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Deep Ploughing and Innovation in the History of Shelley's Reception in China: A Review of Zhang Jing's *Shelley in China* (1905–1966)

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Abstract: As one of the most important British Romantic poets of the nineteenth century, Shelley's works and spirit exerted a profound influence on the development of modern Chinese literature. *Shelley in China (1905–1966)* by Zhang Jing (Peking University Press, 2022) adopts a chronological approach to systematically examine the transmission and reception of Shelley's works in China between 1905 and 1966, as well as the construction and transformation of Shelley's image within the Chinese context. This paper reviews the book from four perspectives: parallel studies, the author's previous research, the main content of the book, and its academic value and methodological innovations, aiming to demonstrate its scholarly significance and provide references for related research.

Keywords: Zhang Jing; Shelly in China; Shelly; Translation study; The relationship between Chinese and foreign literature

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标题：雪莱中国接受史的深耕与拓新——评张静《雪莱在中国（1905-1966）》

摘要：作为 19 世纪最重要的英国浪漫主义诗人之一，雪莱的作品与精神对中国现代文学的发展进程产生了深刻的影响。张静《雪莱在中国（1905-1966）》（北京大学出版社，2022 年，以下简称《雪莱在中国》）以时间为轴，历时性系统梳理了 1905 至 1966 年间雪莱作品在中国被传播与接受的过程，以及雪莱本人的形象在中国语境中的建构与嬗变。本文从同类研究、作者过往研究、本书的主要内容、本书的学术价值与方法论创新四个角度入手，对该书进行评析，以期展现其学术价值，并为相关研究提供参考。

关键词：张静；《雪莱在中国（1905-1966）》；雪莱；译介研究；中外文学关系

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Zhang Jing's *Shelley in China* was published in August 2022 by Peking University Press. It is an interdisciplinary monograph integrating transnational bibliography, comparative literature, Sino-foreign literary relations, and translation studies, with a total of more than 400,000 words. In 1905, the pictorial column of the monthly literary magazine *The New Novel* published a portrait of Shelley, marking "the first time Shelley's image appeared before Chinese readers" (Zhang Jing, 2022, p.32). After 1966, the translation and introduction of foreign literature, including Shelley's works, stagnated due to historical reasons, and Chinese literature entered a new special period with the end of the "Seventeen-Year Literature" period. Therefore, by sorting out the translation, dissemination, and reception of Shelley's works in China from 1905 to 1966 and analyzing the construction and transformation of Shelley's image in different historical contexts, this book fully answers the questions of how Shelley participated in the transformation of modern Chinese literature and how China actively reconstructed Western literary resources.

1. A Review of Research on the History of Shelley's Reception in China

The translation and reception of Shelley in China have gradually attracted attention since the 1980s. Research focuses can be roughly divided into three categories: the history of Shelley's translation, comparisons between Shelley and modern Chinese writers, and the connection between Shelley's reception and modern Chinese literature.

First, research on the history of Shelley's translation focuses on preliminarily sorting out the translation process and major translators of Shelley's works in China along a chronological line. In *A History of English Romantic Poetry*, Wang Zuoliang mentioned the translation of Shelley during the May Fourth Movement, and for the first time included Shelley, Byron, and Keats as the second-generation English Romantic poets in the overall translation framework of English Romantic poetry (Wang Zuoliang, 1991). This broke the mode of isolated translation and evaluation of individual poets and was highly pioneering. Xiong Wenli's *The*

*Translation and Reception of Shelley and His Works in Early Twentieth-Century China*¹, Liang Jian's *A Comparative Study of Shelley's Poetry in Translation*², and Yin Suiqiong's *Through Turmoil to Restored Metre: A Descriptive Study of Shelley's Poetry Translation in China, 1895–1928*³ have respectively reviewed the trajectory of Shelley's translation and reception in different historical periods. Taking the years 1895 to 1928 as its chronological framework, Yin Suiqiong's study adopts descriptive translation studies and polysystem theory to systematically examine the early dissemination and translation of Shelley's poetry in China. It divides this developmental process into four stages: the classical Chinese translation by poets of the Southern Society, the transition to vernacular poetry translation around 1922, Guo Moruo's mixed use of classical and modern poetic forms, and the exploration of metrical writing between 1924 and 1928. It analyzes the translation strategies, poetic form choices and linguistic features adopted by major translators such as Su Manshu, Ye Yusen, Zhou Zuoren, Guo Moruo, Zhu Xiang and Li Weijian, revealing the evolutionary trajectory of translated Shelley poems: a shift from classical verse to modern vernacular poetry, and a gradual return to formal metre after its initial abandonment. These studies systematically collated the translated works and translators of Shelley, possessing important academic value and providing precious research results. However, they failed to combine translation activities with social and cultural contexts, and their investigation of reception effects was limited, making it difficult to reveal the transformation of Shelley's image in the Chinese context.

Research on the influence of Shelley on modern Chinese writers is a fruitful field. In this field, the influence of Shelley on modern writers such as Guo Moruo and Xu Zhimo has been thoroughly analyzed. Representative achievements include Xiong wenli's *A Study of Shelley's Influence on Lu Xun, Guo Moruo and Xu Zhimo* (Xiong Wenli, 2003), Wei Hongshan's *A Study of Guo Moruo's Aesthetic Thought*⁴ (Wei Hongshan, 2003), and Bu Weiyu & Wang Liqun's *On Shelley's Influence on Xu Zhimo's Poetic Views* (Bu Weiyu & Wang Liqun, 2014, pp.38-42)⁵. For instance, in *A Study of Shelley's Influence on Lu Xun, Guo Moruo and Xu Zhimo*, Xiong Wenli adopts the theoretical perspective of reception aesthetics to focus on Shelley's impact on three pivotal modern Chinese writers. She argues that Shelley gained wide acceptance because his ideas aligned with the collective horizon of expectation of Chinese intellectuals during the May Fourth Movement. In *On the Power of Romantic Poetry*, Lu Xun emphasizes Shelley's rebellious and enlightening spirit, portraying him as a "warrior of the spiritual realm". Guo Moruo resonated emotionally and intellectually with Shelley's revolutionary fervor and romantic poetics, which profoundly shaped the

¹ Xiong Wenli (2005). "The Translation and Reception of Shelley and His Works in Early 20th-Century China." *Theory Horizon* (09):186–187.

² Liang Jian (2015). *A Comparison of Translations of Shelley's Poetry* (Master's thesis). Shanxi University, Taiyuan, China.

³ Yin Suiqiong (2021). "Through Turmoil to Restored Metre: A Descriptive Study of Shelley's Poetry Translation in China." *Journal of Yichun University* (11):95-102.

⁴ Wei Hongshan (2003). *A Study of Guo Moruo's Aesthetic Thought* (Doctoral dissertation). Sichuan University, Chengdu, China.

⁵ Bu Weiyu & Wang Liqun (2014). "On Shelley's Influence on Xu Zhimo's Poetic Views." *Journal of Zaozhuan University* (01): 38-42.

creation of his Goddesses. Xu Zhimo, by contrast, was drawn to Shelley's ethereal aestheticism and pursuit of love and freedom, whose poetic vision and life philosophy deeply influenced both his art and personal beliefs. By comparing the underlying causes of these divergent modes of reception, the paper contends that Lu Xun's reception was rational and utilitarian, Guo Moruo's rooted in emotional affinity, and Xu Zhimo's guided by innate aesthetic temperament. It not only demonstrates Shelley's multifaceted influences on modern Chinese literature, but also illuminates the decisive role of the recipient's subjectivity in cross-cultural literary communication. By comparing the poems of Shelley with those of Chinese writers and poets such as Guo Moruo, such studies profoundly analyzed Shelley's influence on the poetic creation of Chinese writers and poets. Nevertheless, they focused on individual Chinese writers and failed to present the macro framework of the history of Shelley's reception in China.

Research on the connection between Shelley's reception and modern Chinese literature explores the impact of Shelley's translation and reception on the ideological trends of modern Chinese literature. Representative achievements include Tang Qiyun's *A History of Modern Chinese Romantic Literary Trends*¹ and Ding Wen's *The Construction and Function of the "Romantic Poet Image" in Early New Poetry Concepts*², which analyzed the promoting role of Shelley's translation in modern Chinese Romanticism. However, they had limitations such as insufficient in-depth analysis of translation and reception, and concentrated research periods.

With a complete chronological axis, diverse research perspectives, and innovative research methods, Shelley in China has made up for the deficiencies of existing research to a certain extent and promoted the deepening of research on the history of Shelley's reception in China.

2. Zhang Jing's Sixteen Years of Deep Ploughing in the Field of "Shelley in China"

Since 2006, Zhang Jing has focused on the translation and reception of Shelley in China as her main research direction. After more than ten years of deep ploughing, she has published more than ten relevant papers, forming a clear context.

The Lark from West to East: The Translation and Reception of Shelley in Chinese Literary Circles (1908–1937) (Zhang Jing, 2006) is Zhang Jing's first paper on this topic. Focusing on the translation of Shelley from 1908 to 1937, it sorted out the translation practices of translators such as Su Manshu and Lu Xun, analyzed the initial construction of Shelley's image in the Chinese context, put forward the view that Shelley's translation developed synchronously with the transformation of modern Chinese literature, emphasized the combination of translated texts and social contexts, and paid attention to translators' motivations and creative

¹ Tang Qiyun (2001). *A History of Modern Chinese Romantic Literary Trends* (Doctoral dissertation). East China Normal University, Shanghai, China.

² Ding Wen (2021). *The Construction and Function of the "Romantic Poet Image" in Early New Poetry Concepts* (Master's thesis). Yunnan University, Kunming, China.

transformation. *Shelley in China (1905–1937)*¹ is Zhang Jing's doctoral dissertation, which sorted out the translation, dissemination, and reception of Shelley in China from 1905 to 1937, analyzed the connection between Shelley and modern Chinese social culture, writers, and literary trends, attached importance to documentary research, and unearthed a large number of first-hand materials. *What is the Modern Significance of Poetry?—The Response to Shelley's A Defence of Poetry in China (1905–1937)* (Zhang Jing, 2015) centered on the Chinese translation of Shelley's poetics *A Defence of Poetry*, sorted out the characteristics and influences of different translations, and analyzed the promoting role of *A Defence of Poetry* in the construction of modern Chinese poetics, making up for the deficiencies in research on the Chinese reception of Shelley's poetics to a certain extent.

The research style, materials, ideas, methods, content, and achievements accumulated in the above representative papers directly laid the foundation for the writing of *Shelley in China*, making it a systematic work covering the history of Shelley's reception in China over more than 60 years.

3. A Comprehensive Presentation and Analysis of the History of Shelley's Reception in China

Taking 1905-1966 as the chronological axis and dividing it into five stages, *Shelley in China* comprehensively presents the translation, dissemination, and reception of Shelley in China, analyzes the construction and transformation of Shelley's image in China and its connection with the transformation of modern Chinese literature, realizing the organic integration of history and theory.

The introduction points out that re-examining the reception history of Shelley in China helps enrich the connotations of Shelley studies and Sino-foreign literary relations research, and reveals the absorption, transformation, and innovation of foreign cultures in the transformation of modern Chinese literature. It also specifically discusses the details of the dissemination of Shelley's portrait in China, taking the publication of Shelley's portrait in *The New Novel* in 1905 as the research starting point, foreshadowing the research of the whole book. Meanwhile, it clarifies the research objective of the book: taking "relations" as the core, breaking the limitations of one-way influence research, and showing the two-way interaction between Shelley's translation and Chinese issues.

The main body is divided into two parts.

The first part is composed of the first five chapters, which divide the history of Shelley's reception in China from 1905 to 1966 into five stages according to phased characteristics: the initial introduction stage from the late Qing Dynasty to the early May Fourth Movement, the climax stage during the centenary of Shelley's death and the May Fourth Movement, the comprehensive translation stage after the May Fourth Movement, the wartime translation stage during the total War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, and the transformation and solidification stage under the context of revolutionary Romanticism in the "Seventeen-

¹ Zhang Jing (2012). *Shelley in China (1905-1937)* (Doctoral dissertation). Fudan University, Shanghai, China.

Year” period after the founding of the People’s Republic of China. Each chapter analyzes five aspects: translation subjects, translated texts, dissemination paths, reception effects, and image construction, progressing layer by layer with rich content and solid theory. For example, Chapter 2 introduces the upsurge of Shelley’s translation and commemoration starting from the centenary of Shelley’s death in 1922. The translation activities were led by members of the Creation Society such as Guo Moruo and members of the Literary Research Association such as Zhou Zuoren, targeting Shelley’s poems, poetics, and biographies, and adopting various dissemination forms such as newspapers, periodicals, monographs, and speeches. This chapter sorts out the editing process and main content of the “Shelley Commemoration Issue” of *Creation Quarterly* in detail, pointing out that members of the Creation Society regarded Shelley as a model of Romanticism, focused on his spirit of freedom and resistance, and combined it with the ideological trend of individual liberation during the May Fourth Movement. Guo Moruo’s poetic creation was deeply influenced by Shelley. Zhou Zuoren, on the other hand, paid more attention to Shelley’s “non-resistant resistance” and utopian thoughts, forming a different reception perspective from the Creation Society. Through textual comparison, this chapter analyzes the characteristics of translated texts in this period—the shift from classical Chinese translations to vernacular translations and the significant improvement in translation quality. Meanwhile, there were creative transformations and misreadings based on social needs and Chinese translators’ own poetic concepts, such as Guo Moruo’s translations in five-character ancient style (Zhang Jing, 2022, p. 91) and Tian Shichang’s translations in *Sao* style, a classical poetic form characterized by lines of variable length and strong lyrical expression, originating from Qu yuan’s *Li Sao* (Zhang Jing, 2022, p. 95), reflecting the attempt to localize foreign cultures.

The second part is Chapter 6, which introduces the reception and dissemination of Shelley, as a symbolized Romantic idol, in specific periods and among specific groups in China in terms of his love and marriage life, poems, poetics, and biography, as a supplement to the first five chapters. For example, Section 2 of this chapter points out that “Shelley... was idolized as a symbol—rebellious, amorous, sentimental, and melancholic, and he himself represented a new emotional yearned for by young people” (Zhang Jing, 2022, p.267). Starting from the translation of Shelley in representative campus periodicals during the Republic of China, it analyzes the reception and image construction of Shelley among new artistic youth at that time.

The appendices are of great academic value, including three lists and two translation comparison tables compiled by the author after more than ten years of research and collation on Shelley’s Chinese translation, covering all important contents of Shelley’s translation and dissemination in China over more than 60 years. For example, Appendix 1 lists 15 Chinese translations of Shelley’s name other than “雪莱” and their corresponding translators or periodicals, including “斯利” in *New Fiction* and “修黎” by Lu Xun. Appendix 2 comprehensively collates the translations of Shelley’s poems in major Chinese newspapers and periodicals from 1905 to 1949, detailing the translated titles, translators, publishing periodicals, and dates of Shelley’s original poems translated in China. Among them, *Ode to the West Wind* has been translated 16 times

successively in more than 20 years since 1923, with four translated titles such as “西风歌” and “西风颂”. These appendices provide extremely important documentary support for subsequent research and reflect the author’s solid bibliographic character.

4. Academic Value and Methodological Innovations of the Book

The academic value of the book is mainly reflected in three aspects.

First, it has made up for the deficiencies of previous research in the period of Shelley’s reception history in China to a certain extent and constructed a complete research framework. As mentioned above, most existing parallel studies have limitations in research periods. The discussion of this book starts from the publication of Shelley’s portrait in *New Fiction* in 1905 and ends in 1966, fully covering the reception history of Shelley in the transformation of modern Chinese literature. It connects the translation, dissemination, and reception of Shelley in five stages to form a complete research framework.

Second, it deepens the research on the relationship between Shelley and modern Chinese literature and breaks the limitations of one-way influence research. This book avoids the misconception of discussing Shelley’s one-way influence on modern Chinese literature and abandons the neglect of the subjectivity of Chinese translators and audiences. While analyzing Shelley’s influence on modern Chinese literature, it focuses on elaborating the misreading and localized transformation of Shelley by Chinese audiences, as well as the complex relationships and roles of social and cultural contexts, ideologies, and poetic concepts behind translation activities, thus showing the two-way interactive relationship between Shelley’s translation and modern Chinese literature. It pays attention to the process of “the eastward spread of western learning” and does not neglect the response of Chinese culture to foreign cultures. As pointed out in Chapter 2, while being influenced by Shelley’s Romantic spirit, Guo Moruo combined his own poetic concepts and the ideological trend of individual liberation during the May Fourth Movement to creatively misread Shelley, making him a spiritual banner of modern Chinese Romantic literature. This shift in research perspective brings objectivity and comprehensiveness to the study of Shelley’s reception history in China, reflects the essence of two-way interaction in transnational literary exchanges, and provides a new perspective and idea for Sino-foreign literary relations research.

Third, it provides rich documentary materials and lays a foundation for subsequent research. As mentioned above, a large number of Shelley’s translated works, reviews, and documents unearthed by the author after more than ten years of unremitting efforts are a major feature of this book, many of which have rarely been noticed. The detailed documentary lists provide documentary support for subsequent research. At the meantime, the sorting and comparison of Shelley’s translated texts in different periods and the analysis of

translation strategies of different translators in different periods also provide rich materials and ideas for subsequent related research. As stated in the preface of this book, it “comprehensively reviews the full translation and influence of Shelley in China with a broad academic vision”. Its meticulous and comprehensive documentary sorting makes it a cornerstone of Sino-foreign literary relations research.

The methodological innovations of the book are reflected in the application of theories. The book integrates theories from multiple disciplines such as comparative literature, translation studies, and cross-cultural studies. Its research framework is innovative, breaking the single method of existing research and presenting interdisciplinary characteristics. For example, Chapter 1, based on Yuri Lotman’s theory of the dialogue mechanism of heterogeneous cultures in *The Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*, regards the behavior of Su Manshu and Zhang Taiyan comparing Shelley’s poems to those of Li Shangyin and Li He as “using tradition to encompass foreign unfamiliar cultures, thus turning the unfamiliar into the familiar and internalizing foreign cultures into one’s own culture” (Zhang Jing, 2022, p.61), and analyzes the localized reception of Shelley’s works and translations. Chapter 5 explores the manipulation of ideology on text selection and translation strategies in Shelley’s translation from the perspective of manipulation theory, pointing out that the “Marxist view of Shelley” emphasized by Jemischgan in *History of English Literature* “guided the translation in this period” (Zhang Jing, 2022, p. 214), making “the ‘Seventeen-Year’ period the most sufficient period for the translation of Shelley’s works in China” (Zhang Jing, 2022, p.216). Moreover, the praise from Marx and Engels enabled Shelley’s long works to be officially and systematically translated in an organized manner, which also reflected the true connotation of revolutionary Romanticism advocated at that time (Zhang Jing, 2022, p. 223). The integration and application of such multi-disciplinary theories enrich research methods, enhance the depth and breadth of research, and make it more comprehensive and profound.

Conclusion

In terms of documents, theories, and academic innovation, Zhang Jing’s *Shelley in China* is a rare masterpiece. To a certain extent, it has made up for the deficiencies of existing research and deepened the connotations of Shelley studies, translation studies, and Sino-foreign literary relations research. Academically, this book has completely constructed the research framework of Shelley’s reception history in China, broken the limitations of one-way influence research, and provided rich documentary materials. Methodologically, it integrates multi-disciplinary theories. Against the background of globalization, this book provides an important answer to the question of how to realize the localization of foreign literature while absorbing, transforming, and innovating foreign cultures, so as to build an equal and two-way pattern of Sino-foreign literary exchanges.

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