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THE POETIC TRANSLATION IN FANG PING'S *THE NEW COMPLETE WORKS OF SHAKESPEARE* FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HERMENEUTICS

CHENFENG TUO¹, HUI LIU²

¹MA Candidate, School of Foreign Languages, North China Electric Power University, Changping District, Beijing, China

²MA Supervisor, School of Foreign Languages, North China Electric Power University, Changping District, Beijing, China



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ABSTRACT

The New Complete Works of Shakespeare edited by Fang Ping is a well-deserved milestone, which achieves the change from prosaic style to the poetic style unifying the spirit and artistic style of Shakespeare's plays. Based on the hermeneutic translation theory, this paper illustrates the poetic style in the Chinese translation of *The New Complete Works of Shakespeare* with hermeneutic philosophy from the following aspects, namely, trust, aggression, incorporation and restitution, so as to provide a new perspective for the further understanding of the translation work.

Keywords: Fang Ping, *The New Complete Works of Shakespeare*, poetic translation, hermeneutics

1. Introduction

The New Complete Works of Shakespeare edited by Fang Ping, is an important breakthrough in the translation history of Shakespeare's works in China. This is the first translation of Shakespeare's complete works in blank verse published in China, which greatly enriches Shakespeare's translation achievements, and effectively promotes the spread of Shakespeare in China.

Since it was published in 2000, *The New Complete Works of Shakespeare* has been attracting the widespread attention. Qiu Ke'an highlights the major achievement of Fang Ping and his collaborators in translating all the blank verse in Shakespeare's plays from English to Chinese in a vernacular metrical style (78-79). Jiang Jianxia mainly criticizes the Chinese translation of a soliloquy in Shakespeare's *Richard III* by Fang Ping and proposes a new way to translate a Chinese character to an English syllable, and try to make it close to the original text syntactically and semantically, so as to ensure the beauty of Shakespeare's works (189-193). In addition, Deng Di makes an in-depth comparison between Zhu Shenghao's prosaic translation and Fang Ping's poetic translation, which implies a significant change in the translation concept of the Chinese versions of Shakespeare's plays (46-51).

2. The Poetic Translation of Shakespeare's Plays under the Guidance of Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is a theory of understanding and interpreting the textual meaning that was widely popular in the 1960s. American translation theorist George Steiner directly introduced hermeneutics into the field of translation. In his monograph *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, he puts forward the

interpretive thought of understanding as translation, and the four-beat model of the hermeneutic motion in the act of translation: initiative trust, aggression, incorporation, and reciprocity or restitution.

Based on the hermeneutic translation theory, this paper illustrates the poetic style in the Chinese translation of *The New Complete Works of Shakespeare* with hermeneutics from the following aspects, namely, trust, aggression, incorporation and restitution, so as to provide a new perspective for the further understanding of the translation work.

2.1 Initiative Trust—The Literary Fame of Shakespeare’s Plays

The necessity of translation lies in the translator’s trust in the original text. “All understanding, and the demonstrative statement of understanding which is translation, starts with an act of trust” (Steiner 312). In the face of unfamiliar texts written in another language, the translator believes in a priori that the content itself is reasonable, so it can be translated and worthy of being understood by the readers after translation. The aesthetic features and the spirit of the times reflected in Shakespeare’s plays are the two bases for the translator’s trust.

For one thing, Shakespeare’s plays have high artistic value for the reflection of reality and the nature of things, which is the significance for translation. The aesthetic value of Shakespeare’s plays lies in the fact that the literature and stage performance follow the aesthetic principles of realism, showing the creative way of writing nature and describing reality and closely grasping the essential characteristics of things. This is a principle of artistic creation that Shakespeare also mentioned in his own works. In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, he claims, “The best in this kind are but shadows, and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them” (5.1.224-225). In other words, the ultimate property of Shakespeare’s play is to reflect reality.

For another, Shakespeare, a great playwright in the British Renaissance, opposes feudal shackles, and fights for individual liberation, equality and social progress in his works, which contains the profound cultural sense of history, reality and humanity, and highlights the humanistic spirit of the times.

This coincides with Fang Ping’s translation idea. He attaches importance to conveying the spirit of the era in the translation of Shakespeare’s complete works. In his view, the atmosphere of the era is a standard of literature, art and language, while the spirit of the era is a historical and cultural standard. Only by organically combining the two, can the translator’s trust be established, so as to guide him to carry out effective translation conveying the artistic value and highlighting the spirit of the time in Shakespeare’s works, which has generated strong attraction and necessity for the birth of the Chinese translation of *The New Complete Works of Shakespeare*.

2.2 Aggression—The Combination of Poetic Translation and Stage Instruction

The translator’s understanding of the original text leads to the invasion of the original text. “After trust comes aggression. The second move of the translator is incursive and extractive” (Steiner 313). Due to the influence and restriction of bias on the translator’s understanding, the original text is not completely and objectively reproduced and exhaustively understood. The different interpretation of the original text constitutes the aggression, and is also the concrete embodiment of the translator’s subjectivity. It is the personality of the translator that makes the translation different from others. In the process of translation, Fang Ping emphasizes the importance of the Chinese translation in poetic style and the directivity of the stage performance. Thus, he organically combines the translation of poetic style with the addition of indicative words for stage performance to form his own unique understanding of the original text.

On the one hand, Fang Ping adopts the poetic translation of the complete works of Shakespeare, which conveys the artistic conception of the syntactic structure, meter and rhythm. The Chinese translation in verse of Shakespeare’s plays was firstly put forward by Sun Dayu and Bian Zhilin, and Fang Ping inherited it well. Fang Ping believes that a translator should first translate the original poetic play with the corresponding metrical system, and pay attention to the genre and style of the original work (Fang 27-29). He insists on the transplantation of the blank verse with the appropriate translation method—replacing the English metrical feet

with Chinese units of characters. Taking the rhythm in Shakespeare's plays as an example, poetic translations can be divided into the following types.

1. It adopts the combination of odd and even numbers, the alternating use of two-word and three-word (or one-word) groups in verse. For example, here is the double line recited by the priest in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Therefore love moderately, long love doth so:

Too swift arrives as tardy as slow. (Fang 429)

爱得 | 要温和, 才能有 | 爱的 | 长久;

感情 | 太猛了, | 太瘟了, | 都爱 | 不到头。(Ibid)

In the translation of the first line, the translator consciously adjusts the two-word groups into an arrangement of odd and even, so as to enhance its sense of rhythm.

2. It consists of two three-character groups (long tone group) and a single tone group (short tone group). The arrangement of sole odd number can also form a sense of rhythm. For example, here is an example from *As You Like It*.

Withal, as large a charter as the wind,

To blow on whom I please. (2.7.50-51)

像阵风, | 风 | 刮来了,

刮着谁 | 就是谁。(Fang 188)

The translator pays attention to the staggered length of lines, which consists of two three-character groups (long tone group) and a single tone group (short tone group), so as to achieve a great sense of rhythm.

3. It consists of the full-length tone group and full odd type of lines, which is completely composed of three-character group forming a sense of rhythm. For instance, here is an example from *The Merchant of Venice*.

Tell me once more what title thou dost bear. (2.9.37)

我倒要 | 听一听 | 你究竟 | 怎么说。(Fang 60)

In the process of translation, the translator can also choose full-length phonetic translation, which is completely composed of three Chinese characters, and creates a strong sense of rhythm.

On the other hand, in the translation of Shakespeare's complete works, Fang puts his guiding ideology of stage instruction into practice. Fang regards Shakespeare's complete works as the performance works on the stage. The enrichment of stage directions has become a prerequisite for translation itself. In his translation of *The Merchant of Venice*, Fang adds more stage indicator words in line with the stage tradition, taking Scene Three of Act One as an example.

SHYLOCK But soft! How many months

Do you desire? *To Antonio*. Rest you fair, good

signior! (1.3.59-61)

夏洛克 可是且慢! 你打算借几个月?

(向安东尼) 你好啊, 好大爷。

方才我们正谈着你老人家呢。(Fang 25)

Shylock turned his back to Antony as he entered the scene, pretending to estimate his cash. Then the former turned, and pretended to be surprised to see the latter there. Shylock took off his hat, and humbly greeted Antony. Admittedly, there was irony in his voice and countenance. The translator adds the stage hints in the footnotes to show the readers clearly the emotional colors of the character's movements and expressions.

2.3 Incorporation—The Combination of Domestication and Foreignization

The translator's absorption of the original text is the result of the previous aggression, so as to achieve the balance between the original text and the target language. "The third movement is incorporative, in the strong sense of the word. The import, of meaning and of form, the embodiment, is not made in or into a vacuum" (Steiner 314). George Steiner points out that the incorporation of meaning and form not only includes the complete domestication of the original text, but also may point to complete foreignization (Zhao 148). Domestication is the translation of meaning, with the target language or target readers as the destination, while foreignization is literal translation, which is the destination of the source language or the original author.

In the process of translating the complete works of Shakespeare, Fang Ping insists on foreignization as the main method, and domestication as the auxiliary, which is not only accurately conveying the meaning and content of the original text, but also vividly giving expression to the artistic style and charm of the original text to the recipient of the target language.

For example, in the translation of *Merchant of Venice*, the strategy of foreignization and domestication with annotation is adopted by Fang Ping.

THE PRINCE OF MOROCCO

And let us make incision for your love,

To prove whose blood is reddest, his or mine. (2.1.6-7)

摩洛哥 让我们刺血检验对你的爱情，

看谁滴下的血最红：是他还是我。(Fang 37-32)

In order to prove the love for Portia, the Prince of Morocco decides to make incision and show his bravery. As for the translation of "blood is reddest", the translator chooses the method of foreignization with the domestication in annotation, so as to follow the image of the source culture to the greatest extent, convey the cultural meanings perfectly and enrich the expression form of Chinese.

2.4 Restitution—The Combination of Transliteration and Footnotes

Significantly, the translator preserves the cultural characteristics of the original text and enhances readers' understanding of the original text through the compensation principle in the process of translation. "All capture calls for subsequent compensation" (Steiner 319), and to "restore balance is the crux of the métier and morals of translation" (316). For Steiner, the hermeneutic act must compensate, no matter domestication or foreignization, the process of incorporation will bring some changes to the target language. Only through the compensation, the original balance can be restored and the ideal state of translation can be entered. When translating texts in special cultural contexts—the rhetoric and allusion, Fang Ping makes the compensation by directly transliterating and adding footnotes, which highlights the visual characteristics of the original work and enriches the cultural images and the understanding of target language readers.

With the increasingly frequent cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries, readers can understand and slowly accept various cultural images with the imprint of foreign cultures. Therefore, it is necessary to retranslate works and make certain compensation with the times. For example, in the translation of allusions in *the Merchant of Venice*, the translator adopted this strategy.

PORTIA If I live to be as old as Sibylla, I will die as chaste as Diana, unless I be obtained by the manner of my father's will. (1.2.106-108)

波希霞 谁想要得到我这个人，就得遵照先父的规定；否则，哪怕我活到西比拉老婆婆那一把年纪，我临死，也还是像月亮里的狄安娜那样，一个童女的身子。(Fang 21)

In this scene, the translator transliterates Sibylla and adds a footnote to explain the name of the prophetic priestess in the temple of Apollo. Apollo fell in love with Sibylla in Cumae, southern Italy, and promised to help her live as long as the particles of sand he held in his hands. However, she forgot to ask for eternal youth, so she became an ugly old woman.

In addition, when it comes to the translation of figures of speech, the translator also follows this strategy as well. For example, in the *Merchant of Venice*, Bassanio expresses the love for Portia.

BASSANIO As doubtful whether what I see be true,

Until confirmed, signed, ratified by you. (3.3. 51-52)

巴珊尼 不知道眼前的情景是真是假，

除非你盖章、画押、担保一下。(Fang 76)

Here, the translator emphasizes the metaphorical kiss of being confirmed, signed and ratified in the footnote. Through the supplement of footnotes to express the significance of rhetorical devices, the readers of the target language can understand more easily the meaning and content conveyed by the source language.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, the translation of Shakespearean plays in poetic style is a great innovation in the historical process of Chinese Shakespearean plays translation, which pays more attention to the artistic form of the language and realizes the organic connection between form and content.

Fang Ping establishes the trust due to the literary reputation—the aesthetic features, the humanistic spirit and the spirit of the times in Shakespeare's plays, and combines the poetic translation with the principle of stage instruction to reflect the process of aggression when he completes the translation of Shakespeare's plays in verse. Furthermore, for better incorporation, the translation strategy of combining domestication and foreignization is adopted by the translator. Eventually, the compensation step is completed with the combination of transliteration and footnote, so as to help readers to perfectly understand the work.

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