

American Chinese Writers and Translators' Choice in the Western Context --An Examination of China Image Building by Lin Yutang and Amy Tan¹

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Among the multitude of Chinese scholars there is a special group, born into Chinese families, thoroughly emerged in the typical Chinese traditions and conceptions from family or early school education, yet they also assume a totally different cultural identity by either growing up or living in the American mainstream cultural environment. In other words, family, society and education endowed these scholars with a dual cultural identity, which constitutes their complicated cultural stands and cultural orientations. Their individualized dual cultural stands undoubtedly impose great effect on their writing and translating, leading to diversified characteristics in their texts; meanwhile, through these texts, the writers and translators' unique cultural stands are typically well presented and demonstrated. The intertextual relations between the writers and the translators' cultural orientations and their texts can facilitate a reliable foundation to interpret their translation and writing holistically and objectively.

The writer will base this study on the English texts, writings, biographical backgrounds, and Chinese-English translations of the two scholars Lin Yutang and Amy Tan, attempting to understand the constitution of their attachment to the oriental culture and the self-orientalism in their cultural stands. Based on this, I will probe into the image building of China in their texts and will try to interpret the intertextual relationship between their cultural stands and their Chinese-English translating and writing, thus a tentative interpretation of the characteristics in their building of China image and a probing into their sources, hoping to shed a light on the study of China image building by the Chinese American scholars as a group in whole.

On the whole, the following common characteristics are found in Lin and Tan. First, they all assume a dual cultural identity from both China and America and secondly, the Chinese cultural factors and American cultural factors both show and effect alternately in their cultural stands, resulting in inevitable complications. Namely, they are visibly attached to the oriental culture in the first place, while on the other hand they may also be inclined to detract, or misinterpret or even distort the image of China in order to cater to the expectations of western readers, who may have preconceptions of China as a mysterious and inferior oriental culture. Also they both write about and translate from China and Chinese to the western readers which inevitably determines a substantial Chinese-English translation in their English literary writing for the western readers. Apart from those common characteristics shared by these two scholars, there are also distinct individual features as their double cultural identities and cultural stands were constituted from different backgrounds and so embodied differently. Meanwhile, when they convey the image of China to the western readers, inevitably, their writing and translating involve much of their

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individualized interpretations of their mother culture.

Based on the commonplace and distinctions between these two Chinese American scholars, this study carries with it the significance in the cross-cultural examination of them. In the current background of overseas promotion of Chinese literature and culture, the writer hopes, through this study of China image building by the two American Chinese scholars' writing and translating texts in the western context, to provoke further discussions and explorations in the subjects of speech rights balance between the East and West, historical and horizontal variations in the China image building in literature, and the development and trend in the study of overseas Chinese literature.

Key words: American Chinese writers and translators; English text; intertextuality; cultural orientation

西方语境下美国华裔写译者的取与舍

——以林语堂、谭恩美的中国形象塑造为基础的探讨

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摘要: 在庞大的学者群中, 有这样一个特殊的群体: 他们出生身于中国家庭, 自小浸染于典型的中国传统思想与观念影响之中; 而同时他们又以不同的身份在相同的美国主流文化环境中成长、生存。家庭、教育、社会等因素赋予了这部分学者特殊的双重文化身份, 而其独特的环境又造就了他们具有个体性特征的文化立场和文化取向。这些具有个体化特征的文化观必然会在其创作活动中得以体现, 令其文本展现出多姿多彩的表象特征, 而透过这些文本所彰显出的特征则又可以管窥作者独特的文化观。作者的文化观、文本以及创作观之间的互文关系为全面而理性地解读文本及写译者的创作倾向提供了可靠的依据。

本文以林语堂和谭恩美两位学者的英语文本为主体, 探讨其文化立场中的东方文化情结与自我东方主义的成因及其体现; 深入解读其英语文本中所构画的中国形象, 通过互文性的视角, 探讨他们各自代表的文化观与其创作之间的相互关系, 借以合理地阐释其文本中的中国形象及其生成的根源。具体来看, 这些学者的共性体现在: 一, 他们都具有东西方文化的双重背景与身份; 二, 其文化观中东西方文化都在此消彼长地产生影响, 因而体现出复杂性与矛盾性的特点。换言之, 他们一方面对中国文化怀有挥之不去的情结, 而另一方面他们在叙写中国的过程汇总又会贬低、误读甚至歪曲中国文化以迎合西方读者对神秘而又落后的东方文化的期待, 从而形成他们文化观中国的自我东方主义; 三, 他们都面向西方读者用英语叙写中国, 这也因而决定了他们面向西方读者的创作文本中难免涉及大量的汉英翻译的成分。除了共同点, 这两位学者的双重文化身份与文化立场的产生背景、方式以及表现形式上又存在着具有代表性的差异, 在他们向西方叙写中国的英语文本中必然蕴含他们对中国文化的个人解读的成分。在共性与差异并立基础上, 将两位华裔学者共同置于中西文化的视角下交叉审视不仅可行而且具有深远的意义。在推动中国文化走出去的使命背景下, 笔者希望通过特定美国华裔学者的英语创作文本与汉英翻译文本探讨西方语境下中国形象塑造, 对华裔学者整体的文化取向及话语权、中国形象的历史与现今的变化及背景、华裔文学走向等问题能引发更为深入的思考与探索。

关键词：华裔写译者、英语文本、互文性、文化立场