

Study on the Influence of Western Literature on Modern Chinese Literature under the Effect of Translation Culture

Zaijun Li*

Department of Foreign Students, China University of Petroleum (East China), Qingdao, China

*Corresponding author: 1158234430@qq.com

Abstract: In the context of globalisation, the cultural effect of translation, as a bridge of cross-cultural communication, has become increasingly significant. Focusing on the cultural effects of translation, this study explores the profound influence of Western literature on modern Chinese literature since the end of the 19th century. The introduction of Western literature has brought new subjects, narrative techniques and ideological contents to Chinese literature, promoting the diversification of literary forms and the renewal of literary ideas. This is of great significance in promoting dialogue and exchange between different cultures, as well as in promoting the pluralistic development of literature on a global scale.

Keywords: cultural effect of translation; Western literature; modern Chinese literature; influence

1. Introduction

In the context of globalisation, translation, as a bridge of cross-cultural communication, has an increasingly significant cultural effect. Translation cultural effect refers to the influence and change of the target language culture while the translation activity spreads the foreign culture. This effect is not only reflected in the content and form of literary texts, but also profoundly influences the literary creation, critical theory, and aesthetic concepts of the receiving culture ^[1].

2. Overview of the cultural effects of translation

Western literature has been pouring into China since the end of the 19th century, and its translation and dissemination have had a far-reaching impact on modern Chinese literature. On the one hand, the introduction of Western literature has brought new subjects, narrative techniques and ideological contents to Chinese literature, inspired Chinese writers, and promoted the diversification of literary forms and the renewal of literary ideas ^[2]. On the other hand, the unavoidable cultural adaptation and selective acceptance in the process of translation have also led to the reconstruction and re-creation of Western literature in the specific cultural context of China. The study of the cultural effect of translation pays attention not only to the conversion at the textual level, but also to the interaction and integration at the cultural level. By analysing the translation practices of Western literature in China, we can better understand how cultural differences affect the reception and dissemination of literature, and how literature builds bridges of communication and understanding between different cultures. This is of great significance in promoting dialogue and exchange between different cultures, as well as in promoting the pluralistic development of literature on a global scale.

3. Translation and Dissemination of Western Literature in China

3.1 Historical Review of Western Literature Translation

(1) The course of translation from the late Qing Dynasty to modern times

The translation history of Western literature in China can be traced back to the late Qing Dynasty, which marked China's initial contact with and understanding of Western culture^[3]. At the end of the 19th century, with the invasion of Western powers and the signing of unequal treaties, a strong demand

for Western science, technology and culture began to emerge in Chinese society. Translation activities became an important means of linking Chinese and Western cultures, and many early translations focused on fields such as science and technology, law and politics. In the 20th century, with the rise of the New Culture Movement, the translation of Western literature gradually became the focus of intellectual attention. A group of pioneers, such as Lu Xun and Hu Shi, began to systematically translate and introduce Western literature. They not only translated numerous classics, but also promoted Western literary concepts through the media of newspapers and magazines, and carried out profound criticism and reflection on traditional Chinese literature. The translation activities in this period not only promoted the spread of Western literature in China, but also laid the foundation for the modernisation and transformation of Chinese literature.

(2) Important Translators and Their Contributions

In the history of the translation of Western literature, many outstanding translators emerged, whose work not only enriched the treasury of Chinese literary translation, but also promoted the development of Chinese literature. For example, Lin Shu, who was a famous translator in the late Qing Dynasty, although most of his translations were in the literary language, his works such as *The Remains of the Lady of the Camellias in Paris* gave Chinese readers their first contact with the glamour of Western literature [4]. Lu Xun, on the other hand, is the founder of modern literary translation, and his translations cover a wide range of fields such as Russian, Eastern European, and British and American literature, etc. His translation style focuses on faithfulness to the original text, and seeks to convey the spirit of the original work. Through translation, many writers have introduced Western literary genres such as realism and romanticism to Chinese readers, which has had a profound impact on Chinese literature.

3.2 Dissemination channels of translated works

The dissemination channels of translated works of Western literature evolve with the development of the times. In the late Qing Dynasty, translated works were mainly disseminated through books, newspapers and magazines. With the progress of printing technology and the development of the publishing industry, books became the main means of dissemination of translated works of Western literature. Many translated works were included in various anthologies and series of books, such as *The Law of Nations*, etc. These works were not only circulated among intellectuals, but also gradually came into the view of the general public. In the 20th century, especially after the founding of New China, the means of dissemination of translated works became more diversified. In addition to traditional books and newspapers, radio, television and films also became important media of dissemination. For example, many classic Western literary works have been adapted into films and TV dramas, such as *Jane Eyre* and *The Red and the Black*, etc. The wide dissemination of these works has further expanded the influence of Western literature in China. With the rise of the Internet, the web has become a new platform for the dissemination of translated works. Online literary websites, e-books and online forums provide a broader space for the dissemination of translated works of Western literature. Readers can easily access and share translated works through online platforms, which also promotes the popularity and acceptance of Western literature in China. Meanwhile, the interactivity of the Internet also enables readers to participate in the discussion and evaluation of translated works, forming an active literary exchange community.

4. The Influence of Western Literature on the Concept of Modern Chinese Literature

4.1 The Transformation of Literary Concepts

(1) From classical to modern: the evolution of literary concepts

The transformation of literary concepts is an important feature of the development of modern Chinese literature, and this transformation has been largely influenced by Western literature. In classical literature, poetry and prose dominated, and literature was seen as a tool for expressing emotions and displaying talent. However, the importation of Western literature, especially the translation of novels and plays, led the Chinese literary world to emphasise narrative and realism. During the May Fourth Movement, writers such as Lu Xun advocated a literary revolution, arguing that literature should have the functions of enlightenment and reform, and emphasising the democratic and scientific nature of literature. This change of concept laid the foundation for the development of modern literature, and literary works began to pay attention to the lives of ordinary people and reflect

social problems.

(2) Introduction and Acceptance of Western Literary Theories

The introduction of Western literary theories challenged and impacted the traditional concepts of Chinese literature. With the translation and introduction of Western literary theories from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, the Chinese literary world began to come into contact with and accept such Western literary schools as Realism, Symbolism, Expressionism, etc. These theories not only affected literary creation, but also influenced the development of modern literature. These theories not only influenced literary creation, but also literary criticism and theoretical research [5]. For example, the introduction of realist literary theories prompted Chinese writers to pay more attention to social reality and endeavour to reveal social conflicts and the complexity of human nature. Meanwhile, Western methods of literary criticism, such as textual analysis and structuralism, have provided new perspectives and tools for Chinese literary criticism. As shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Representative works under representative genres in the late 19th and early 20th centuries

| Representative Genres | Authors | Works |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Symbolism | William Butler Yeats | The Celtic Twilight |
| Imagist Poetry | Ezra Pound | In a Station of the Metro |
| Futurism | Filippo Tommaso Marinetti | Futurist Manifesto |
| Expressionism | Franz Kafka | The Metamorphosis |
| Stream of Consciousness Fiction | Virginia Woolf | To the Lighthouse |
| Surrealism | Salvador Dali | The Persistence of Memory |
| Existentialist literature | Albert Camus | The Stranger |

4.2 Themes and Forms of Literary Creation

(1) Diversification of thematic content

Under the influence of Western literature, the theme content of modern Chinese literature began to show a diversified trend. Literary works are no longer confined to the traditional moral edification and lyrical writing, but begin to pay attention to social change, class struggle, national crisis and other real problems. At the same time, personal emotions and psychological states also became important areas of literary exploration. For example, Zhang Eileen's novels explore in depth the individual loneliness in urban life and the changing concept of love, and the exploration of these themes is relatively rare in traditional Chinese literature.

(2) Formal Innovation and Experimentation

The narrative techniques and structural layout of Western literature provided rich resources for formal innovation in Chinese literature. Chinese writers began to experiment with new forms of novels, such as psychological novels and detective novels, as well as in poetry and theatre writing. Modernist poets such as Xu Zhimo and Guo Moruo, for example, were influenced by Western literary genres such as Symbolism and Futurism, and exhibited styles and forms very different from traditional poetry. In theatre, Western forms of drama were introduced into China, such as Cao Yu's *Thunderstorm*, which not only absorbed the techniques of Western drama in the construction of the plot, but also made bold innovations in the stage presentation.

5. Interaction between Western Literature and Modern Chinese Literary Creation

5.1 Influence of Western Literary Genres on Chinese Writers

With the translation and introduction of Western literature in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Chinese writers began to create relevant works under the influence of literary genres such as Realism, Romanticism and Symbolism. These genres not only brought new forms of artistic expression to Chinese literature, but also introduced new literary themes and ideological contents. For example, realist literature emphasised the profound exposure and criticism of social reality, a concept that influenced the work of writers such as Lu Xun, who explored social problems and the complexity of human nature in their works. Romanticism, on the other hand, emphasised the free expression of personal emotions and inspired Chinese writers to explore personal emotions and natural beauty. Genres such as Symbolism and Modernism, on the other hand, promoted formal innovations in Chinese

literature, such as the free verse style of the New Poetry Movement and modernist poetry. In addition, the theoretical concepts and critical methods of Western literature also had a significant impact on Chinese literature. Chinese writers have not only absorbed the artistic techniques of Western literature in their creative work, but also borrowed its literary theories, such as the rhetorical techniques of symbols and metaphors in literature, as well as the techniques of digging deeply into the psychology of characters [6]. The introduction of these literary genres and theories has greatly enriched the expressiveness and depth of thought of Chinese literature and promoted the modernisation of Chinese literature.

5.2 Chinese writers' borrowing and localisation of western literature

Chinese writers have made a series of localised innovations while borrowing from Western literature. On the basis of absorbing the achievements of Western literature and art, they combined Chinese social reality and cultural tradition to create literary works with Chinese characteristics. For example, Mao Dun's novels incorporate traditional Chinese narrative techniques and deep insights into social change while drawing on Western realist literature. Bajin's "Family" series of novels, on the basis of the exploration of family ethics in Western literature, shows the disintegration of the traditional Chinese family and the process of individual liberation. Chinese writers' attempts at formal localisation are also noteworthy. They conducted bold experiments in poetry, novels and theatre, creating literary styles that were both characteristic of Western literature and deeply rooted in Chinese soil. For example, the poets of the New Poetry Movement tried to break the bounds of traditional poetic metre and created a free verse style, which was to some extent influenced by Western free verse, but with distinctive Chinese characteristics.

5.3 Positive significance of literary exchange under the cultural effect of translation

(1) Promoting literary diversity and innovation

The translation culture effect plays an important role in promoting literary diversity and innovation. Through translation, literary works of different cultural backgrounds can cross the barriers of language and region, and communicate and integrate with each other. Such exchanges not only enable Chinese literature to absorb the nutrients of foreign literature and enrich its own artistic expression and ideological content, but also enable Western literature to learn from the unique charm of Chinese literature, which promotes the development of global literary diversity [7]. In addition, the creative transformation and localisation practice in the translation process also provide new paths and possibilities for literary innovation.

(2) Enhancing the international influence of literature

The cultural effect of translation also helps to enhance the international influence of literature. Through translation, literary works are able to reach a wider group of readers and enhance their global recognition and influence. The translation of Chinese literature enables readers around the world to understand and appreciate Chinese culture and history, and enhances understanding and respect among different cultures. At the same time, the Chinese translation of Western literature has also won more attention and recognition for Chinese literature in the international arena, and enhanced the international status of Chinese literature. This two-way interaction of literary exchange not only promotes mutual understanding and respect of cultures, but also contributes to the common prosperity of world literature.

6. Conclusion

The cultural effect of translation not only promotes the modernisation process of Chinese literature, but also enhances the international influence of Chinese literature. Through translation, Chinese literature has been able to absorb the nutrients of foreign literature and enrich its own artistic expression and ideological content, while at the same time providing Western literature with the opportunity to learn from the unique charm of Chinese literature. This two-way interaction of literary exchange promotes mutual understanding and respect of cultures, and contributes to the common prosperity of world literature. In the future, the study of the cultural effects of translation will continue to deepen, with a view to better understanding and promoting the development of literature in a global multicultural context.

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