonably, the rhyme of Song Ci can be understood and appreciated by English readers.

Wang Zhaopeng (2000), after statistical analysis, selected as the "first famous work" of Song Ci-- Su Shi's "Niannu Jiao-Recalling Antiquity at the Cliff". It is full of emotions. It recalls the past and has majestic tempo, and its long and short sentences crisscross to show the beauty of Chinese musicality:

大江东去，浪淘尽，千古风流人物。故垒西边，人道是，三国周郎赤壁。乱石穿空，惊涛拍岸，卷起千堆雪。江山如画，一时多少豪杰。

遥想公瑾当年，小乔初嫁了，雄姿英发。羽扇纶巾，谈笑间、檣櫓灰飞烟灭。故国神游，多情应笑我、早生华发，人间如梦，一尊还酹江月。

The whole Ci dispersed verb-object structure many times, such as "浪淘尽，千古风流人物"，"人道是，三国周郎赤壁"，"多情应笑我、早生华发" and so on. Long sentences are divided into long and short sentences, with pauses and setbacks. How can its English translation

restore the artistic charm of this famous work through the ages? Take the opening sentence:

The Great River flows,

Eastward waves sweeping away,

For thousands of years, gallant heroes. (Zhu Chunshen)

East flows the mighty river,

Sweeping away the heroes of times past; (Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang)

The Great River eastward flows,

With its waves are gone all those

Gallant heroes of bygone years. (Xu Yuanchong)

The River flows to the East.

Its waves have washed away all

The heroes of history. (Kenneth Rexroth)

The Yangs shortened the three sentences of the original Ci to two sentences. They did not retain the form of the original Ci, but expressed the meaning of the original Ci more faithfully. Zhu's clever use of the parenthesis "For thousands of years," just as Su Shi's method that separated the verb-object components with punctuation. It has the rhythm of the original Ci; Rexroth, as a native speaker, skillfully used common expressions of English poetry, and the translation is smooth and natural, but he did not consider the rhythm. Like Rexroth, Xu, who is familiar with the expression of English poetry, replaced the verb-object separation expression of the original Ci with enjambment in English poetry; moreover, its final rhyme is exquisite and catchy. Similarly, the unique Chinese level and oblique tones or reduplication in the Ci may be replaced by the end rhyme or alliteration in English poetry. Thus, it's necessary to make the translation of classic works as classic as the original Ci, which can show the grandeur, beautiful rhythm, and exquisite conciseness of the original Ci.

3.2.2 Picture Construction

(1) The key to showing the real-life picture in Song Ci is to build an overall picture. The full text needs to be closely connected and coherent. Liu Yong's *望海潮* is the top work to describe the urban style:

东南形胜，三吴都会，钱塘自古繁华。烟柳画桥，风帘翠幕，参差十万人家。云树绕堤沙，怒涛卷霜雪，天堑无涯。市列珠玑，户盈罗绮竞豪奢。

重湖叠巘清嘉。有三秋桂子，十里荷花。羌管弄晴，菱歌泛夜，嬉嬉钓叟莲娃。千骑拥高牙。乘醉听箫鼓，吟赏烟霞。异日图将好景，归去凤池夸。

The poem presents the scenery of Hangzhou to readers from all directions and angles. The opening phrase "东南形胜，三吴都会，钱塘自古繁华" points out the location of the prosperous capital and shows its magnificence. Referring to Mr. Xu Yuanchong's translation: "Scenic splendor southeast of River Blue / And capital of ancient Kingdom Wu / Qiantang's as flourishing as e'er", we find that the first sentence beginning with "scenic splendor" is echoed by the last sentence ending with "You may picture the scene another day", and thus the translation becomes compact and round.

The construction of the whole picture cannot be separated from the description of details, the words used in details need to be vivid, and the syntax should also be carefully studied. Taking another example in *望海潮*, "烟柳画桥，风帘翠幕" was translated as "The smoke like willows form a wind-proof screen; / Adorned with painted bridges and curtains green." Although the original Ci are piled up with noun phrases, they show a picturesque scenery. Xu's translation grasps the differences between English and Chinese languages, adds several verbs such as "form," "adorned" and "painted" in the English translation, converts a static description into dynamic movements, and exchanges the position of "画桥" and "风帘". The writing is logical and clear, which can be understood easily after reading.

After Liu Yong's Ci was written, Jin Zhuliang heard it and was delighted to admire "三秋桂子，十里荷花". Therefore, he threw his whip to cross the river (Wu Xionghe, 2004). If the beautiful scenery in the Ci is translated, western readers will also "gladly go for it." Does this exceed the simple value of words? The authors believe that the translation of "The fragrance of sweet osmanthus lingers on the autumn air, / Lotus flowers bloom far and wide in summer" by Yang Xianyi and his wife lacks the beauty of rhyme, but it presents the magnificent scene of flowers blooming thousands of

miles to readers, which is a double experience of smell and sight. Therefore, in order to convey the beauty of Song Ci, it is necessary to translate its details and construct its pictures.

3.2.3 Emotional Transmission

Literary works, especially Song Ci, are often full of emotions. In order to convey the deep feeling of Ci, it is necessary for the translator to experience the deep feeling in Ci first, and then carefully select vocabulary and syntax to arouse readers' resonance. The famous poet Li Qingzhao wrote 声声慢. Its words are straightforward but the temperament is gentle. The emotion is strong but the atmosphere is cold. It really shows the delicate mind of ancient women, and the feeling of forbearance:

寻寻觅觅，冷冷清清，凄凄惨惨戚戚。

At the beginning, several overlapping words set off the feeling of confusion and sadness to the extreme and also left difficulties for translators:

Search. Search. Seek. Seek.

Cold. Cold. Clear. Clear.

Sorrow. Sorrow. Pain. Pain. (Kenneth Rexroth)

Seeking, seeking,

Chilly and quiet,

Desolate, painful and miserable. (Yang Xianyi, Gladys Yang)

Rexroth and Yang's translation are based on the original word order with some notional words. Rexroth breaks away from the conventional translation method, and each word is punctuated, which is innovative to a certain extent. However, he directly imitated the repeated use of Chinese words and mechanically translated the corresponding meanings of the words. For example, "冷冷清清" is translated as "cold" and "clear", and it is far from the true artistic conception; The Yangs translated the first line into verbs, and the following two lines into adjectives. It is in step with the original words, and the euphemistic and desolate mood is also enhanced.

I look for what I miss;

I know not what it is.

I feel so sad, so drear,

So lonely, without cheer. (Xu Yuanchong)

So dim, so dark,

So dense, so dull,

So damp, so dank,

So dead! (Lin Yutang)

Xu and Lin added their own understanding to the translation and discarded the repetition of words (vocabulary) in form. Xu's translation directly added the subject "I", which makes the sentence complete, and easy to understand. The reader is able to understand the meaning of the original Ci, but the "forbearance" is lost. Although Li Qingzhao's Ci is strongly emotional, her words are euphemistic and touching, Xu's translation seems to be more like a kind of "talk" or "complaint", which exposes the poet's emotions; Lin's translation uses seven words with the same initial word "so" to replace the reduplication effect of Chinese words, which is worthy of praise. The seven short sentences all use the sentence pattern of "so + adj.," which is in line with the spoken English habit. It does not directly express emotions, but uses the creation of artistic conception to express the meaning of the Ci, and then to express emotions.

IV. CONCLUSION

The construction of the international discourse system of Chinese literature is inseparable from the discussion of literary translation, but at the same time, it is not only from the perspective of traditional literary translation, but also to promote the dissemination of Chinese culture. Through the analysis of the English translation of Song Ci, to make the English translation of Song Ci better serve the construction of the international discourse system of Chinese literature, it is necessary to present different focuses in the English translation of style and content: (1) When translating Song Ci, we should be familiar with the expression habits of Chinese and English, learn to replace the expression methods in the face of the unique expression of the language, and replace the uniqueness of Chinese poetry with the uniqueness of English poetry. We should give attention to the accuracy of meaning and the beauty of phonology, and strive to create classical translations of classical sentences. This is the key to

building an international literary discourse system. (2) When translating the Song Ci depicting scenery and writing the lives of common people, we should focus on the structure of the picture, not only in a sentence (long or short), but also from the whole Ci to perceive the panorama. In translation, we should be faithful to the original Ci but not stick to its form; (3) When translating Song Ci with rich emotions and strong appeal, we should choose words carefully to express emotions accurately. Moreover, we should make good use of diversified sentence structures in English to recreate the atmosphere, highlight emotions, avoiding too straightforward language in place of graceful and restrained words. The authors hope that the discussion of specific literary translation can provide reference for the translation of other literary types, and also hope that more people will discuss the translation of specific literature from the perspective of constructing international discourse system of Chinese literature, so as to further promote the development of Chinese literature and culture.

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