An Analysis of the Socio-historical Value of Chinese Translations of Grimm's Fairy Tales

-- Taking the May Fourth Period as an Example

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Abstract: Grimm's fairy tales are an important part of the Western cultural history and have had a profound influence on Europe and the world. When Grimm's fairy tales were spread out of the European continent to the rest of the world, it was inseparable from its reinterpretation by translators of various languages. Since their introduction to China, Grimm's fairy tales have had a lasting impact on adults and children alike. This paper will elaborate on the socio-historical value of the translation of Grimm's fairy tales in China during the May Fourth period, starting from the translation of Grimm's fairy tales in China.

Keywords: Grimm's Fairy Tales, Chinese Translation, The May Fourth Period, Children's Literature.

1. Introduction

Reading classic fairy tales is a tradition of Western civilization, and the aesthetic needs and moral codes embedded in them, as well as the life lessons and wisdom passed on through fairy tales, have become the foundation of Western civilization. Since its introduction to China in the May Fourth period, Grimm's fairy tales have been popular among readers and studied by many scholars. They have also taken on the task of enriching the spiritual life of the people, educating children, and influencing people's perceptions in a subtle way. This paper analyzes the background of the rapid development of Grimm's fairy tales when they were introduced to China during the May Fourth period, including the social environment, cultural atmosphere, and educational concepts. It also explains the process of development in China during the May Fourth period. Finally, it analyzes the historical value of Grimm's fairy tales in the May Fourth period from both educational and social perspectives.

2. Children's Literature

Grimm's fairy tales belong to children's literature. Children's literature in particular requires easy to understand and lively. Not only the theme of the work should be clear and prominent, the image should be vivid, the structure should be simple, the language should be simple and concise, the plot should be interesting, and the imagination should be rich, it is also necessary to make its content, form and means of expression as far as possible to adapt to the physical and psychological characteristics of children for their favorite. According to psychological knowledge, children's cognitive process is to receive information from the environment, store information, extract and manipulate information as needed, and then make an external response. Information processing combines the perceptual part of the cognitive process (e.g., sensation, perception, attention and memory) and the rational part (thinking) into a complete control system from input to output. It can be seen that children's literature is a literary category based on the cognitive level of children. However, children are different from adults, who have certain reading and life experience and can easily transform words and symbols into images in their minds in their recreation, while children, due to their age and aesthetic experience, often have difficulty in grasping the connotation of the beauty of words, so when introducing literary works to children, we must consider whether the language and characters of the works are in line with the physiological and psychological characteristics of children. In a broad sense, fairy tales are one of the means of helping children to establish a correct ideology. In fairy tales, the characters are imagined in a single way, either good or bad, and the representative of the good guys is usually the prince, and the youngest son is mostly the image of the one who has gone through the ordeal. The representatives of the bad guys are more limited, for example, the stepmother, the witch, the queen and so on, who are particularly jealous of the achievements of others.

3. Grimm's Fairy Tales

Grimm's Fairy Tales, originally titled The Collected Fairy Tales of Children and Families, were compiled by the German brothers Ja-kob Grimm (1785-1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786-1859), who spent more than 40 years (1812-1857) collecting folk fairy tales. Their initial aim was to collect and record the German cultural heritage. However, to their surprise, after the first edition (two volumes, volume 1 in 1812 and volume 2 in 1815), Grimm's fairy tales became very popular with readers, especially children and teenagers. At that time, many readers wrote to the Brothers Grimm, asking them to put the educational purpose of children in the first place in the process of editing, which led the Brothers Grimm to reedit the fairy tales to a certain extent in the process of reprinting, and made several edition revisions by the hands of the Brothers Grimm (see Zhang Sumei, "The Evolution of the Editions of Grimm's Fairy Tales", Journal of Zhejiang Media College, No. 6, 2013), turning the original rough and simple folk oral narratives into beautiful and moving reading stories. It has become one of the "three classic fairy tales of the world" and has been widely circulated around the world for more than 200 years. Grimm's fairy tales are now the most famous children's books in the world. Children's literature and folklore have a long history in China, but they became an independent discipline around the May
Fourth Movement, when Grimm's fairy tales were translated by scholars such as Sun Thio, Mao Dun, Zhao Jingshen, and Zhou Zuoren as the best representatives of children's literature, promoting the birth of Chinese children's literature. During the New Culture Movement, Grimm's fairy tales were published as typical works of folk literature in the Song Weekly, which influenced to a certain extent the occurrence of the Chinese folk literature movement, and its influence on China can be said to be far-reaching.

4. Background of Grimm's Fairy Tales in Chinese translation

4.1. Socio-historical background

There are two years in modern Chinese history that must be remembered: 1840 and 1895. 1840 was an epochal year for the ancient Chinese Empire. The Sino-Japanese War in 1840 woke up China from the dream of "Heavenly Kingdom", and the crisis of national extinction made Chinese intellectuals spontaneously start a powerful social movement. Yan Fu, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao and others advocated for the Restoration Movement, vigorously spreading western social science knowledge and propagating the idea of change and renewal, trying to save the country from destruction. The most representative one is Yan Fu's translation of his Theory of Natural Evolution. It introduced Darwin's theory of biological evolution and Huxley's social Darwinism, putting forward the ideas of "the survival of the fittest" and "the world is bound to advance, and the later will prevail over the present", which aroused great reactions at that time. Du Yuqian commented, "The doctrine of competition for survival has been imported seeds, and can protect the religion." This statement has clearly by oneself, which can protect the country, can protect the change; change and change, the power of change is controlled statement: "Change is also change, and unchanged is also influenced by this doctrine." Liang Qichao's "General has been no change in social affairs that has not been aroused great reactions at that time. Du Y aquan commented, "China can be said to be far-reaching."

4.2. Cultural background

The publication of Minbao in 1876 represented the official appearance of vernacular newspapers and periodicals on the stage of Chinese history. Since then, vernacular newspapers and periodicals have blossomed all over China, according to statistics in the general history of Chinese journalism, at that time, many kinds of vernacular newspapers were published and distributed in China. As long as there were newspapers, they would be greatly impacted by the cultural atmosphere. Especially after the May Fourth New Culture Movement, with the promotion of vernacular language, the replacement of the traditional "elementary school" by modern Chinese linguistics, and the popularization of new punctuation marks, Chinese literature witnessed a tremendous revolution, and "there has never been a period of such great change in art form as the century: classical poetry, lyrics, and writings classical poetry, lyrics, the literary novel has basically died out, and some brand-new genres such as drama, reportage, prose poetry, and the modern short story are completely new..

4.3. Development of educational philosophy

Western countries didn't care much about children until the 16th century. "There was a cognate that said the Greeks had a corresponding word for everything under the sky, but this cognate did not apply to the concept of 'children.'" From the 17th century, Comenius, Locke, Rousseau and others wrote books and proposed that education should focus on children, understand them, and promote their all-round development as its mission. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, with the development of socialized industries in the West, the demand for workers' knowledge and culture began to increase, which objectively promoted the popularization of modern education and the rapid development of children's education. The subsequent century saw the spread of the theory of biological evolution, the establishment of psychology and pedagogy, and the further development of the school system, which in turn created conditions for the development of children. The concept of "child" was truly "discovered" in the West, meaning that a modern view of children's education began to be established. "It is rumored that the West discovered man in the 16th century, women in the 18th century, and children in the 19th century." The inclusion of children in education is a major advance in the development of education in modern times. During the late Qing Dynasty, the Qing government set up the Mengxue Hall in 2007, where children were educated in "games, songs, talks, and hand skills" before being promoted to the elementary school. In 1919, Dewey, an American educator, came to China to give a lecture, which lasted for two years and covered more than 10 provinces, and had a profound impact on Chinese education. The impact on Chinese education was profound. Zhou Zuoren's "child-centered view" and Tao Xingchi's educational philosophy of "unity of knowledge and action" were inspired by Dewey's educational thought. Zhou Zuoren and Zhao Jingshen started the famous "Fairy Tale Discussion" and Ye Shengtao created the first original collection of fairy tales in China's history, both of which have deep roots in the spread of Grimm's fairy tales in China.

4.4. Background of publication development

In the history of Chinese editing and publishing, recent times are a very critical period. The explosive growth of publishing institutions and the comprehensive development of new-style newspapers, books and magazines provided a
historical opportunity for the introduction of Grimm's fairy tales. In the modern era, changes in publishing technology accelerated. The popularity of monochrome lithography, color lithography, photographic plate making, and intaglio printing in China; the improvement of letterpress printing; and the promotion of lead type technology not only reduced the printing cost of books, but also greatly improved the printing quality and efficiency of Chinese newspapers and books. The space for publishing selections and the publishing market were expanded. In addition to the change in the public's cultural reading needs, the potential to publish content varieties that were originally "afraid to start printing because of the small printing quantity" was also available. After the Sino-Japanese War, there was a clear shift in China's publishing institutions, from publishing scriptures and history books to translating Western books. This was partly the result of the objective promotion of newspapers, periodicals, and books as propaganda tools by the reformists to promote the change and improvement of the law, and was also related to the innovation of publishing technology mentioned above. All in all, various publishing institutions grew up like a spring in all, various publishing institutions grew up like a spring festival, and according to the statistics in the publication history, No. 1 of the year, there were many publishing institutions in Shanghai before the year, most of which were private. Among them, publishers such as the Commercial Press, the Evening Bookstore, and the Beixin Bookstore, and newspapers such as the Oriental Magazine and the Morning Post, which published Grimm's fairy tales, were in the leading position in the industry, which undoubtedly provided a good platform for the dissemination of Grimm's fairy tales in China.

5. Chinese Translations of Grimm's Fairy Tales in the May Fourth Period

5.1. The Process of Chinese Translation of Grimm's Fairy Tales

From the literary era of the late Qing Dynasty a century ago to the multi-media context of today, Chinese society has undergone great historical changes: abolition of the imperial system, the National Revolution, the May Fourth Movement, the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, the War of Liberation, the "Three Against Five", the Chemical Revolution, and reform and opening up. ..... What has changed over the past hundred years is the changing environment in which the Chinese translation of Grimm's fairy tales has been transmitted. This transmission environment and the fate of Grimm's fairy tales in China are tightly entwined, resulting in a unique history of the dissemination of Grimm's fairy tales in China over the past hundred years, and making Grimm's fairy tales leave a unique mark in the process of China's modern and contemporary cultural development. As a result, Grimm's fairy tales have not only become a distinctive example of China's cultural ups and downs over the past century, but their dissemination in China also testifies to the classic charm of Grimm's fairy tales that transcends time and space and transcends nationalities.

From the second half of the 19th century, modern China began to import a steady stream of Western culture, and this environment of "Western learning" gave rise to a boom in translating and interpreting Western literature, and Grimm's fairy tales, which were widely circulated in the Western world, entered the vision of Chinese translators. The earliest Chinese translation of Grimm's fairy tales was published in 1903 by Shanghai's Tsinghua Book Company in a two-volume line-bound edition by Zhou Guisheng. This "first collection of fairy tales in the late Qing Dynasty" included in its Volume II such Grimm's fairy tales as "Revenge of the Wolf and the Sheep," "The Bear's Skin," "The Musician," and "The Prince of Clam Borers. Like the literary translations of foreign works in the late Qing Dynasty, these fairy tales were all translated in literary form. In his Preface, Zhou Guisheng says that his translations were made by abandoning the "Zhuang language" and using "harmonious words", and that he "chose the one that could be understood" from the "Thai and Western novels" published by Wu Shuren. "This is why the collection of translations is called "Harmonious Translation". Zhou Guisheng tried to preserve the original work of fairy tales by "harmonious translation", but its literary translation is really against the plain and lively nature of fairy tales, "Moreover, the characteristic of fairy tales lies in the general article of children's speech, but now he said it in an ancient language accent, making it no longer interesting at all." However, as the earliest Chinese translation of foreign fairy tales, "Xin'an Harmonious Translation" for the first time in front of Chinese youth "to show the magnificent and fantastical realm of myths and fairy tales of foreign peoples", to show Chinese readers a world of Grimm's fairy tales. "Between 1909 and 1910, the Oriental Magazine, founded by the Commercial Press in Shanghai, published a number of Grimm's fairy tales translated into Mandarin, with no specific title or translator given in the table of contents, but with the title "In the catalogue, no specific titles were given and no translators were indicated, but rather the title was "Time and Harmony". Later, in 1915, the Commercial Press published the "Saying Department Series", which included the "Shihun" series, translating a total of 50 or 60 Grimm's fairy tales. The "Times and Harmonies" translation can be said to be a special collection of Grimm's fairy tales, "but the title of the book is not marked fairy tales, and the meaning of the text is profound, so children often do not get to read this book, which is a pity! "The two early literary translations of Grimm's fairy tales were both translated under the title "Harmony", which shows that the translators at that time perceived Grimm's fairy tales as harmonic literature for the amusement of the public and entertained the secular public with their fun, while children were not considered as the target readers of these translations, just as their Children were not considered as the target audience of these translations, just as their "archaic" literary form was not accessible to children. Because the written style was so detached from the spoken language, the translations of Grimm's fairy tales in the literary language were not accessible to the public and children, and because of their small circulation and readership, they had a limited impact at the time, but their pioneering significance is undeniable. During the May Fourth period (1917-1927), China experienced a great cultural change between the old and the new, and under the influence of the New Culture Movement, the concept of children's education gradually emerged and the children's literature movement flourished. Once the May Fourth literary circles realized the characteristics and value of children's literature, they were eager to learn and translate it." Zhou Zuoren, Zhao Jingshen, Zheng Zhen duo and others were actively engaged in the research, translation and creation of children's literature, and the magazine Children's Literature, edited by Zheng Zhen duo, also included "all materials of children's literature from all over the world", while the
vernacular literature movement also changed the language, style and appearance of children's stories in translation. In 1922, the Shanghai Chongwen Publishing House published Huang Jieru's Fairy Tales, which included such Grimm's fairy tales as The Shoemaker and the Dwarf, Twelve Dancing Princesses, and Three Golden Hairs of the Giant; in 1923, Shanghai's Novel World published a collection of Grimm's fairy tales. In 1923, Shanghai's Fiction World published a translation of the Grimm's fairy tale "The Cat and the Mouse Friends" in its supplement Popular Literature, No. 9. Zhou Zuoren also translated two Grimm's fairy tales during this period, one was "Straw and Coal and Broad Beans", which was published in the July 24, 1923 issue of the Morning Post Supplement and the other was "The Big Radish", which was also published in the same publication on August 28, 1923, both of which were translated from the English translation. These translations gradually replaced the literary style with the vernacular style. When Grimm's fairy tales entered China, the May Fourth scholars, represented by Zhou Zuoren, soon saw their folkloristic value, and while lamenting that they were "too late" to meet Grimm's fairy tales, Zhou called for the collection of folk materials in his country, just as the Grimm brothers had collected folk tales, and the search for materials to offer children from the folklore. "Inspired by the Grimm brothers, Zhou Zuoren and others began to collect fairy tales and legends that had been recorded in ancient texts and those that had not been written down but had been passed down in folklore, and to use them as materials for spiritual enlightenment and literary research." In response, scholars advocated "following the example of the German Grimm's Fairy Tales" (Guo Moruo 1922), and a folklore movement began with the collection of folk tales in China, which lasted from 1918 to 1937. Through this folklore movement, scholars of the new culture of the May Fourth Movement expressed their demands for nationality and their new cultural ideas, such as confronting the old sage culture with "literature of the common people". The translation and dissemination of Grimm's fairy tales in the late May Fourth period went through a change of form from literary ancient texts to modern vernacular texts. The intellectuals of the May Fourth period made Grimm's fairy tales widely available in China, but most of these translations were in two ways: first, there were strong traces of reprinting, as the translations of Grimm's fairy tales in circulation at this time were basically based on the English or Japanese versions, and the origin of some of the translations was even unclear; second, selected translations dominated, and most of the translations were selected translations of parts of Grimm's fairy tales. In such a situation, Wei's new full translation from German played an important role in the authentic and complete transmission of Grimm's fairy tales in China in the early years. The translation and dissemination of Grimm's fairy tales in China during this period also had a lot of influence, besides inspiring the folk literature movement of the May Fourth period, it also enlightened the creation of children's literature in China, and some famous writers of children's literature at that time, such as Ye Shengtao and Zhang Tianyi, talked about the inspiration and influence given by Grimm's fairy tales in their autobiographies or creative talks. Grimm's fairy tales, one of the classics, were not only the result of the Grimm brothers' efforts, but also the product of the interplay of personal, national and ethnic factors of the time. Similarly, the translation and dissemination of Western fairy tales in China in modern times were also associated with a specific historical background and realized through some driving forces. The pioneers of fairy tale translation and mediation who were ahead of their time and devoted themselves to translation at an early stage, the journals, magazines and books that were ahead of their time and began to publish fairy tale works at an early stage, and the cultural figures and scholars who dared to keep experimenting and boldly introducing or applying theories of fairy tale studies. The cultural figures and scholars who dared to experiment, introduce or apply theories of fairy tale studies have been crucial in the history of modern Chinese fairy tale translation. It was through the efforts of these forces that the translation of fairy tales in modern China became so important. It was through the efforts of these forces that modern fairy tale translation and It was through the efforts of these forces that the modern trend of fairy tale translation and mediation emerged.

5.2. Socio-historical value of Chinese translations of Grimm's fairy tales

5.2.1. The educational value of Chinese translations of Grimm's fairy tales

The pioneers of Chinese creative fairy tales were exactly the compilers of the Fairy Tale series, Mao Dun and Zheng Zhenduo, both of whom coincidentally embodied a slant toward educational purposes when they first created fairy tales. Take Mao Dun's original fairy tale "The Nerd" as an example. "The Nerd" depicts a diligent elementary school student named Nan San, who is dubbed "The Nerd" by his classmates because he usually buries himself in hard reading. Mao Dun's purpose in creating this fairy tale is obvious: "I hope that when elementary school students read it, those who do not work hard will become hardworking, and those who do work hard will work harder". It is undeniable that this fairy tale inherits the pragmatism of traditional culture and is still rather didactic, but as China's first creative fairy tale, it is rare to find a good blend of children's perspective and educational purpose. Zheng Zhenduo took on the responsibility of editing the third collection of the Fairy Tales series after Mao Dun took over the Novel Monthly, and since Zheng "by nature loves fairy tales" (Ye Shengtao's words), he published a fairy tale in Children's World, and "The Morning Dew" in the Novel Monthly, which can be seen The influence of Grimm's fairy tale "The Golden Bird". The main character of "The Golden Bird" is a kind-hearted prince who rescues a fox on his journey to find the golden bird for his father, and then finds it after some twists and turns with the help of the fox, but is framed by his brothers and finally succeeds in clearing his name with the help of the fox. The plot of "The Morning Dew" is also about a brother's framing of his younger brother, who by chance finds the morning dew and sees the light again, and cures the eye disease of a mouse, a bee and a crane with the dew, and is finally rewarded with the help of the animals, and the brothers are punished. It is easy to compare the themes of these two fairy tales, both of which were written with the purpose of rewarding good with evil and treating animals well. Later, in the creation of local fairy tales, writers have continued to research and explore the educational purpose of fairy tale creation. In his biography of the fairy tale writer, the Brothers Grimm, Zhao Jingshen suggests that "I think Grimm's fairy tales can provide a good reference for studying education, and his method of choosing fairy tales is extremely precise, which we should follow." Here we can observe that by the May Fourth period, the writers had begun to focus on the children's perspective. The
so-called children's point of view "refers to a writing method in which writers interpret and express the alien real world or the fantasy world in the mind in the form of children's feelings, ways of thinking, narrative strategies and even language sentences." To truly win the love of children and teenagers, fairy tales must be depicted with children's eyes, arrange dialogue with children's language, and use children's minds to perceive the story's people and scenes. According to Zhou Zuoren, the mind of a child is similar to that of a primitive man, and children believe that everything in the world is conscious and capable of thinking. Reflected in fairy tales, flowers, birds, fish and animals can think, talk and communicate freely. In the Grimm's fairy tale "The Mouse, the Bird and the Sausage," for example, three very different creatures live together in harmony and cook together, a very different set of characters from the traditional Chinese story.

We can name just one local fairy tale writer whose works almost always have animals, plants, or inanimate objects as the main characters, with the fundamental purpose of fitting in with children's hearts.

5.2.2. The Social Value of Chinese Translations of Grimm's Fairy Tales

In the late Qing Dynasty, after a series of humiliations and failures, a group of progressive intellectuals began to explore the causes of China's poverty and weakness from the perspective of cultural reform. They believed that traditional culture had its own essence, but the long-term feudal rule had brought great pollution to the nation's ideology and cultural consciousness, and these feudal toxins had infiltrated the nation's psychological consciousness and emotional thinking, constituting a powerful force of habit, influencing the nation's mind and will in a subtle way and blocking the development of new things. Therefore, the intellectuals represented by Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao and Yan Fu started the New People's Movement to reform the nationality in the bourgeois reform thought. In particular, Liang Qichao, Tan Sitong and others advocated a series of cultural innovations with the slogan of "revolution in the novel". Among them, the novel was one of the most important tools for the new people, and the bourgeois reformers hoped to transform society and develop people's hearts through novels. The fairy tale was first introduced to China as a Western short story. The earliest collection of translations of Western fairy tales, Xin'an Harmonious Translation, had been classified as a type of Western novel. Their purpose in translating Western fairy tales was not only to introduce a genre of children's literature, but also to meet the needs of the New People's Movement. Zhou Guisheng, an early translator of Grimm's fairy tales, began translating Western fairy tales and stories under the guidance of Wu Shuren (1866-1901), whose purpose was to introduce outside cultural ideas to China, to stimulate China's development with foreign ideas, and at the same time to absorb foreign culture and preserve China's own cultural traditions. He said in the preface of the "Xin'an Harmonious Translation of the First Edition" that "it is difficult to change the stubborn nature without seeking the art of importing civilization, and so the translation of Western texts and the translation of Eastern books is still carried out." Therefore, most of the early translations of fairy tales were done in the literary language, and the translation method was also based on the free translation. These fairy tales, translated in Mandarin, were far from the original fairy tales in terms of content and plot, and while they became popular reading materials for children, they also became tools for the progressive intellectuals of the time to promote new ideas and new morals. They often arbitrarily changed the plots of the original fairy tales and even directly inserted the subjective opinions of the translators. Like other introduced Western literary genres such as political novels, science fiction, detective novels, and adventure novels, the subjective arbitrariness of the translations, the emphasis on Chineseness of the content, and the more popular language did satisfy an emerging reading demand and had a certain influence in modern social and cultural history. The value of the fairy tale as a "new people" lies not only in the fact that it is a type of Western short story, but also in the fact that it is a literary work for children. In the ancient view of children, children were treated as "miniature adults". However, this view of children changed in the late Qing Dynasty and early Republican period. As a result of the crisis of national extinction and the failure of many legal changes to strengthen the country, the national consciousness of the pioneers began to strengthen. They gradually realized the importance of children's education for the rise and fall of the nation, and children were thus regarded as the future nationals of the Chinese nation, the hope for saving the country from peril and revitalizing its fortunes. Therefore, they advocated the enlightenment of children with new educational ideas, especially by providing them with new children's books. That is why Liang Qichao emphasized the value of novels for early childhood education in his "General Discussion on the Change of the Law - On Early Childhood Education". Western fairy tales, as a kind of foreign children's books, enriched the aesthetic world of Chinese children, and at the same time, they could implicitly feel the progressive ideology, morality and values of the West, achieving the effect of "inspiring children's interest, enlightening children's wisdom, and cultivating children's virtue". This concept of fairy tales still existed in the May Fourth period, and the fairy tale translations of the New Culture Movement were still, to a certain extent, responsible for developing children's minds and leading them to enlightenment. Thus, it can be seen that the early fairy tale translations were opened under the idea of New People'sism, and it was the cultural aspiration of the early fairy tale translators to use fairy tales with Western cultural characteristics to achieve the enlightening effect of "enlightening wisdom" and "bringing in new virtue" to the people.

References