

On Zhou Zuoren's Translation of Children's Literature in the Early 20th Century

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Keywords: Zhou Zuoren, Translation of Children's Literature, Translation Style

Abstract: Zhou Zuoren is a great translator in the history of modern Chinese literature. He had translated a lot of Children's literature in the early 20th century. His had made great contributions on Children's literature, mainly including: 1) pioneering the translation of Children's literature; 2) promoting the prosperity of translation and writing of Children's literature; and 3) establishing a unique translation style of Children's literature in China.

1. Introduction

As a famous translator in the history of Chinese translation, Zhou Zuoren (1885-1967) has translated a number of literary works in his entire life. Over nearly 20 years, his translation activity, works and principle have been deeply studied by Wang Yougui and many other scholars. We found that in the early 20th century, many of Zhou Zuoren's translated works can be classified into Children's literature. The works of Children's literature translated by him are in a great amount and good quality, having enormous impact on Chinese Children's literature.

2. Achievements of Zhou Zuoren's Translation of Children's Literature

Table 1 Zhou Zuoren's translation works of Children's literature in the early 20th century

Number	Original Author	Original Name	Translated Name	Publisher	Publication Date
1		Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves	A Brave Maid	Women's World, vol. 8-12	1904
2			A Female Hunter	Women's World, vol.1	1905
3			A Story of a Stone	Women's World, vol. 2-3	1905
4			A Story of Swan	Women's World, vol. 4-5	1905
5	[America] Edgar Allan Poe	The Gold-Bug	A Story of Gold-Bug	Forest of Stories	1905
6	[England]H. Rider Haggard and Andrew Lang	The World's Desire	A Story of a Star	The Commercial Press	1907
7			A Collection of Foreign Fictions	Kanda Printing Office, Tokyo, Japan	1909
8	[Denmark] H. C. Anderson	The little match-seller	The little match-seller	New Youth	1919
9			A Collection of Foreign Fictions (Enlarged edition)	Shanghai Qunyi Publishing House	1920
10			Gyro	Shinchosha, Japan	1925
11			Children's Drama	Shanghai Children Publishing House	1932

Good at Japanese, English, ancient Greek and Esperanto, Zhou Zuoren translated lots of literary works of different countries and regions. In 2012, Zhou Zuoren's Complete Works of Translation was published. With eleven volumes in total, this book collected all of his works translated from other language into Chinese. It can be seen from Zhou Zuoren's translated works in the early 20th century in this book that many of his early translated works belong to Children's literature, as shown in table 1.

The language in Zhou Zuoren's early translation works of Children's literature is plain and elegant, with detailed and insightful explanatory notes. The source texts he chose, no matter which language they are in, are all world-class literary classics, which have great aesthetic taste and high value of foreign literature research.

3. Contributions of Zhou Zuoren's Translation of Children's Literature

3.1 Pioneering the Chinese Translation of Children's Literature

Zhou Zuoren's translation activity of Children's literature has the significance of pioneering the Chinese translation of Children's literature. In the beginning of 20th century when China was in the late Qing Dynasty and the early republican period, there were two kinds of translation works known to the Chinese people: the popular novels of European and American countries translated by Lin Shu and others, and the western social science works translated by Yan Fu, a famous Chinese translator. Hence the readers of those translated works could also be divided into two types: the common people and social elites, with purposes of entertainment and seeking of good strategies to save China respectively. Zhou Zuoren and his old brother Lu Xun (Zhou Shuren), being active in literary translation though, did not follow the trend of translating popular works or cater to the taste of readers intentionally. Instead, they developed a creative path of their own. In 1904, Zhou Zuoren translated *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* in *The Arabian Nights* into Chinese in a magazine, *Women's World*. In 1905, his other four translated works were published in the magazine [1]. In September 1906, Zhou Zuoren followed Lu Xun to study in Japan. According to his own memory, he had read a lot of Japanese books about Children's literature in Japan, which was why he had interest in Children's literature [2]. When studying in Japan, Zhou Zuoren translated many works of Children's literature.

Zhou Zuoren's well-known translation work of Children's literature is *A Collection of Foreign Fictions*, translated jointly by Lu Xun and him. They pointed out in the original preface of the first volume of the book that their translation works had problems such as mistranslation, missing translation and adaptation; and the translation principles they followed were translating accurately and choosing completely new source texts. Through the translated works, they were intended to both delight people and change the society. Zhou brothers described their translation principles more clearly in the advertisement of the book that the source texts they had chosen were all world-known short stories in recent years; the structure and content of the stories were totally strange for the Chinese people; and the translated works could bring fresh blood for Chinese literature [2].

Zhou Zuoren's pioneering translation of Children's literature was finished by his enormous courage. The first volume of *A Collection of Foreign Fictions* has 16 stories in total, which can be divided into two categories according to the writers of the source texts. *The Happy Prince*, translated by Zhou Zuoren, can be one category alone for it was written by Oscar Wilde, a famous author UK. This unique story belongs to fairy tale, a totally strange literary genre for the Chinese readers. The stories translated by Lu Xun are the other category, which were written by those who were from small and weak countries at that time [4].

There may be two reasons for Zhou Zuoren to choose *The Happy Prince* as a source text. For one thing, its writer Wilde and the aestheticism he stood for were having the greatest esteem for the Japanese people. For another, it was a romantic fairy tale, with structure and content avant-garde in China at that time. *The Happy Prince* told a story that a noble prince sacrificed himself to give hands to poor people at roots. The images of the kind, compassionate prince and the smart, amiable

little swallow showed unprecedented fantasy and amazement for Chinese readers.

3.2 Promoting the Prosperity of Translation and Creation of Children's Literature

There was no such a genre as Children's literature in the history of ancient Chinese literature, which was closely interrelated with China's religion and laws of physics for two thousand years. In ancient China, there was almost no literature suitable for children to read as they were thought as the attachment of parents. But in recent China, not only did Zhou Zuoren translate foreign Children's literature works into Chinese, but he was also the first to propose the concept of "Children's literature" [5]. What's more, the phrase "fairy tale" did not exist in Chinese until Zhou Zuoren translated it from Japanese [6]. It can be concluded that Zhou Zuoren translated Children's literature and drove others to translate and create Children's literature, making significant contributions for the emergence and development of Chinese Children's literature.

In September 1911, Zhou Zuoren finished his study in Japan and came back to China. Since then, he translated a large amount of foreign Children's literature works into Chinese. His translated works included a variety of subjects, such as Children's folk rhymes, fairy tales, fables and folk stories. The Japanese folk rhymes and children haiku (a Japanese form of light poetry consisting of 17 words) were introduced into China by Zhou Zuoren. In the beginning of the New Culture Movement (around the time of the May 4th Movement in 1919), he sporadically translated works of many foreign fairy tale writers, which included stories in the world's top three classic fairy tales —The Arabian Nights, Andersen's Fairy Tales and Grimm's Fairy Tales. In 1923, he translated fairy tale dramas of Japan and America and edited them as Children's Drama. By publishing his translated fairy tales in *New Youth*, a magazine that was popular and had enormous influence at that time, Zhou Zuoren greatly promoted the status of Children's literature in public mind. At the same period, Liang Qichao and other renowned Chinese scholars also translated many works of Children's literature, among which Zhou Zuoren published the most translated works of Children's literature.

The real start of Chinese Children's literature, or the start of Children's literature in the modern sense, was after the tide of translation spread across China around 1920s [7]. Li Hongye pointed out that Chinese Children's literature in the modern concept was born in the hit of translating foreign Children's literature. Ye Shengtao, an outstanding Chinese writer and educator, created a modern fairy tale *Strawman with Chinese style*. It was published for many times after its publication in 1923, becoming one of the classics of Chinese Children's literature. *Ancient Heroes' Stone Images*, published in 1931, was another well-known fairy tale written by Ye. The two fairy tales laid the groundwork of Chinese Children's literature. Ye's creation of fairy tale had much to do with his reading of foreign works of Children's literature. He said that the fairy tales of Grimm, Andersen and Wilde were introduced into China around the May 4th Movement in 1919, and it was obvious that his writing of fairy tales was the result of reading the western fairy tales. Since then, he began to create fairy tales [7].

3.3 Establishing a Unique Translation Style of Children's Literature

The translation of *The Prince of Happiness* clearly reflects Zhou Zuoren's highly personalized translation style. Zhou Zuoren stated that the translator should try his best to retain the heterogeneity of the original texts as much as possible in his translation, and try his best to convey these heterogeneities into Chinese context, which should be conveyed faithfully both in forms and contents. In his translating, he tried his best to convey heterogeneities in the original text into Chinese faithfully both in forms and contents. For example, when he translated *Happy Prince*, he conveyed heterogeneities as the following.

One night there flew over the city a little Swallow. His friends had gone away to Egypt six weeks before, but he had stayed behind, for he was in love with the most beautiful Reed. He had met her early in the spring as he was flying down the river after a big yellow moth, and had been so attracted by her slender waist that he had stopped to talk to her.

"Shall I love you?" said the Swallow, who liked to come to the point at once, and the Reed made him a low bow. So he flew round and round her, touching the water with his wings, and making

silver ripples. This was his courtship, and it lasted all through the summer.

These two paragraphs highlighted swallows' earnest love for reeds. Undoubtedly, in terms of contents, the love between swallows and reeds is very fresh to Chinese. Before early 20th century, there was no detailed description of actions of animals to express romantic love in Chinese literary works. For such description of heterogeneity, Lin Shu, a well-known translator of that period, would delete all information related to heterogeneities when translating foreign literary works. Zhou Zuoren, instead, conveyed the heterogeneous information of original texts in details and as faithfully as possible.

In terms of forms of expression, Zhou Zuoren made full use of Classical Chinese to convey information of original texts concisely and vividly. In terms of word translation, Zhou Zuoren tried to make his translation understandable and simple even if they are some small words about heterogeneous information. For example, he translated "six weeks before into" "40 days ago." To Chinese readers, the concept of "week" is the information that they never encountered and the concept of "day" is a traditional Chinese timing method. In this way, not only information of original texts is accurately conveyed, but also the concept of "day" suits the style of classical Chinese. In terms of sentence translation, he also tried to make his translation to be easy and comfort for Chinese readers. He also made some adjustments to the sentence sequence to cater to the reading habits of Chinese readers. Such as this sentence "His friends had gone away to Egypt six weeks before, but he had stayed behind, for he was in love with the most beautiful Reed". The sentence above serving as adverbial of clause should be placed behind adverbial clause of result. Zhou Zuoren's translations are arranged in Chinese logic order, which is opposite from that of English. Through this way, not only the orders and logics of original texts is clear, but also the translation is smooth and natural.

4. Conclusion

The early 20th century had witnessed the thriving of Chinese literary translation. During that period, Zhou Zuoren translated many Children's literature works and published some commentary articles about the nature of Children's literature, Children's literature translation, and Children's literature creation, which has promoted the development of Chinese Children's literature to some extent. In his early translation period, Zhou Zuoren did not follow the translation trend of that time. Instead, he developed a new style and tried translating Children's literary works with unique contents and genres. Zhou Zuoren tried to create his own translation style and had made great contributions to Chinese literature translation.

Acknowledgements

The research has been supported by humanities and social science research fund from China's ministry of education (Fund No. 16XJC740007), Xi 'an International Studies University (Fund No. 19XWD23), and Center for Translation Studies of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (Fund No. CTS201818).

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