

Exploring the Chinese-Western Culture Conflict in the Translation of Culturally Loaded Words in the English Translation of Romance of the Western Bower

Ruiyi An^{1,a}, Chengcheng Zhang^{1,b,*}

¹Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication, Beijing, 102600, China

²Xi'an Fanyi University, Xi'an, 710105, China

a. 2018336002@email.cufe.edu.cn, b. 1728385029@qq.com

*corresponding author

Abstract: Romance of the Western Bower, which is regarded as an outstanding representative work of Chinese opera classics, contains rich, culturally loaded vocabulary. Cultural backgrounds and lifestyles of specific ethnic groups naturally incorporate their respective cultural characteristics when translators from different cultural backgrounds make literary translations. For this reason, this paper chooses the English translations of Xu Yuanchong, Hsiung Shih-I and Henry H. Hart as the objects of study and analyzes in-depth their strategies in dealing with culturally loaded words. Through the three dimensions of social culture, religious culture, and linguistic culture, it aims to explore the Chinese and Western cultural exchanges and conflicts in the translation process. Finally, it is concluded that when dealing with Chinese cultural load words, Chinese translators are able to convey the inner meaning of the load words more clearly than foreign translators, while foreign translators are able to convey the meaning of the original text more concisely by using more varied words in English. Although the translation strategies of the three translators are different, all of them have successfully realized the fusion of Chinese and Western cultures. This excellent work, which is rich in cultural heritage, can be promoted and recognized globally.

Keywords: Romance of the Western Bower, English translation, culturally loaded words, conflict

1. Introduction

Romance of the Western Bower occupies an important position in the history of Chinese literature, and it is one of the treasures in the history of Chinese opera. It is unique in its theme, distinctly questioning feudal rites and the feudal marriage system, and has a unique and novel artistic approach. Zhao Jingshen once praised it as one of the double jewels of Chinese classical literature, which not only has profound literary research value but also has profound literary research value and extremely high literary appreciation value [1]. Since its appearance, countless researchers at home and abroad have been attracted by its profound cultural heritage, and translators and sinologists from various countries have also paid great attention to it. In a short period of more than a hundred years, Romance of the Western Bower has been widely disseminated worldwide through various language versions [2]. However, in the process of translating Romance of the Western Bower, the cultural load word is

an extremely tricky obstacle for translators. Language is a carrier of culture, and the goal of translation lies in conveying information accurately and without ambiguity, which requires the translator to fully understand and take into account the characteristics of different national cultures, as well as to convey information accurately and without ambiguity, which requires the translator to fully understand and take into account the characteristics of different national cultures and the differences between them. This understanding and mastery of cultural depth is the key to ensuring the accuracy of translating translation accuracy. Generally speaking, "cultural imagery is the main carrier of the cultural connotation of opera and exists in many forms in the text of opera" information. However, the word cultural imagery cannot summarize all the cultural information in literary translation, so there is a new concept - culture-loaded words [3]. Culture-loaded terms refer to the words, phrases and idioms that symbolize the unique things in a certain culture, and these words reflect the unique ways of activities of a particular nation that have been gradually accumulated in the course of a long history and that are different from those of other nations [4]. According to Peter Newmark's classification of culture and the statistical analysis of the culturally loaded terms in the English translation of Romance of the Western Bower, this paper tries to classify the culturally loaded terms into three categories: socio-cultural loaded terms, linguistic loaded terms and religious loaded terms, terms by the three translators in their translations [5].

2. Socio-cultural load Words

Romance of the Western Bower is rich in socio-cultural information, such as imperial examinations, officialdom, place names, appellations, and allusions. Therefore, translators should know how to make appropriate naturalizations for easy understanding. There are various kinds of socio-culturally loaded words, and this paper chooses three perspectives: Names of persons, allusions, and appellations. First of all, names of people from different cultures and regions often have deep historical and cultural backgrounds, but it may be difficult for people from other backgrounds to understand the deeper meanings of the names. Allusions, on the other hand, are often derived from ancient stories, historical events or literary works of a people or culture. Finally, in ancient China, appellations were a reflection of reflected complex social structures and relationships, whereas in the West, they were relatively simple.

2.1. Names of persons

Personal names are the most frequent words in a translated work and the most common translation unit in cross-cultural communication. Usually, the names of people have many other meanings besides name, such as implying fate and so on character, so it is crucial to understand and accurately translate the names of people. The main characters in Romance of the Western Bower include Zhang Sheng, Cui Yingying, Hongniang and so on. Among them, Zhang Sheng is mainly translated as "student Zhang", "scholar Zhang", and other expressions which are relatively simple. The translations of female names such as Yingying and Hongniang are more varied, which not only reflects the translator's personal literary and aesthetic orientation but also reflects certain characteristics of the times.

Table 1: Translation of personal names by the three translators

	Hsiung Shih-I	Henry H. Hart	Xu Yuanchong
崔莺莺	YING-YING	YING YING	Yingying
红娘	HONG NIANG	HONG NIANG	Rose

The name of Cui Yingying, the heroine of *Romance of the Western Bower*, is not just an identification or positioning of the heroine's image. Cui Yingying's name reflects the unique qualities of her image. The word "ying" in Cui Yingying's name means a bird with a clear voice, and the word "ying" itself has a sense of rhythm, the inner qualities of the name. In the process of translation, conveying such aesthetic and cultural information is an important manifestation of translation style, and the translator should try to choose appropriate translation strategies and expressions to skillfully convey the beauty and emotion of the source text in the form of the target language. This process enriches the linguistic dimension of the text to a certain extent and enhances the readers' in-depth understanding of the characters. As shown in Table 1, in the translation of Cui Yingying, both Hsiung Shih-I and Henry H. Hart transliterate her name directly as "Ying Ying" without much change, while Xu Yuanchong changes her name to "Yingying" in the translation, which is more in line with the reading habits of English readers. Another extremely important female character in *Romance of the Western Bower* is Hong Niang. Although she is a servant girl, her soul is sublime and beautiful. Hongniang not only actively assists Zhang Sheng and Cui Yingying in delivering letters but also shows extraordinary courage in the struggle against feudalism. For the translation of Hong Niang, Hsiung Shih-I and Henry H. Hart also adopted the phonetic translation, while Xu Yuanchong chose to translate her name as "Rose", which expresses the character's passionate character and her courage to break away from the constraints of feudalism through the meaning of "rose", just like a brightly colored rose. By choosing an English name for Hongniang, Xu tries to convey the characterization of Hong Niang to Western readers. It can be seen that in the early translations, translators usually chose to show the names of the people directly so as to avoid any misunderstanding in the foreign communication, and when *Romance of the Western Bower* was more widely disseminated in the western countries, compared with continuing to pay attention to the basic phonetic translations, Xu Yuanchong, as the newest translator, chose to follow the habits of the English readers more closely in his translations, and the translations of the names of the people were more in line with the naming conventions of the English language, so as to facilitate the western readers to more deeply understanding.

2.2. Allusion

Allusions are very common in classical Chinese literature, and the main purpose of the authors is to express their feelings by borrowing historical figures, myths and legends, fables and so on. However, in most cases, these allusions are completely unfamiliar to readers in the source country, and the translator needs to retain the culture of the source country while dealing with them appropriately so that readers can understand them.

Table 2: Translation of allusions by the three translators

	Hsiung Shih-I	Henry H. Hart	Xu Yuanchong
等闲飞出广寒宫。(Book 1, third fold)	has availed herself of the opportunity to escape from her confined surroundings	has waited for an opportunity to fly out of the Kuang Han Place.	so inconsiderate as to flee from the Palace on high.

As shown in Table 2, Guanghan Palace is the palace above the moon in ancient Chinese mythology, also known as the "Toad Palace", which is a unique Chinese mythological allusion. In this context, it refers to Cui Yingying's longing to be free from bondage. Therefore, in emotions of translation, he used the strategy of naturalization to translate "广寒宫" as the environment that binds Cui Yingying

through "confined surroundings", which helps readers in Western countries to understand quickly but fails to convey the Chinese culture embedded in it. Henry H. Hart, as a foreign translator, translated the allusion more simply as "Kuang Han Place". Finally, Xu Yuanchong translates it as "the Palace on high", which is a more profound translation of the meaning of the allusion, and deliberately capitalizes the first letter to indicate that it is a proper noun with a fixed meaning in Chinese culture, which not only helps readers in Western countries to understand, but also conveys the meaning of the allusion in a better way.

2.3. Appellations

In ancient China, people attached great importance to titles, which were used to distinguish different individuals and were connections such as kinship, social status and occupation. Appellations played an important role in society at that time, not only determining the status of individuals in interpersonal relationships but also closely related to their lives. In *Romance of the Western Bower*, the use of various titles profoundly demonstrates the life customs and etiquette culture of the people at that time. Through the different titles in the book, readers can understand the norms of the marriage system, the hierarchy, and the family system in the Yuan Dynasty society.

Table 3: Translation of appellations by the three translators

	Hsiung Shih-I	Henry H. Hart	Xu Yuanchong
小姐	Young Lady	Young Mistress	Young Mistress
小娘子	young maid	young lady	young maid

Yingying is referred to as "小姐" and "小娘子" in *The West Wing*. Since ancient times, the connotation of the term "小姐" has undergone many evolutions. Initially, it was used as a title, such as maidservants, maidservants and prostitutes. However, with the evolution of society, the meaning of "小姐" gradually evolved to refer to unmarried women of higher social status and with the emotional coloring of honoring the women of rich families. Most of the uses of the word "小姐" in *The West Wing* fall into this category. As shown in Table 3, in the translation of this title, the three translators mainly chose the words "Lady" and "Mistress." The term "Lady" was initially used to refer to women of higher social status, especially those of the aristocratic class, while "mistress" was mainly used to address women of lower social status in the early days. However, with the evolution of the times and the change in social class, the two terms gradually became more common honorifics and no longer had any obvious class coloring. Cui Yingying, as an unmarried lady of the boudoir, is of noble status, so both treatments by the three translators are in line with English appellative conventions. In ancient China, the term "娘子" was initially used as a generic term for women and was gradually used to refer to "wife" in the course of development. In *The West Wing*, Zhang Sheng uses the term "小娘子" to address Cui Yingying or Hongniang, which is a general term for women, not specifically "wife". Therefore, the three translators have translated the term "小娘子" into "young maid" and "young lady". In this case, "小娘子" refers to Hong Niang, and Henry H. Hart still chooses "lady" to indicate the honorific title, while both Chinese translators choose the word "maid". Maid" originally referred to a female servant or a woman who performed domestic work in a household. Over time, the word "maid" was also used to denote a young woman or an unmarried woman. Therefore, Chinese translators have paid more attention to the difference in status between Hong Niang, a maid, and Cui Yingying, a young lady, in their translations of "小娘子".

It can be seen that translators choose different strategies when facing socio-cultural load words. Early Chinese and foreign translations usually adopt direct translation to translate specific socio-

cultural load words, try to keep the cultural symbols in the original text and elaborate them with the help of detailed commentaries, trying to convey the most accurate meanings. When the Romance of the Western Bower was gradually understood by the Western world, the translators adopted the strategy of naturalization to make the translation more in line with the reading habits of Western countries. In addition, when it comes to some traditional Chinese social and culturally loaded words, Chinese translators have a deeper understanding than foreign translators and pay more attention to the connotation behind the translation.

3. Linguistic and cultural load words

Through the flexible use of rhetoric, Romance of the Western Bower greatly enhances the richness of language. At the same time, it is also very successful in characterization, for example, Zhang Sheng's quoting of Confucian classics to depict his image as a scholar and Hong Niang's use of contrasting rhetoric in her language to emphasize her spunky and courageous image in contrast to other people's performances, and so on [6].

3.1. Appellations

Metaphors are one of the most important rhetorical devices in the Romance of the Western Bower, including explicit metaphors, implicit metaphors, borrowed metaphors, and more. Through the use of metaphors, Wang Shifu relates things that happen in the world to nature or other things, achieving natural and ingenious linguistic beauty, successfully familiarizing unfamiliar things and making profound truths plain.

Table 4: Translation of metaphors by the three translators

	Hsiung Shih-I	Henry H. Hart	Xu Yuanchong
你是个银样镞枪头。 (Book Four, Fold Two)	And as a spear-head that looks like silver but is really wax.	Indeed you are but a waxen candle.	You look like a silver spearhead. But in fact it is made of lead.

"银样镞枪头" is one of the famous metaphors in classical Chinese literature, "镞" means solder, and looks like silver; the literal meaning of the metaphor is to describe the look like silver is actually the head of the gun made of solder, and the actual use of the metaphor is that the appearance is very good-looking, but in fact, it is not useful. In Table 4, Hsiung and Xu Yuanchong both translated it as "spear head" because in Western culture, medieval knights also fought with guns, so there is a cultural common ground, and Henry H. Hart's translation does not reflect the translation of this word. For "镞", the pinyin is "lù", and the English meaning is "pewter or solder". Both Hsiung and Henry H. Hart confuse it with "蜡" - the pinyin is "là" and the meaning is "wax". In contrast, Xu Yuanchong translates it as "lead", which is more in line with the original meaning.

It can be seen that when faced with metaphors with strong traditional Chinese cultural connotations, Chinese translators have a more thorough understanding of them and try to disseminate their original meaning in their translations so that English readers can understand them. As for specific words, the earliest versions have a certain degree of mistranslation, and the problem is gradually improved in the later translations.

3.2. Stacked words

Stacked words are rhetorical devices that use the same words in an arrangement. The use of superimposed characters can increase the sound beauty of the article, make the article three-dimensional, read as if it sounds into the ear, and make the language more vivid. In classical Chinese poetry, the use of superimposed characters has a high aesthetic value and is an important form of perfect unity of content, meaning and sound [7].

Table 5: Translation of stacked words by three translators

	Hsiung Shih-I	Henry H. Hart	Xu Yuanchong
…望穿他盈盈秋水…(Book 3, Fold 2)	Her eyes, dark as the waves of autumn, stand out with expectancy...	Her eyes, gleaming like the pools of autumn...	Don't weary the longing eyes of your lady dear...

The phrase "盈盈秋水" is used to describe a woman's eyes full of emotion, and here (Table 5), it is used to describe the beauty's eyes as clear as autumn water, highlighting Cui Yingying's anticipation and urgency in waiting for Zhang Sheng's arrival. Hsiung Shih-I's and Henry H. Hart's translations are both based on direct translation. Hsiung Shih-I translates it as "dark as the waves of autumn", emphasizing the depth of the woman's eyes as if they were the color of autumn waves and the same time, according to the phrase "望穿", it adds emphasis on the meaning of being full of anticipation. Henry H. Hart translates it as "gleaming like the pools of autumn", which emphasizes the brightness and sparkle of the woman's eyes, which is more graphic and does not translate the meaning of anticipation. Finally, Xu Yuanchong's translation is more rhythmic and beautiful, choosing naturalized translation as "longing eyes", which does not cite the metaphor of autumn water, directly emphasizing the longing in the woman's eyes.

It can be seen from the translation strategies of the three translators for the linguistic and cultural load words: when encountering some expressions or imagery that are exclusively Chinese culture and may lack corresponding counterparts in Western culture, the translators' treatment strategies show differences. Among them, Hsiung Shih-I's translation is more inclined to paraphrase, which is helpful for Western readers to understand; Henry H. Hart's translation is more concise, which is in line with the habits of English readers, but does not have enough in-depth understanding of some exclusive imagery; Xu Yuanchong, as a new translator, is more precise and suitable for Western readers to understand the linguistic and culturally loaded words. It is thus clear that the translations of The West Wing are constantly progressing.

4. Religious and culturally loaded words

Religion and culture have always been closely related to religion and drama. The Yuan Dynasty was an era of great development in religious beliefs, which not only provided spiritual comfort to ordinary people but also became a reflection of the overall spiritual outlook of society [8]. The story in "The Story of the Western Chamber" takes place in a temple - the Pujiu Temple, where monk characters such as Faben and Facong also play an important role. In Buddhist culture, there are many concepts related to "heaven", "earth", and "god". These concepts may find corresponding meanings in Western culture or exist as unique images of Buddhist culture due to their unique connotations. When translating these Buddhist cultural images, the translator faces not only the barriers between Chinese and Western cultures but also the differences in worldviews, values, and other concepts between Eastern and Western religions [9].

Table 6: Translation of religious words by three translators

	Hsiung Shih-I	Henry H. Hart	Xu Yuanchong
正撞著五百年 前风流业 冤。……是兜 率宫，是离恨 天，我谁想这 里遇神仙。 (第一本第一 折)	I have suddenly observed a beauty, who must be the victim of an amour between us five hundred years old!... Is this a paradise, a heaven where no regrets reign? Who would have thought that I should meet here such an angel.	Suddenly I behold the consequences of my life five hundred years ago.... Is this then a palace in Paradise, or is it the place of broken hearts? Can it be that I have come upon one of the immortals?	Who is there if not the beauty who has won love seed in my heart for five hundred long years!... Is this a paradise or a sorrowless sphere? Who would have thought I'd meet an angel here!

These few sentences depict the scene of Zhang Sheng when he first saw Yingying. Zhang Sheng was shocked by Yingying's beauty when he saw her in a temple, so he used several religious-related cultural images such as "karma", "Dou Du Gong", "Li Hentian", and "immortal" to describe Yingying as if she was a flying immortal from the sky, emphasizing her extraordinary and refined temperament [10]. Among them, 'ye yuan' means the former enemy, as shown in Table 6. Xiong's translation translates 'ye yuan' as the victim, Hart's translation as 'sequences', and Xu's translation as 'won love seed in my heart'. It can be seen that the Xiong version places more emphasis on literal translation of the original text, while the Hart and Xu versions lean more towards free translation. Although the translation strategies of the three translators were different, they all achieved a fusion of Chinese and Western cultures, allowing the excellent work "The Story of the Western Chamber", which is rich in cultural heritage, to go global.

5. Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is based on the theory of text analysis, aiming to highlight the cultural differences between Chinese and foreign translators when dealing with words with different cultural connotations and provide suggestions for further research on the application of different translation strategies in different types of Chinese classics, thereby expanding our understanding of Chinese and foreign cultural translation and contributing to the international dissemination of Chinese classics. Mr. Xu's translation has "three beauties", the most important being the beauty of the artistic conception, followed by the beauty of sound and rhyme, and finally, the beauty of form. From this, it can be found that Xu Yuanchong's translation strategy is summarized as follows: 1. literal translation is the main approach, supplemented by free translation. 2. Choose words carefully and strive for sound beauty. 3. Emphasize understanding and domesticate appropriately. Mr. Xiong Shiyi's translation emphasizes readability and comprehensibility and pursues the reproduction of the original text. From this, it can be concluded that his translation strategy is: 1. Pay attention to the original text, not to rhythm. 2. Pay attention to fluency and choose additional translations. 3. Write objectively and strive for elegance. Henry Hart's translation emphasizes the smoothness and coherence of the translation, so his strategy is to ensure understanding and appropriate domestication. Although the translation strategies of the three are different, they have successfully achieved the integration of integrated Chinese and Western cultures, enabling this excellent work with rich cultural heritage to be promoted and recognized globally. This article analyzes the translation strategies of the three translators, allowing readers to have a deeper understanding of their different styles, understand their contributions to translation, and develop a stronger interest in the traditional drama of the Western

Chamber. It also serves as a reference for translators with the intention of translating drama. However, this article also has some limitations. In each culturally loaded word category, only one example was selected for analysis, which cannot fully cover all cultural differences and translation strategies between China and foreign countries. Therefore, in future research, a more comprehensive exploration of cultural differences between China and foreign countries and the application of translation strategies should be conducted through a wider range of textual materials.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally, and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

References

- [1] *Biographies of Yuan, Ming and Qing Opera Scholars Recorded in Fangzhi*. Zhao Jingshen, Zhang Zengyuan, eds. Zhonghua shuibu.1987
- [2] Xue, Jing. (2020). *Study on the English Translation of Romance of the Western Bower* (Doctoral dissertation, Shanxi Normal University).
<https://kns.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbname=CDFDLAST2021&filename=1021034983.nh>
- [3] Zhao, Keqin. (2012). *Example analysis of common idiomatic aliases*. *Secretarial work* (03), 56-57.
- [4] Zheng, Dehu. (2016). *Chinese culture going out and the translation of culturally loaded words*. *Shanghai Translation* (02), 53-56.
- [5] Newmark, P. . (1988). *A Textbook of Translation*. Prentice-Hall International.
- [6] Chen, Z. M. . (2017). *Translation of culturally loaded words under the view of alienation and naturalization theory* (Master's thesis, Nanjing University).
<https://kns.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbname=CMFD201702&filename=1017097221.nh>
- [7] Lubecia. (2021). *Characteristics and Influence of Rhetorical Grammar in Yuan Miscellaneous Drama Romance of the Western Bower*. *Imago Wenchuang* (43), 4-5. doi:10.20024/j.cnki.cn42-1911/i.2021.43.001.
- [8] Yi, Xing & Bai Yang. (2014). *A brief analysis of the rhetorical pattern of superimposed words in The West Wing*. *Journal of Mudanjiang Normal College (Philosophy and Social Science Edition)* (06), 88-90. doi:10.13815/j.cnki.jmtc(pss).2014.06.028.
- [9] Huang Su. (2020). *On the Translation of Superimposed Words in Romance of the Western Bower*. *Overseas English* (06), 26-27.
- [10] Ouyang, Yue. (2018). *The English Translation of Culture-Loaded Words in The West Wing from the Perspective of Functional Equivalence*. *Overseas English* (09), 114-116.