



Literature Review on *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang*

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Abstract

Chen Zhong De Chi Bang, which won the second Mao Dun Literary Prize in 1985, is a contemporary Chinese novel written by Zhang Jie. As one of the literature works for foreigners to learn about China, it has been translated into two English versions, one by Gladys Yang and the other by Howard Goldblatt. Through carding relevant documents, it is found that researches on *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang* focus on artistic features, different versions and English versions' reception while studies on its English versions are mainly from translator's subjectivity, feminism and translation strategies three aspects. After analyzing previous studies, the thesis hopes to provide a new perspective on studying *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang*.

Key words: *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang*; English versions; translation comparison

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INTRODUCTION

After *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang* won the second Mao Dun Literary Prize in 1985 and the two different English versions came out in later four years, more and more scholars fixed their study on the novel and its English versions from different perspectives, such as writing arts, three different versions, feminism and so on. As for the

original text, most of scholars attach importance to its artistic features and the changes of three editions, while for the English versions, translator's subjectivity is much valued by those scholars.

1. PREVIOUS STUDIES ON *CHEN ZHONG DE CHI BANG*

Chen Zhong De Chi Bang has attracted considerable attention since it won the second Mao Dun Literary Prize. Previous studies on *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang* can be roughly divided into two parts: artistic features and its different versions.

1.1 Studies on Artistic Features

There are many scholars focusing their studies on the artistic features of *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang*. Chen Juntao (1982) comments that *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang* is a distinctive novel which reminds us of reform, marriage and love. Chen also figures out that the portrait of simple life and the description of distinctive characters are the most fascinating parts of the novel. Hu Depei (1985) thinks *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang* owns a specialty in its artistic creation. Hu claims that Zhang Jie changes a lot in her writing style in this novel, which becomes incisive and sharp. Zhang shows a colorful picture of real life with a detailed psychological description and creates plenty of thought-provoking artistic images. Yang Jiaxin (1985) also points out that *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang* has its own unique artistic structure. Yang claims that Zhang Jie not only absorbs the essence of Chinese classical literature, but also draws the lesson from the structure of excellent foreign novels. Besides, Zhang is successfully in creating different characters vividly to draw readers' attention. Yang Jianguo (1986) concludes that *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang* gains praises not only because it gives a vivid description of industrial reform but also due to the reason that Zhang Jie makes creativity on the art

of writing. In Zhang Zhong's (1985) opinion, Zhang Jie merges the exquisite and bold emotion in the work, which shows her writing style and artistic personality driving to maturity stage. Zhang reveals the complex and severe conflicts during the process of industrial reform. Fu Peng (2017) considers that Zhang Jie has outstanding realistic sensitivity and artistic creativity on the conflicts of values in the New Period Literature. However, during a forum held by *Journal of Literature and Art*, Wu Chen (1982) indicates that some scholars think the loose structure and the redundant discussion cripples the artistry of the novel. Lin Weijin (1995) argues that *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang* weighs a lot from the perspective of sociology but it's difficult to get the pleasure of reading because the book lacks of exciting plots or artistic images. Thus it can hardly be an artistic work. The same belief is held by Hong Zhigang (1999) who insists that *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang* doesn't show the beauty of literature.

1.2 Studies on Different Versions

There are also some studies on different versions of *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang*, but the number is limited. Yang Jiabin (杨佳欣, 1985) figures out that the revised edition makes a great progress on compacting the structure, simplifying the sentence and deleting unreadable economic policies. However, the revision and deletion inevitably affect the literariness of the work. Su Kui (2014) also agrees that the deletion in the revised edition weakens the keenness of the novel, but some details are added to highlight the theme and smoothen the structure. Wu Xiuming and Zhang Tao (2015) take a comparison of versions and an empirical analysis of collation to reveal the revision progress of *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang* and the unbridgeable internal cracks left by the revision. Besides, with the adopting of Lidchi's theory of discourse structure and Bourdieu's field theory, they represent that the version which won the second Mao Dun Literary Prize is the compromise between the author's subject consciousness and the mainstream ideology. Thus it can be acquired from their study that the discourse structure is making adjustments with slow but irresistible steps, the mainstream ideology never holds the dominant position anymore but embracing the intervention of other discourses. Jin Hongyu and Xu Wentai (2018) make a very comprehensive study on the changes of different editions. Jin & Xu indicate that the change of the version reflects the collision between the polysemy of personal discourse and the identity of mainstream discourse in the 1980s. From their study, it can be learned that of the three editions of *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang*, the third edition (the one won the second Mao Dun Literary Prize) goes through the biggest change. In the third edition, the change of gist, the adjustment of characters' image as well as the modulation of the angle make the work closer to mainstream ideology.

2. PREVIOUS STUDIES ON THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF CHEN ZHONG DE CHI BANG

There are two English versions of *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang*. The first one, published by Virago Press in 1987, was translated by Gladys Yang Yang. The second one, published by Grove Weidenfeld in 1989, was translated by Howard Goldblatt. Since then more and more scholars devote their studies to the two English versions from varied perspectives, which can be divided into two categories: reception studies on the English versions and text studies from different angles.

2.1 Reception of *Leaden Wings*

Some scholars abroad have made comments on Gladys Yang's translation since its publication. Leo O Lee (1987), professor emeritus of Chinese Literature at Harvard University, says the novel is "a roman à clef" that deals with government bureaucracy and its manifold problems and gives the western reader "a true sampling of such social issues and, to some extent, of the author's realistic art". In a long review published on *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, Sylvia Chan (1989), a former researcher in the Center for Asian Studies at University of Adelaide, points out "the factional struggle described in the novel is typical enough of the Chinese situation" and the novel "has painted a basically truthful picture of the old Chinese nation in the throes of rejuvenation". In terms of translation appraisal, Chan (1989) thinks highly of Gladys Yang's translation which "has abridged many long passages of speech and interior monologue. This will no doubt make the book more readable to the average Western reader". The same belief is held by Michelle M. Yeh (1988) who insists that the translator does a good job and gives readers "a highly readable English version" by deleting some "lengthy passages on politics and economic policies". However, Frances Wood (1988), a sinologist and historian known for her writing on Chinese history, criticizes that "though it informs, and despite heroic efforts by Gladys Yang Yang and Delia Davin, *Leaden Wings* remains disappointing as literature". And in her opinion, part of *Leaden Wings*' success in Germany is due to "the number of businessmen who bought it, hoping to understand the machinations of politics within Chinese ministries and factories". (ibid, p.137) Rosemary A. Roberts (1989), the author of *Images of Women in the Fiction of Zhang Jie and Zhang Xinxin*, claims that in Zhang Jie's works, women are generally seldom presented in positions of power and few of them even presented as negative characters and criticizes her "challenges to traditional morality and traditional women's roles tend to be either superficial or weakened by being qualified".

2.2 Reception of *Heavy Wings*

A review published on *Publishers Weekly* (1989), points

out that Zhang Jie tactfully links all personalities to Morning Light Auto Works, and “her most innovative element, more satisfying than the plot contrivances, is the candid portrayal of the protagonists’ domestic lives”. In regard with translation quality, the review claims that “Goldblatt’s superb translation does credit to this work”. Kinkley (1990) from St. John’s University considers that even though Zhang Jie describes love and feminism in the book, “they are too tame to spark any but a sociological interest in the Western reader”. When it comes to translation, he thinks that “Goldblatt’s superb, uncut translation is idiomatically American”, which is suitable for “general readers at all levels”. In a long review published on *Los Angeles Times*, Richard Eder (1989) contends that the book pictures “an uncertain struggle among bureaucrats, factory managers and political cadres to determine whether a seemingly modest kind of economic reform will prevail over ossified party control”. And he also presents that the tone of the novel is “pungent”, but it has “an occasional moment of poetic inwardness”. In Herbert Mitgang’s opinion, *Heavy Wings* is a story about “the struggle of a small group of people to break out of a rigid social and economic structure and seek the right to express themselves as individuals” (Mitgang, 1990). Although it is difficult to distinguish so many characters, Mitgang thinks the novel “is worth the effort for American readers willing to meet a Chinese novelist of knowledge and courage”. (ibid, p.23) An anonymous review published on *Kirkus Review* holds a different idea on those characters. And it thinks highly of Zhang’s writing strategy, which uses characters “as probes into the collective psyche of a country in the throes of reform as the story moves from squabble to jealousy to frustrated dream”. Kandice Hauf (1990) makes a comment on *Heavy Wings* as a “profoundly patriotic book” in a review published on the *Harvard Book Review*. Hauf speaks highly of Zhang Jie for she drawing readers into the “aspirations and frustrations of her idealistic, vain, confused, scheming, crusting cast of characters.” In a review published on *Booklist*, Joanne Wilkinson (1989) claims that the novel is “a fascinating glimpse of a country racked by turmoil”, besides, he also agrees that the dozens of characters “presenting a rich cross section of a people so mired in corruption and intrigue”. Kitty Chen Dean (1989) holds the idea that husbands and wives use different names making it difficult to keep straight, but it’s still “an important work by one of China’s best-known writers”.

3. TEXT STUDIES FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

In recent years, the English translation of *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang* is widely explored by domestic scholars from different perspectives.

3.1 Perspective of Feminist

There are at least three comparative studies on two English versions from the perspective of feminist. Based on feminist translation theory, Song Min (2018) focuses her study on *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang* from such three parts as the translator’s subjectivities, specific translation strategies adopted and gender awareness. She points out that Gladys Yang’s version is better demonstrating the feminist features than Goldblatt’s. Likewise, Fu Wenhui (2011) indicates that Gladys Yang’s version highlights female theme and strengthens the importance of female character while which is a rare reference in the original text. For example, Gladys Yang adopts foreignization translation strategy when translating female characters’ names in order to draw target readers’ attention. Zhang Xiaoyun (2013) makes a comparative study of the two English versions from the perspective of interventionist feminist strategy. She finds out that Gladys Yang extends the social relationships with female characters as the center and employs the strategies of supplementing, omission and emphasis to improve the status of female characters.

3.2 Perspective of Translator’s Subjectivity

There are also some scholars exploring the English versions of *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang* from the perspective of translators’ subjectivity. Gao Fei (2015) makes a comparative analysis to the subjectivity of two translators by using the rewriting theory and finds out that translators are influenced not only by the individual factors but also by social factors, such as ideology, poetics and patronage. Wang Jiali (2015) takes *Leaden Wings* as a case study to investigate Gladys Yang’s subjectivity in the hope of offering Chinese female translators a valuable reference for the C-E translation of female writers’ works. Wang reports that Gladys Yang’s female subjectivity can be vividly reflected in three aspects: the selection of text, translation strategies and translation activities.

3.3 Perspective of Translators’ Styles

Some scholars focus their interests on the translators’ styles by comparing two English versions, but the number is limited. With an approach of corpus, Fu Jie (2018) analyzes two English versions from lexical, syntactic and textual three levels to compare two translators’ styles. He concludes that Goldblatt’s version adopts more complicated words and complex sentences than Gladys Yang’s, and the former uses more conjunctions to make the sentences more logical. Fu also probes into the reasons that cause differences in translators’ styles and comes to a conclusion that the cultural differences, the choice of translation strategies and the choice of language form and meaning construction are the three main factors.

3.4 Perspective of Grammatical Metaphor

Based on the grammatical metaphor, Li Qiaoqiao (2013) makes a comparative study in terms of ideational,

interpersonal and textual metaphor and draws a conclusion that Golblatt's version is comparatively successful in reproducing the grammatical metaphors. She claims that even though Gladys Yang and Goldblatt did not perform well in dealing with the ideational metaphor, taking the translation quality into account, Goldblatt utilizes the reference and nominalization well to make text more cohesive and the characters much clearly.

3.5 Perspective of Narratological Stylistics

Employing the method of narratological stylistics, Wang Fangfang (2017) takes two characters --- Zheng Ziyun and Ye Zhiqiu as main objects and finds that both of them get reconstructed in the two versions. But here are also some differences between two versions, for example, Gladys Yang's version deletes more comments about politics and largely weakens the tragic features and negative emotions of Ye.

3.6 Perspective of Medio-Translatology Theory

Adopting a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis, Yin Meiqin (2018) analyzes the two versions systematically from such four aspects as the choice of the original text, the choice of translation strategies, factors that influence those choices as well as the reception status by using the medio-translatology theory in order to provide practical solutions to Chinese literature "going out".

3.7 Perspective of Eco-Translatology Theory

In virtue of Eco-translatology theory, Yan Xiaohong (2019) takes a contrastive analysis on two versions from linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions. She concludes that Gladys Yang adopts translation methods like rewriting, deletion and free translation, which means her version makes a big change from the original one while Goldblatt prefers to use literal translation, which makes the version faithful to the original meaning and style. Hence, comparatively speaking, the version of Goldblatt wins more readers' hearts.

CONCLUSION

Based on the literature review on the translation of *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang*, translator's choices and Bourdieu's theory of practice in translation studies, the author finds some limitations on previous studies. Firstly, these studies have figured out the inside factors, but few of them take the influence of society into consideration. They attach great importance on translators' subjective but neglect that translators are part of society, who will be inevitably influenced by society, so the ideology, cultural playground as well as the interrelationship between agents will also have some impacts on the translation. Secondly, some case studies on translator's choices are comparative study, which is a big project to make a comprehensive analysis, so only examples that can support the viewpoint are

selected. Hence in some degree, these one-sided examples in studies are not all valid. In this study, further studies of *Chen Zhong De Chi Bang* will be conducted from the angle of Bourdieu's sociological theory. Under the effect of society, the translator's choice can be explained more clearly and thoroughly. Therefore, it is necessary to do this research.

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