

Study on the Translation Thoughts and Translation Styles of Gladys Yang

Yang Ganggui and Xue Hongguo

Abstrac—Since the 1980s, the English translations of Chinese classical literary works have been emerging, most of which are classic literary works and famous novels in modern times. In the 21st century, the exchanges between China and foreign countries in various fields are more in-depth, especially in the cultural exchanges, and their forms are more diverse. During this period, there emerged outstanding translators represented by Gladys Yang and others. This paper discusses the research status of the famous translator Gladys Yang from two aspects of her works, translation thoughts and translation style, in order to provide some enlightenment for translation learners and benefit for subsequent translation studies of Gladys Yang.

Index Terms—English translation, Gladys Yang, translation thoughts, Translation style.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the history of modern and contemporary literary translation, countless outstanding Chinese female translators emerged. Gladys Yang was a representative one of them and was a shining star in the river of translation. Named Gladness Tayer after she was born, she changed her name to Gladys Yang after marriage with Xianyi Yang. She had lived in China for nearly 60 years before she passed away at the age of 80. As the descendant of a missionary, she was destined to have a hard love affair with China. Her love with Yang Xianyi combined Chinese and English and has become a legend. Their cooperation in translation has been a great story in the translation circle [1].

Gladys Yang devoted herself to promoting the communication between Chinese and Western cultures in all her life. It is no doubt to call her “Bethune” in the translation field. She once joked that her love was not Xianyi Yang, but Chinese culture. Though it was just a joke, it really reflects her love for Traditional Chinese culture [2]. Therefore, this great translator is worthy of study, but the current research on her is not systematic and in-depth, so it is necessary to carry out a study about her as comprehensive as possible. This paper will analyze her translation thoughts and her translation styles so as to provide some insights for future study about her translation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Gladys Yang translated a wide range of works with good quality. More than 600 papers can be found on China

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Yang Ganggui and Xue Hongguo are with School of Foreign Studies, Northwestern Polytechnical University, Xi'an, China (e-mail: cc164704178@163.com, xuehg@126.com).

National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), numerous scholars have studied Gladys Yang from various angles. For example, in recent years, Chen Yu has analyzed the English translation of the *Leaden Wings* by using the narrative reconstruction the Three-Dimensional Translation Control theory, which provides a new perspective for disciplinary research [3]. Li Jing and Yan Ji have also acknowledged the her contribution to the translation of *A Dream of Red Mansions* in the English world [4]. Wang Jinbo and Wang Yan hold that the translation of the chapters of *A Dream of Red Mansions* by Gladys Yang is a product of the times and has strong limitations of that times, but on the whole the quality of the translation is excellent, and the English version of *A Brief History of Chinese Novels* has been widely spread in the English world and has far-reaching influence [5]. Wang Wenqiu and Ma Guanghui took her translation style as the research object and take *The Scholars* as the research carrier to sort out several translation styles of her works [6].

Plentiful scholars have analyzed the translation works such as *The Husband*, *Sunrise*, *The Hand*, *The True Story of AH Q*, *Kong Yiji*, *Blessing*, *Scream and Medicine*. The English translation of *Wild Grass* and *Sorrow for The Past* and the cultural identity of translators have also been studied by scholars [7].

Furthermore, a number of scholars focus on her co-translations with Yang Xianyi. Therefore, it is necessary to review and reflect on Gladys Yang's translation practice, especially her solo translation practice [8]. Once, co-translation ran through her whole life while solo translation could better reflect her personal thoughts.

III. TRANSLATION THOUGHTS IN GLADYS YANG'S WORKS

Gladys Yang's translation thoughts guide her translation practice. There are three main translation thoughts of Gladys Yang, which can be summarized as: being creative in translation, conforming to the readers' consciousness, and adapting to the current policy. These translation thoughts are reflected in her *Panda Series* translations, as well as in the English translations of classical and modern literary works, which are also the reasons why her translated texts are loved by western readers. Due to her numerous works, only part of the text is selected for discussion.

A. Being Creative in Translation

As far as her translation thought is concerned, the first idea she insisted on was that translation should be creative. She cooperated well with Xianyi Yang in translation, but had different opinions about translation in an interview in Australia. Xianyi Yang believes that translation must be very faithful to the original text, and it is wrong to overemphasize

creativity because at that time the translator was not translating, but rewriting. However, Gladys Yang thought that their joint translation was too faithful to the original text and lacked creativity, so readers would not like to read it. She admired Hawkes' approach and believed that the translation could be more creative [9].

(1) ST: 小姑娘日长夜大了, 长到五个月/就会爬了, 爬得就像耙齿耙地一样, 爹爹喜欢了一场, 妈妈喜欢了一场[10]。

Gladys Yang's translation: From day to day sweet Ashima grew/ Until at five months old/ Her parents laughed to see her crawl/ So nimble and so bold [10.]

Compared with other translators, Gladys Yang has a deeper understanding of Chinese and Western culture. The SA Ni ballad of Yi nationality has a very similar function to the English ballad, that is, to narrate the national story in the form of poetry. Although they are similar in function, they differ slightly in form. To translate *A SHI MA* into English, the first thing is to achieve the unity of the whole poem system [10]. Therefore, when translating these sentences, Gladys Yang thought carefully and decided to translate them in the form of quatrains, which reflected her innovative thoughts on the translation.

(2) ST: (其实, 他不过是在推敲着他写在本子上的诗句。) 幸好那时还没到“文化大革命”的时候, 没人敢翻他的笔记本子。若有人翻了, 没准那时候就得蹲巴篱子, 用不着等到“文化大革命”。比如, 他还记得这样的两首: “光阴一逝如流水, 岁岁西楼, 今又西楼, 鼠啸虫吟几度秋。小窗遥望中天月, 尽是闲愁, 岂是闲愁, 落叶西风正满头。” 又如: “湖中峙一楼, 四望景物收。山水淡墨染, 蚱蜢镜中游。古塔浮云接, 层峦星斗留。晚烟四处起, 回步忆春秋。勾践亡吴后, 归来不用谋。西施随范蠡, 寂寞五湖舟。千古旧江山, 奸梟同一筹。有诗题不得, 挥笔画吴钩。” [11]

Gladys Yang's translation: Luckily, no one dared to examine his notebooks before the Cultural Revolution. Otherwise he'd have been for it[12].

This instance also shows Gladys Yang's creative thoughts in translation. When translating with her husband Xianyi Yang, they tried to keep the original text as much as possible. Here she omits many classical Chinese elements, for example: she does not translate “Xi Lou (西楼)”, “Dan Mo (淡墨)”, “grasshopper (蚱蜢)”, “small window (小窗)”, and the following poems, in order to make the translation more fluent. She thought of her readers so that they could read without being distracted by unnecessary content. She once said that she would cut and abbreviate some contents in her translation because of the elements with Chinese characteristics, such as “the struggles against the ‘three evils’ and the ‘five evils’, “cannot be understood by foreign readers without annotation or explanation” [13]. It is not because that Gladys Yang does not value or love Chinese culture, but the preservation of Chinese cultural elements should be subject to the readability of her works, which should not affect the fluency of her Chinese stories [14].

B. Conforming to the Readers Consciousness

Gladys Yang also believes that readers awareness is very important and that literal translation of Chinese literary

tradition is so rigid that readers often don't understand what it means. The reason for this is that they are not only translating for Americans or Australians, but also for English-speaking readers in Asian and African countries, with an unclear target audience [15]. She thinks it necessary to translate texts from the perspective of the reader.

Some of her masterpieces can reflect the translation idea of reader consciousness in her works. When she translated *Leaden Wings*, for example, she made cuts from the original text. There are two types of content that have been cut. One is a lengthy account of political and economic reform. They are usually in the form of character dialogues or speeches, which are not closely related to the plot advancement and style shaping of the novel. For example, Zheng Ziyun's speech on behavioral science has more than 1500 words [16].

Another type of deletion is mainly the artistic style of the novel's language [16]. For instance, in Zhang Jie's *Leaden Wings* there is such a strong lyricism and some cliched narration (“Under the Thumb of Men”) [17]. In consideration of readability of readers, Gladys Yang made translation intervention and abridgment of the English translation. Her sense of readership is also reflected in the English translation of *A SHI MA*, as shown in the following example.

(3) ST: 莽种撒下土, 七天就生长, 莽叶嫩汪汪, 象飞蛾的翅膀。玉米撒下土, 七天就生长, 叶子绿茵茵, 长的牛角样[10]。

Gladys Yang's translation: The maize seed in the furrow fell/ In eight days shoots were seen/ And like the wings of moths in flight/ The lusty leaves grew green .

And eight days after it was sown/ Up sprang the Indian corn/ As green as emerald were its leaves/ And curved as bull's horn[10] .

“Seven” in the article describes the growth cycle of two crops, and also reflects the unique cultural factors of the Yi people, that is, “Seven” is a lucky number for the nation. It means the endless life. After understanding this cultural connotation and considering the situation of the target language readers, Gladys Yang translated the Chinese “Seven” into the English “eight”, which is not faithful to the literal meaning of the original text [10]. What she wanted to express is life and vitality, which is exactly the meaning of “eight” in Western culture. If the original text is translated according to the “seven”, those readers who do not understand the cultural background will not grasp the original meaning of the source text that the author intended to convey. However, when readers read the English translation of Gladys Yang's passage, they can feel the meaning behind the words, and they will have a better reading experience.

(4) ST: 急急地脱下白大褂, 饭也顾不上吃, 赶到约会地点。饿着肚子, 靠在他的臂弯里, 花前月下地走来走去 [12]。

Gladys Yang's translation: As soon as she came off duty, she would miss her supper to nestle in his arms [18].

The word “靠” here is translated as “to nestle”, which is based on the readers awareness. She regarded herself as a reader, standing in the perspective of foreign readers to understand the feeling. This sentence described a date between two people who were madly in love. If the translator translates this part as “lean against”, it will lose the feminine sense of female movement, and cannot convey the lady's trust

and love for her lover.

C. Adapting to the Current Policy

She is carrying out different translation policies at different times. The translation should be consistent with the policy of establishing the image of new China and the cultural policy of exporting the red revolutionary literature and classical literature of New China. At the same time, translation should produce appropriate social effects.

In the later part of her translation style, we can see the specific examples of her translation thoughts. Under the influence of Gladys Yang's dual perspective of identity, her Chinese-English translation has two characteristics: alienation with strong Chinese feelings and domestication with English readers as the center [19].

From the 1950s to the 1970s, the publicity activities of Chinese literature carried out by China International Publishing Group (CIPG) strictly followed the principle of "political correctness" and the translation norm of "fidelity to the original text" [20]. In this situation, translators were basically deprived of their autonomy and became what Yang Xianyi called "hired translators" [21]. It can be inferred that Mr. Yang chose to abide by internal norms. The translator's compliance with the norms will be internalized as part of his translator's manners over time, that is, the active or passive "compliance" to the existing norms [22]. Before the 1980s, as an assistant, Gladys Yang repressed the translator's habit of targeting cultural orientation and chose to conform to the translation principles followed by Xianyi Yang, namely, the internal translation norms of China International Publishing Group (CIPG) [21]. Although she wanted to do more creative translation, she did so according to the policy of the time.

IV. TRANSLATION STYLES OF GLADYS YANG

A. Foreignization

(5) ST: 我那没有什么文化却相当有见地的老保姆说我“贼风入耳”了[19]。

Gladys Yang's translation: My old nurse, a shrewd though uneducated woman, said an ill wind had blown through my ear [19].

This example can well reflect the readers consciousness and alienation style of her translation. "贼风入耳" is a bad thing to people. If it invades the human body, it will cause harm to people. It contains Chinese culture, which is first introduced in the book of Bian Que's *Acupuncture and Moxibustion Method*. She chose the strategy of alienation to show a new horizon to western readers and spread traditional Chinese culture.

(6) ST: 曾经沧海难为水, 除却巫山不是云 [19]。

Gladys Yang's translation: No lake can be compared with the ocean Canghai, no cloud with those on Mount Wu [19].

The example can show the creativity and alienation of her translation. This line was chosen from *Li Si* written by the poet Yuan Zhen for mourning his dead wife Wei Cong. Canghai (沧海) and Mount Wu were the most beautiful scenery in the world. What is more important is that Gladys Yang uses pinyin to translate "(沧海)" and introduces Chinese culture and reflects cultural confidence and thus shows the new China to the outside world.

(7) ST: 有的说：“跑了和尚跑不了寺院。” [23]

Gladys Yang's translation: Others said "The monk can't run away with the monastery" [24].

In order to better translate Chinese culture and slang, Gladys Yang retains the form and vocabulary of the original text, which reflects her innovative spirit and her support for Chinese language and culture. Foreign readers can feel the charm of Chinese culture vividly after carefully reading and combining with the context.

B. Domestication

(8) ST: 英国大作家哈代说过：“呼唤人的和被呼唤的很少能互相应答。”我已经不能从普通意义上的道德观念去谴责他们应该或是不应该相爱。我要谴责的却是：为什么当初他们没有等待着那个呼唤着自己的灵魂？ [19]。

Gladys Yang's translation: Thomas Hardy wrote that the call seldom produces the comer; the man to love rarely coincides with the hour for loving. I cannot judge them by conventional moral standards. What I deplore is that they did not wait for a missing counterpart to call them [19].

This example also illustrates the readers consciousness and alienation style of translation. Gladys Yang both naturalized and did not translate the original expressions with Chinese characteristics into English ones such as "gossip", "do harm to nature", "offend people"; and "The man to love rarely coincides with the hour for loving". The purpose is to make the context closely related. The first half of the sentence corresponds to what I condemn, and the second half corresponds to what I cannot condemn. Translation with domestication was more in line with the reading habits of foreign readers.

(9) ST: 一九六二年夏天, 台湾海峡局势紧张, 上级规定大队治保主任由大队党支部书记兼任[25]。

This demonstration reflects her ability to grasp the situation and the style of Adaptation. There's no Gladys Yang's translation here. This was not translated because of the situation at the time. This is a quote from *Fu Rong Town*, which is translated by Gladys Yang at this time. Because it was during the Great Leap Forward, the policy toward Taiwan also shifted from military reunification to peaceful reunification. Under the policy of "one country, two systems", she chose not to translate it. This was in line with the trend of the time, but also reflected pragmatic thinking.

(10) ST: 孔乙己便涨红了脸, 额上的青筋条条绽出, 争辩道“窃书不能算偷……窃书! ……读书人的事, 能算偷么?” [26]。

Gladys Yang's translation: At that Kong Yiji would flush, the veins on his forehead standing out as he protested, "Taking books can't be counted as stealing ... Taking books ... for a scholar ... can't be counted as stealing."

The translation of "tou(偷)" and "qie(窃)" in this sentence into "taking" has been praised by many scholars as classic examples about "tou(偷)" and "qie(窃)". It was true that Kong Yiji stole books, but he tried his best to explain himself, thinking that a scholar stealing books was not stealing, and he said "tou(偷)" was "qie(窃)". They are synonyms. The difference only lies in usage: "tou(偷)" is a spoken word, and "qie(窃)" is used in written language, which satirized Kong

Yiji's pedantic and face-saving but he was afraid to face the tragic reality of the mentality. The translation of "tou(偷)" is very accurate, while "take" can be regarded as a synonym of "steal" with a lighter tone according to the specific context [26]. "Just as 'take' is often used to dilute 'steal' in Chinese, it can appropriately reproduce Kong Yiji's mentality of deliberately diluting the behavior of stealing books" [27].

(11) ST: 又要马儿不吃草，又要马儿走得好 [28]。

Gladys Yang's translation: I want to eat my cake and have it [24].

Gladys Yang's translation of this sentence is a naturalized style, which also reflects her sense of readership and creative translation thoughts. If it is translated directly, foreign readers may not understand it because of the Chinese cultural background. So she uses the expression habits of the target language. At the same time, she tries to keep the flavor of the original text so as to well reproduce the original author's ideas and avoid rigid translation.

V. CONCLUSION

Gladys Yang, a famous translator, is an outstanding representative of Chinese women writers. She not only loved China, but also was fond of translation, so she has devoted her life to the Chinese-English translation. She translated and introduced many brilliant Chinese literary works to the western world. To some extent, these translations reflect her translation thoughts (to be innovative, to have the awareness of readers, and to adapt to the situation) and translation styles (Alienation and Adaptation) from various fields. Her *Panda Series* and other excellent translations have opened a whole new door for western readers to understand ancient and modern China.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Yang Ganggui did the research, wrote the first version of the paper and revised the paper.

Xue Hongguo gave the revising suggestions, edited the second and third version of paper and helped Yang Ganggui proofread the paper.

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