

An Analysis of the Translator's Subjectivity in Yan Fu's Translation Activities from the Perspective of Lefevere's Manipulation Theory

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Abstract: Belgian scholar Andre Lefevere introduced the concept of "rewriting" into translation studies, maintaining that "rewriting" was mainly influenced by ideology, poetics as well as patronage. On the basis of Lefevere's manipulation theory, this paper makes a detailed analysis on the translation activities of Yan Fu, a famous thinker and translator in the modern history of China, through literature research method and deductive method. This paper mainly analyzes the influence of ideology, poetics and patronage on Yan Fu's translation activities in the late Qing Dynasty. Under the influence of these three factors, how Yan Fu show his translator's subjectivity, determine his own translation purpose, translation materials, translation audience and translation methods are also discussed.

Keywords: ideology, poetics, patronage, Yan Fu's translation activities, the translator's subjectivity

1. Introduction

Yan Fu (1854-1921) was a prominent bourgeois enlightenment thinker, renowned translator, and educator in modern China. He translated Western works such as *Evolution and Ethics*, *The Wealth of Nations*, and *On Liberty*, systematically introducing the politics, economics, and cultural thoughts of the Western bourgeoisie to China for the first time. He proposed the translation criterion of "faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance," having a profound impact on future translation work. However, although Yan Fu advocated for "faithfulness" in translation, he did not fully adhere to this standard in his translation practice. In his translated works, a total of four books were somewhat close to the literal translation and less criticism-worthy, while the rest used analogies and examples, and made more modifications in accordance with personal opinions. This indicates that Yan Fu fully expressed his subjectivity as a translator by actively selecting and "rewriting" the original text during the translation process.

Traditional translation research focuses on the original text, emphasizing textual comparison and equivalence as the translation criterion. Since the 1970s, nevertheless, western translation studies have shifted towards a "cultural turn." One of the most influential figures in this regard is Belgian scholar Andre Lefevere, who introduced the concept of "rewriting" into translation theory. In recent years, as western translation theories have gradually entered China, some Chinese scholars have also begun to focus on the issue of cultural turn in translation research and to analyze Yan Fu's translation activities from a cultural perspective. Lefevere's manipulation theory provides a new perspective for the study of Yan Fu's translation work. According to Lefevere, translation is rewriting the original text, and ideology, poetics, and patronage are factors that manipulate translation in different social contexts. To attract more readers, translators can modify their translations by closely following the mainstream ideologies and poetics of their society, thereby fully expressing their subjectivity as translators. Yan Fu's translation activities constitute a typical example of manipulation by ideology, poetics, and patronage.

Furthermore, there is a close relationship between Lefevere's manipulation theory and the study of translator subjectivity, which has a guiding significance for the study of translator subjectivity. Firstly, Lefevere's positive evaluation of "rewriting" affirms the agency of the translator. Secondly, Lefevere's manipulation theory identifies three specific types of manipulative factors-ideology, poetics, and patronage, which provide a direction for the study of translator passivity. Thirdly, Lefevere emphasizes that translators can still exert their agency under the constraint of manipulative factors, and achieve counter-manipulation. As a consequence, this paper will use Lefevere's manipulation theory to interpret

Yan Fu's translation activities and highlight the translator subjectivity present in them.

2. Theoretical Framework

Since the 1970s, Western translation studies have become more diverse and have broken through the traditional models of linguistics and literature. People have realized that equivalence is often an ideal state in the actual process of translation, and sometimes it is difficult to achieve complete equivalence between the original text and the translated text. At this time, Even-Zohar proposed the polysystem theory, pointing out that translation occupies a certain position in a country's cultural system. In his opinion, "These systems maintain hierarchical relations, which means some maintain a more central position than others, or that some are primary while others are secondary" [1]. According to the specific cultural polysystem in which translation exists, translation is not only seen as a language conversion, but also as a cultural exchange. Researchers have gradually realized the importance of cultural attributes in translation practice.

In the 1990s, the book *Translation, History and Culture*, co-authored by Andre Lefevere and Susan Bassnett brought about a huge breakthrough in translation studies. In this book, the two scholars focused more on the interaction between translation and culture, as well as the ways in which culture influences and constrains translation, such as how to select texts for translation, what role translators play in the selection, and what role editors, publishers or sponsors play in translation, and what standards determine the strategies translators adopt [2]. They called this shift a "cultural turn" And scholars have shifted their attention to various other factors that affect translation activities.

Andre Lefevere is one of the representative figures in translation research. In his book *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, he introduced the concept of "rewriting." "Rewriting" refers to various processing and adjustment of literary originals, such as translation, rewriting, compilation, criticism, and editing. Lefevere believes that translation is not just a linguistic conversion, but also a cultural rewriting by the translator of the original work on a cultural level [3].

Lefevere argues that rewriting is largely influenced by ideology, poetics, and patronage. Ideology primarily limits and guides the work of rewriters in terms of politics, economics, and social status, while poetics is an important component of the cultural system in which rewriters operate. In order to conform to the dominant ideology and poetics, rewriters often make certain adjustments to the original work. The rewritten work will be designed to be as acceptable as possible to readers. Under different historical conditions, rewriting is mainly restricted by two aspects, internal and external to the literary system. The first aspect comes from within the literary system, which is made up of "professionals" such as critics, teachers, and translators. The other aspect comes from outside the literary system, namely "patronages" who have the power to promote or hinder literary creation and translation. The "patronages" are usually interested in the ideology of literature, while the "professionals" are often concerned with poetics [3].

Lefevere believes that ideology is not limited to the political sphere but refers to the various forms, customs, and beliefs that control our words and actions[3]. In general, ideology refers to the ideological system that reflects the interests and demands of a class or a specific social group. But in translation studies, the connotation of ideology is more complex and diverse, and can be subdivided according to factors such as the author, translator, and reader. It can refer to the dominant social ideology in the source language country, as well as to the target language of the translator. It refers not only to the personal ideology of the original author or specific readers, but also to the group representing authoritative institutions or the personal ideology of the author.

The poetics that Lefevere mentioned mainly involves two aspects. One is a series of literary elements, including literary genres, literary techniques, themes, and symbols. The other is the exploration of literature itself under a certain social background, such as the role and status of literature in social forms [3]. The former constitutes the function of literature, and the latter dominates the degree of influence of literary works. In order to make translated works more accessible to a wider readership, translators must closely follow the mainstream poetics, but they should not be completely influenced by the mainstream poetics in their choice of translation strategies.

Patronages refer to influential individuals or organizations that can promote or hinder reading, writing, or rewriting. Patronages can be professionals in the literary system, publishers, religious groups, translators, political groups, as well as parties, academic institutions, social classes, and media such as newspapers, television, and the internet [4]. Patronages directly or indirectly affect translation practices, as they can determine translation materials, methods, and select translators. Moreover, it is no

exaggeration to say that patronages are able to provide financial support and academic research venues for translators, as well as bring corresponding economic returns and social status to translators.

3. The Influence of Ideology on Yan Fu's Translation Activities

As Lefevere demonstrated, all rewriting, regardless of its intention, reflects a certain ideology and poetics, and thus manipulates literature to function in a specific way in a specific society [3]. As a translator eager to save the fate of China, Yan Fu's translation activities were largely influenced by ideology. Simultaneously, Yan Fu also contributed tremendous ideological strength to the salvation and survival of the late Qing Dynasty under the call of ideology.

3.1. Mainstream Ideology

The ideological factors that affect Yan Fu's translation activities are divided into two aspects, namely social ideology and Yan Fu's personal ideology.

On the one hand, the late Qing Dynasty was a typical period when social ideology had a significant impact on people's thinking. The failure of the Sino-Japanese War further exposed the corruption and incompetence of the Qing government, stimulating the ambitions of imperialist powers to invade China. At that time, internal conflicts within the country are increasingly intensifying, and people are living in a state of intense hardship. The reformists represented by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao in the late Qing Dynasty carried out the Reform Movement of 1898, also called Wuxu Reform, with the support of Emperor Guangxu of the Qing Dynasty by advocating learning from the West, promoting science and culture, reforming the political and educational systems as well as developing agriculture, industry, and commerce. Due to multiple reasons such as excessive reform measures and strong obstruction by feudal forces, the Reform Movement of 1898 ultimately failed. Faced with domestic and foreign troubles, many patriots realized that China needed not only foreign technology and weapons, but also western political systems and ideological culture. However, although the Qing government was weak at that time, it still maintained an absolute dominant position. Therefore, most intellectuals advocated only internal reforms, rather than overthrowing the rule of the Qing Dynasty.

On the other hand, Yan Fu's personal ideology has the characteristics of connecting China and the West, and integrating ancient and modern times. He was knowledgeable in both China and the West, and had his own unique insights into the current development situation of both China and the West. He received both traditional private school education and modern education, and he also studied in the UK. Yan Fu enrolled in a private school at the age of 5 and began studying under the famous scholar Huang Zongyi from his hometown in 1863. After his father's death, he was influenced by economic factors and enrolled in a more economical new style school. He attended the Shipbuilding School founded by Zuo Zongtang, a representative figure of the Westernization Movement, and studied courses such as English, mathematics, geology, astronomy, and navigation, achieving excellent results. In 1877, Yan Fu, as the second batch of publicly sent international students, went to the Royal Naval Academy in Greenwich, England to continue his studies. During his study abroad, he not only actively studied Western natural science knowledge in the classroom, but also extensively read Western humanities and social science works in his spare time. He also conducted on-site inspections of political, legal, educational and other institutions in the UK, deepening his understanding of Western political and economic systems and ideological theories.

The period from the Sino-Japanese War to the Xinhai Revolution was an active period for Yan Fu's translation activities. Yan Fu was proficient in Western learning and deeply concerned about the national crisis in China. Since 1895, he had published varieties of political papers promoting Enlightenment ideas in support of the Wuxu Reform. Aiming to save China, he also aspired to popularize western learning and inspired people's wisdom through translation. Nevertheless, he also had a conservative side in politics. After the Xinhai Revolution overthrew the Qing government, Yan Fu was deeply saddened and had specific actions to support the restoration of the imperial system. In fact, he did not retreat from supporting the feudal autocratic system. He supported the restoration of monarchy but only hoped to maintain social order through the use of strong man politics. In essence, Yan Fu's behavior vividly reflects his political proposition of gradual social reform.

3.2. Ideology and Yan Fu's Translator Subjectivity

Translation is a product of the interweaving and interaction of social ideology and the translator's

personal ideology. The social context, the translator's upbringing, education, understanding of society, and political orientation can all influence the translation process and the resulting translation work, as manifested in the translator's selection, understanding, and choice of translation strategy for the source text. This article maintains that ideology mainly manipulates Yan Fu's translation activities in the following two aspects:

For one thing, before Yan Fu's translation activity began, ideology influenced his translation purpose and selection of materials. Yan Fu's choice of translations was not accidental, but determined by the social ideology and his personal ideology at that time. From the historical background in which Yan Fu lived, it can be seen that after the defeat of the Sino-Japanese War, he attempted to transform the ideological beliefs of his target readers through translating Western learning in order to save China. This was the specific purpose of Yan Fu's involvement in translation practice. As a consequence, he carefully selected books involving advanced Western political systems, legal concepts, and enlightenment ideas for translation, in order to inspire people to strive for saving China.

For another, in Yan Fu's translation activities, the manipulation of ideology was more apparent, especially in the selection of translation strategies and techniques. Yan Fu mainly used the translation strategy of "Dazhi", that is to say, conveying the intended meaning. From his perspective, the translation should convey the clear and deep meaning of the original text, and occasionally reverse the order of words and sentences for the benefit of the meaning. The focus is not on the word-by-word or sentence-by-sentence comparison, but the meaning should not deviate from the original text. The goal is to convey the intended meaning, not literary translation, and can be flexibly interpreted. This indicates that Yan Fu's "Dazhi" strategy not only conveys the intention of the original text but also his own intention, and his primary focus is his own intention. For Yan Fu, conveying the information of the original work was secondary, and expressing his own views was the primary focus. In the process of "Dazhi", he used various translation methods to "rewriting" the original text, such as free translation, addition or deletion of words, addition of annotations, and substitution of examples. These translation methods were used throughout his translation process.

In Yan Fu's translations, *Evolution and Ethics* played a significant role. It was originally a collection of essays by the British biologist Herbert Spencer, which mainly introduced Darwin's evolutionary theory. When translating the title, Yan Fu used deletion and only selected "Evolution", deleting "Ethics". He borrowed from Herbert Spencer's introduction of social Darwinism and not only changed the chapter structure of the original book but also altered Herbert Spencer's original intention. Yan Fu also wrote more than 30 annotations in his translation, accounting for nearly one-third of the entire book. Herbert Spencer only talked about the concept of evolution in biology, while Yan Fu focused on the application of evolutionary theory in human society. He hoped that the Chinese people would be aware that only by making their country strong could they resist foreign invasion and avoid being eliminated by international competition. As a result, in order to stimulate the Chinese people's awareness of saving the nation, Yan Fu rewrote the book's title, chapter structure, and content according to his own translation purpose.

4. The Influence of Poetics on Yan Fu's Translation Activities

A successful translation should not only conform to the ideology of society, but also to specific poetic forms. Poetics is an important as well as prominent component of the cultural system in which translators operate, including two elements: literary techniques and social functions. To make the translation easier to accept, the translator needs to make some modifications to make the translation conform to the poetics of the target language culture.

4.1. Mainstream Ideology

The late Qing Dynasty was a turning point in Chinese ideology and also a turning point in Chinese poetics. At that time, China's literary system was still in a closed and conservative state, and poetics, as a subsystem, was no exception. Since ancient times, Confucian poetics has always dominated Chinese poetics. In the mid to late Qing Dynasty, the Tongcheng School was the mainstream poetics and dominated the literary world of the Qing Dynasty. The Tongcheng School pursues the elegant style of the eight part essay, advocating the use of a simple and elegant style to explore profound topics. At the same time, the social function of poetics had also undergone a significant turning point. With the continuous aggression of western powers, China had gradually become a semi colonial and semi feudal society, and the task of saving the country's fate was urgent. However, Chinese people were still deeply influenced by foolish and backward feudal ideas and conservative and stubborn social culture. Therefore,

ideological enlightenment became a new way of saving the nation. The rise of vernacular Chinese, the revolution in the poetry industry, and the climax of translation had also emerged. Unfortunately, the literati class was still the dominant social class, and the Tongcheng School was still the mainstream form of poetics. The vast number of literati had not actively accepted the new style of poetics.

4.2. Poetics and Yan Fu's Translator Subjectivity

Poetics mainly influenced Yan Fu's choice of translation language, syntax, narrative perspective, and translation methods. Yan Fu employed classical Chinese in his translation of western works, and his narrative perspective mostly used the third person omniscient perspective. Traditional Chinese rhetoric techniques such as antithesis, allusion, metaphor, personification, etc. were common in his translation. For example, the original author, Huxley, used first-person limited perspective in his writing, while Yan Fu chose third-person omniscient point of view in his translation. On the one hand, the third-person narrative perspective is one of the narrative features of traditional Chinese literature. On the other hand, the third-person perspective is more readily accepted by traditional literati. This is the result of the translator's poetic manipulation of the original work based on mainstream Chinese poetics. What's more, Yan Fu often employs traditional Chinese rhetorical devices and replaces the original text with expressions that have Chinese cultural characteristics, in order to reduce the foreignness of the translation, increase its acceptability within Chinese culture, and enhance its social poetic effect. Influenced by the writing style of the Tongcheng school, Yan Fu abandoned the declarative tone commonly found in Western works and used Chinese modal particles with a classical Chinese flavor to express the original text. He also adopted the syntax of the pre-Han Dynasty era, using more classical Chinese judgment sentences rather than contemporary colloquial styles. And Yan Fu's translation reads more in line with traditional Chinese expression, appearing appropriate and authentic, making it easy for the literati to read and comprehend.

Combining the above discussion, this paper deems that Yan Fu's translation approach meets the poetic requirements of the target audience and his own aesthetic pursuit, balancing mainstream and personal poetics. On the one hand, although Yan Fu lived in a period of decline of the feudal dynasty, Confucianism still deeply influenced the literati and feudal intellectuals. In his view, to save the country, one must first enlighten the people, and the literati of that time were the key to changing the country's destiny. Consequently, Yan Fu identified the literati as the target audience for his translation. As the literati were conservative, they would not naturally accept new Western ideas. Yan Fu grasped their pursuit of traditional Chinese poetics and used his translation as a medium and tool to attract the upper-class literati to accept Western advanced ideas, with a translation style influenced by the Tongcheng school and Chinese poetic features. On the other hand, Yan Fu received traditional private education in his youth, deeply influenced by Chinese Confucianism and the Tongcheng school culture. Yan Fu himself is also an outstanding writer of the Tongcheng school. He maintained that profound reasoning can be expressed with simple language. Using the word and sentence structure before the Han, it would be straightforward; using modern popular language, it would be challenging to express profound reasoning. Thus, Yan Fu's translation naturally possessed the poetic features of traditional Chinese and the cultural characteristics of the Tongcheng school.

5. The Influence of Patronages on Yan Fu's Translation Activities

From Linping Bai's perspective, "In the field of translation studies, patronage could be understood positively as the action of persons or organizations that offer financial support or use their influence to advance a translation activity. [5]" Patronages have an impact on the acceptance of translator's translation activities and work from three aspects: economic, ideological, and social status. Economically, patronages provide financial security for the translator, ensuring that they can maintain a living. Ideologically, patronages use their money or resources to suppress some radical works or to influence the content and ideas of the works to conform to mainstream ideology. In terms of social status, patronages are able to guarantee the reputation, status, and honor of literature. Zhang Yuanji and Wu Rulun were the main patronages of Yan Fu's translation activities.

Economic patronages refer to individuals or groups that provide material assistance to the translator. They may guarantee the publication of translations or provide funds to ensure their economic sources. Zhang Yuanji was a typical economic patronage, and it was under his sponsorship that Yan Fu gradually succeeded. Zhang Yuanji (1867-1959) was an outstanding publisher, educator, and patriotic industrialist in China. In 1902, he entered the Commercial Press and held various positions such as director, manager,

supervisor, and chairman of the Compilation and Translation Institute. After 1949, he served as the director of the Shanghai Literature and History Museum and succeeded as the chairman of the Commercial Press. In 1890, Zhang Yuanji began to associate with Yan Fu. At that time, Zhang Yuanji founded Xixuetang in Beijing and hired Yan Fu as a lecturer. Zhang Yuanji was also the most critical sponsor of the successful publication of *The Wealth of Nations*. After the failure of the Reform Movement of 1898, Zhang Yuanji served as the dean of the Translators' Institute of Nanyang Public School and began to plan the publication of Yan Fu's translation of *The Wealth of Nations*, making Yan Fu China's first translation to receive royalties in addition to fees. Subsequently, Zhang Yuanji also planned and published Yan Fu's "Eight Great Translations," including *The Wealth of Nations*, *The Study of Sociology*, *On Liberty*, *Logic*, *A History of Politics*, *Evolution and Ethics*, *Pure Logic*, and *The Spirit of the Laws*. It can be seen that Zhang Yuanji provided Yan Fu with a lot of economic support, not only hiring him as a full-time translator and paying him high fees but also helping him to publish translations.

Wu Rulun (1840-1903) was a famous literary and educational figure in late Qing Dynasty and a representative of the Tongcheng School. As a representative of mainstream poetics and traditional intellectual class at that time, Wu Rulun standardized Yan Fu's translation activities in terms of poetics. The status factors in Yan Fu's sponsorship were also allocated and manipulated mainly by Wu Rulun. After Yan Fu finished translating *Evolution and Ethics*, he submitted the manuscript to Wu Rulun for review. Wu Rulun highly praised Yan Fu's purpose for translating the book and provided some feedback for correction. In the process of publishing *The Wealth of Nations*, another translation work by Yan Fu, Wu Rulun mainly sponsored Yan Fu in terms of social status. Wu Rulun also promoted the dissemination of Yan Fu's translation works among intellectuals through his recommendations, elevated Yan Fu's social status, and promoted the spread of advanced western thoughts to a certain extent.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, Yan Fu's translation activities were carried out under the influence of the ideology, poetics, patronage of late Qing Dynasty. As a translator, Yan Fu was an active agent who, despite being influenced by various factors, fully exerted his translator's subjectivity by determining his translation purposes, texts, audience, and methods, and achieved the anti-manipulation of his translations. Through the dynamic "rewriting" of the original work, Yan Fu's translations and his proposed translation standard of "faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance" not only met the urgent need of learning from the West at the time, but also had a profound impact on saving the nation, enlightening people, and reforming society, providing valuable practical experience and theoretical guidance for the development of translation in China. Learning from the past, Yan Fu's translation activities have a crucial influence on the translators of the new era. In the late Qing Dynasty when Yan Fu lived, society needed to learn about Western political, economic, and cultural thinking. Nowadays, China has achieved a historic leap from standing up to becoming prosperous to becoming stronger, and how to make the world recognize China correctly and comprehensively has become a new task for the translators in the new era. It goes without saying that translators should fully exert the translator's subjectivity, choose translation texts that have Chinese characteristics of the new era, and actively promote Chinese culture going global through our own translation practice.

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