

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Translation in the Dubbed Films in “Seventeen Years” (1949-1966) from an Occidentalism Approach: Two Case Studies of *Great Expectations* and *Salt of the Earth*

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Abstract:

This paper focuses on dubbed films in the “Seventeen Years” (1949-1966) after the founding of the People’s Republic of China, during which period China imported and translated 18 films from the United Kingdom and the United States to construct unreal, hallucinating images of the Western world. Two case studies, namely *Great Expectations* and *Salt of the Earth*, are examined and the study finds that translation played a significant role in changing the plot, lines and narratives. Simultaneously, translation helped maintain the humanistic values and literary content in the films. Occidentalism is used as the framework to explore the role of translation and media production in molding the products of multicultural literature in different cultures. The study of the film industry in the “Seventeen Years”, especially the dubbed and subtitled films, requires a rethinking of the contents and functions. Dubbed and subtitled films from the West followed the Occidentalist discourse, like those imported from the Soviet bloc, and helped promote China’s cultural leadership and supported its social and political practices, but at the same time the translation helped retain the aesthetic and humanistic aspects of the original films and served as counter-Occidentalist discourse. The findings reveal that Occidentalist discourse in translation functions to strengthen the state ideology and translation also functions as counter-Occidentalist through retaining humanism and artistic features of the films.

Keywords: Chinese cinema, “Seventeen Years”, translation studies, Occidentalism, dubbed films

1. Introduction

“Seventeen Years” (十七年) is a special term referring to the 17 years from 1949 to 1966. It started with the founding of the People’s Republic of China, ended before the Cultural Revolution, and was a crucial period for the establishment of the socialist regime (Ma, 2016, p. 40). “Seventeen Years” witnessed the first two decades of the development of the film industry in China, when 1213 Chinese films were released (Zhu, 2013, p. 6). During this period, the film industry followed the principle of shooting “films of the people” (人民电影), paying attention to the lives of ordinary working class and farmers. The principle revealed “a deep emotional attachment to the rural ideal of ‘the unity of living and working’”, and a profound distrust of the cities as sites of foreign dominators and their servants, urban intellectuals (Meisner, 1982, p. 98). The same ideological principles influenced the criteria of translating foreign films. In the “Seventeen Years”, China imported 1309 foreign films, of which more than two-thirds were from the Soviet bloc and they showed the lives of peasants and workers (Chen, 2003, p. 183; Chen, 2004, p. 85). Although Western films were believed to have been removed from



distribution chains (Johnson, 2012, p. 168), 18 films were imported from the United Kingdom and the United States (Table 1) (Liu, 2015, p. 6-10).

Table 1. List of Translated and Dubbed Films from the UK and the US in the “Seventeen Years”

English Title	Chinese Title	Year Imported
<i>Great Expectations</i>	《孤星血泪》	1957
<i>The Pickwick Papers</i>	《匹克威克先生外传》	1958
<i>Monkey on My Back</i>	《人间地狱》	1958
<i>Richard III</i>	《理查三世》	1958
<i>Laughter in Paradise</i>	《天堂里的笑声》	1958
<i>Hamlet</i>	《王子复仇记》（上、下）	1958
<i>The Million Pound Note</i>	《百万英镑》	1958
<i>The Proud Valley</i>	《骄傲的山谷》	1958
<i>Salt of the Earth</i>	《社会中坚》	1960
<i>The Red Shoes</i>	《红菱艳》	1962
<i>A Night to Remember</i>	《冰海沉船》	1962
<i>The Ghost Goes West</i>	《鬼魂西行》	1962
<i>Private's Progress</i>	《士兵的经历》	1963
<i>An Inspector Calls</i>	《罪恶之家》	1963
<i>The Magic Box</i>	《魔盒》	1964

These films were selected to justify the socialist regime. *Great Expectations*, *Salt of the Earth*, *Great Expectations*, *The Pride Valley*, etc. displayed the miserable lives and struggles of peasants and the working class. *Richard III*, *Hamlet*, *The Pickwick Papers*, *Laughter in Paradise*, etc. envisioned deceitful evils in capitalist society. They provided vivid pictures of the West and revealed the evil, the ugly within. These films triggered heated discussions in the Chinese media (Ming, 1954, p.90-92; Ma, 1960, p. 21-22). They were released after 1957 when translation activities shrank dramatically (Cui, 2009, p.308). Some films were not in favor of revolutions or social progressive and therefore, they deserve academic attention and could contribute to exploring and understanding the “missing years” in the history of China(Chan, 2019, p. 8).

This paper examines the scripts, plots and film reviews of two imported films, *Great Expectations* 《孤星血泪》 and *The Salt of the Earth* 《社会中坚》, in which translation helped create hallucinating images of the West. The research methods involve case studies and textual comparison. Scripts from 18 films imported from the UK and US, as well as their Chinese translated versions were recorded as corpus of the study, and differences in the translation were counted. A total of 138 lines were different from the original scripts. The data of the study was taken from *Great Expectations* and *Salt of the Earth* because they were representatives in disputing the Western world and defending the Socialist regime. The two films had 46 altered lines in translation, representing different political, social, and humanistic attributes in the East and the West. 20 lines with significant changes were analyzed and discussed in the textual comparison part. By referencing Occidentalism theories in the analyses of dubbing scripts,



this study intends to look into the way China viewed the West, explore why translators made the changes, and investigate the cultural metaphors behind the scripts.

2. Literature Review

The film industry and screen translation in China have been well discussed in previous studies (Clark, 1987a; Qian, 2004; Berry & Farquhar, 2006; Lim & Ward, 2020; et al.). Films, especially translated films, have always been “the most direct cultural template for hundreds of millions of ordinary audiences and one of the officially recognized legal channels for peeking into the outside world in the ‘Seventeen Years’.” (Yuan, 2015, p.114-119). Thus, films in the “Seventeen Years” provided data to analyze the nation’s cultural policies, and attracted academic attention. A dubbed or subtitled film is “a recording of the dialogue or script of the film, from one language into another language” (Li, 2011, p.4-5). According to Alex Wedding (1967), a widely published East German author in the socialist regime, “literature has revolutionary powers, each experience of art shapes the personality” (Thomson-Wohlgemuth, 2004, p.499). The situation was similar in China. Braester (2008) observed that Chinese domestic films in the “Seventeen Years” were not only akin to political campaigns but also reflected ideology and form in general (p.119-140). Du (2015) argued that foreign dubbed films both served and failed to serve the conflicting imperatives of program supply, diplomacy, and propaganda (p. 141-158). Chan (2012) devoted her work to imported films from the Soviet bloc, translated film theories, montages and different female images. Her work (2019) further explored the censorship in domestic films and films from the Soviet bloc, as well as national and international approaches. Liu (2012, p. 122-128) and Li (2011, p. 4-5) examined the themes, plots of imported films from the Soviet bloc, and concluded that these films had significant influences on the Chinese film industry. Seventeen-year literature, including films, had been highly effective in “its educational mission of uniting people and resisting the ideological invasion of foreign powers”, and “a key device for defining both national identity and literary presentation of the nation.”(Zhang, 2018,p.2-3) As research between year 1949 to 1967 in China focused on translating and dubbing techniques, translation studies could make up for the cultural gaps in previous research, revealing the role translation played in this process. (Li, 2010, p.259-262).

Although domestic films and films imported from the Soviet bloc underwent careful research and studies, dubbed or subtitled films from the Western developed countries in the “Seventeen Years” received little academic attention. The intimate connections between cinema and translation in the study of Chinese cinema were neglected (Chan, 2012, p. 51). In the “Seventeen Years”, the development of dubbed and subtitled films suffered setbacks and difficulties, including excessive emphases on political ideological content while artistic elements became a second thought (Li, 2010, p. 259-262). It could explain why dubbed or subtitled films from the West received less academic attention. Liu (2012) observed the deletion of contents, plots and lens language in dubbed and subtitled films. He pointed out that these contents must comply with policy guidance (p.122). However, audiences in both urban and rural areas had equal access to dubbed films, indicating that imported films cast a deep influence on both urban and rural audiences (Liu, 2013, p. 98-106). Therefore, dubbed and subtitled films from the West should not be neglected.



Audio-Visual translation (AVT) studies in subtitling and dubbing caught academic interest in the fields of translation studies, teaching, second language acquisition, etc. Tina Chen (2009a) suggested that dubbing was conceived as “the most advanced and efficient of available translation technologies,” and the use of state studios to dub imported Soviet films “marked a shift in China’s status as modern” (p.81-82). Johnson (2020) pointed out the lack of dialogue between AVT and film and media studies, and suggested interdisciplinary research collaborations through ideas of authorship, genre, history, technology, industry labor, and reception and audience studies (p. 910-919). Ridha and Tayeb (2021) concluded that screen translation between cultures tended to mingle domestication and foreignization strategies and shift from one to another on purpose. The choice of the appropriate strategy depends on whether the translator plans to defend his own cultural and social identity against the foreign and strange through domesticating, or he accepts the other and welcomes the foreignness (p. 5).

Adaptation of digital content is as important as that of books to screen. However, there is a lack of systematic analyses and translation studies on Chinese films in the “Seventeen Years” imported from the West. This article looks into the scripts of the translated films, and studies the connotation behind the screen.

3. Theoretical Framework: Occidentalism

Occidentalism was coined in contrast to Said’s Orientalism, which indicated “a way that alien people produce an essentialist notion of themselves” (Carrier, 1992, p.198). Occidentalism could refer to “a discursive practice that, by constructing its western Other, has allowed the Orient to participate actively and with indigenous creativity in the process of self-appropriation, even after being appropriated and constructed by western Others” (Chen, 1995, p.4-5). In other words, “the picture of the West painted by its enemies is what we have called Occidentalism” (Buruma & Margalit, 2004, p.5). Occidentalism is an action to approach another culture and analyze how the other culture is presented within the given culture. With the development and rise of the East, more emphasis is laid on power balance and relations between the East and the West. As a result, how the West is being viewed in China has been an important research topic. Zhang (1994) commented that Occidentalism provided an alternative perspective for China in its negotiation with the West (p.13). It has provided a path to looking at the power balance in literature, film scripts, and so on.

After the founding of the PRC, modern Western civilization was officially regarded as “shallow, rootless and destructive of creative power”. The loathing of everything associated with the Western world, exemplified by America, was still strong (Buruma & Margalit, 2005, p.3-4). China was dedicated to resolving the issue. As Arif Dirlik observed, in the “Seventeen Years”, “Global problems were China’s national problems, and China’s national problems were global problems, all of them rooted in the capitalist world system. Awareness of worldwide social conflict resulted in a new reading of China’s problems.” (Dirlik, 1989, p.9) In this context, the West was not a simple geographic space, and could pose a threat to Chinese rationality and order. Hence, a set of hallucinated Western images was presented to the Chinese audience as an Occidentalist discourse. They were created to show the shallowness and evilness of the West. For example, perceptions were strengthened over and over, as countries including the United States were destined to wipe out China on the global stage (Kissinger,



2011, p.203). Under the guidance of Occidentalism, cinema in the “Seventeen Years” was framed as part of a social and cultural project, permeated with a belief in the capacity of education and culture to enable social progress (Hoffmann, 2003.) The films had to portray the West as the root of all evil.

In the process, China produced a new discourse after constantly revising and manipulating imperialistically imposed Western theories and practices. The discourse was marked by a particular combination of the Western construction of China and the Chinese construction of the West. Both components interacted and interpenetrated with each other. This seemingly unified discursive practice of Occidentalism exists in a paradoxical relationship to the discursive practices of Orientalism, and in fact, shares with it many ideological techniques and strategies (Chen, 1995, p.5). Translation in the film industry served Occidentalism in promoting the cultural leadership of the new regime, supporting its social and political practices and criticizing them in a subtle manner.

Dubbed and subtitled films presented images of the West with both visual and audio elements. They helped Chinese people understand the Western world. Occidentalism has shaped oriental interpretations of Western societies. Translation revised the relations within and between societies, which “shape the construction and interpretation of the essential attributes of those societies” (Carrier, 1995, p. x). There existed both Occidentalist discourses and counter-discourses in the films.

Occidentalism is deeply interconnected with ideology. Ideology is often enforced by the patrons, the people or institutions that commission or publish translations (Lefevere, 2004a, p.14). Lefevere (2004b) recognized that “translation has to do with authority and legitimacy and, ultimately, with power, which is precisely why it has been and continues to be the subject of so many acrimonious debates” (p.2). The Chinese state acted as the patron for screen translation activities in the “Seventeen Years”. As Cui (2009) concluded, “in a country where the sole ‘patronage’ was the national government, translators had to choose texts from among a very limited number. Consequently, the text, preface, postscript, note, literary introduction and review could be regarded, to a large extent, as ‘rewriting’ of the original texts.” (p.306). These rewritings provided ample evidence for study into how China viewed the West, as well as how hallucinating images of the West were created.

4. Strategies Employed in the Translation of Dubbed and Subtitled Films in “Seventeen Years”

According to Nornes (2007), translation is “a form of authorship and scholarship in the domain of film theory and criticism” (p.69). The adaptation of dubbed and subtitled films took place in both audio and visual contents, and translation played an important role in transmitting lines and narratives into Chinese. For the Chinese audience, “the inability to access the original actually amplified the translation’s transformative power,” so translations could be creative, productive, and transformative with certain strategies that were employed in the process of translating imported films, most of which are borrowed from Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007, p.202–207):

- 1) Literal translation, or word for word translation is carried out by means of a direct transfer of a word/utterance from a source language (SL) into a target language (TL) aiming at proper grammar and idiomaticity of the original.



- 2) A loan is used when the very same ST word or phrase is also employed in the TT.
- 3) Calque is a type of literal translation, which is far from sounding natural in the TL.
- 4) An explicitation resorts to specification, which can make use of a hyponym (a term with a more specific meaning), or a hypernym or super-ordinate (a word with a more general meaning).
- 5) A substitution is a type of explicitation, which is very recurrent in dubbing and subtitling given the fact that sometimes the spatial limitations do not permit to insert long terms in the subtitle, or when the patrons of the film wish to replace some of the contents.
- 6) Lexical recreation is perfectly acceptable in the TL, especially if the character has also invented a word in the SL.
- 7) Omission can be said to be a must in dubbing and subtitling when subtitles are condensed and normally rephrased due to technical restrictions. The usual elements prone to being omitted in the subtitles are words, clauses, and sentences, including proper nouns, adjectives, vocatives, conjunctions, etc.
- 8) Reformulations are utilized to express an idea of the SL differently in the TL. Reformulation leads to text reduction/condensation and its purpose is to express utterances in an idiomatic way.

Moreover, it was considered insufficient for translators in China only to have knowledge about the country of the source text and to master a foreign language and mother tongue. In the “Seventeen Years”, they were also required to be knowledgeable about societal evolution and to be in touch with the leading influences in the state, so that their translations were in a way that workers and farmers could relate to. By applying the changes to the final dubbed films, translators kept the essence of the original films, yet rendering them into products that met the needs of propaganda and education. It has given these films a new afterlife in Chinese culture. The study would look into the translation of lines and narratives to further explain the purposeful rewriting in these films.

5. Purposeful Rewriting of Lines and Narratives through Translation

Occidentalism served as a means of censorship and rewriting throughout the history of literature introduction in the “Seventeen Years”. *Great Expectations* and *Salt of the Earth* are examined in this part. In the “Seventeen Years”, films served as a powerful means of persuasion in a situation where they could impress on the people a model of behavior and a belief system (Cornelium & Smith, 2002, p.16). China favored films adapted from Charles Dickens’ novels. *Great Expectations* was listed among the four films that “brought high international honor to post-war British cinema”. It was praised for its “unique national style, excellent artistic handling, and excellent performing arts”, as it showed the life of Joe, the blacksmith, a token of the working class (Bo, 1957, p.10).

The Chinese dubbed versions of both films were faithful translations at first glance. However, changes that took place in translation served as “a partial construct” of the West. As Carrier (1995) observed, these contents were “interpretations of bits of Western society or culture that get shipped out”, rather than an objective reflection of them (p. ix). The imported films provided the Chinese audiences with the imagined Western world. The Chinese media and film critics took the advantage of



it to justify the socialist regime and claimed its superiority. The following examples can help explain why and how some experiences and perceptions of the Western society were elevated to the level of acceptance by the Chinese public with the help of translation, while others were denied.

5.1 Reconstruction of the British society in history, taking the adaption of *Great Expectation* as an example

Great Expectations was David Lean's 1946 adaptation of the original novel, and was imported into China in 1957. *Great Expectations* had a great influence both at home and abroad. Joss (2001) commented that among adaptations of Dickens' works, not a single piece could go beyond *Great Expectations* and *Oliver Twist* shot in the 1940s (p.211). Many Chinese commentaries on the film indicated its influence (Wu, 1957, p.8-10).

As Arif Dirlik pointed out, unilinear European history has been taken as the model to represent China's past in order to attain China's admission into universal history (Dirlik, 1987, p.158). Cultural translation must reflect cultural differences and respect the source culture (Sinha, 2021, p.11). However Chinese film translators were not supposed to follow the rule. Translators adjusted the background of the story by merging the political system and social structure of the West with those of China. The following part demonstrates the process of constructing an idealized Western society through the adjustment of the political system and social structure in the process of film translation.

The original novel *Great Expectations* was published from 1860 to 1861 in the British newspaper as a series of novel stories. Film translators should in no case mistake how to translate the names of the rulers. In the Chinese version, the British king is translated as “皇上” (emperor, representing the highest power in ancient Chinese societies), and the queen is translated as “皇后” (empress). It changed the political system in the United Kingdom into that of the former Qing dynasty. The purposeful change took place throughout the entire film. For example, when the guards were on the chase of an escaped prisoner, they knocked on the door of the blacksmith's and asked the blacksmith, Joe to repair the handcuffs for them:

Officer: Excuse me, Ladies and Gentlemen, but I'm on a chase in the name of the king.

士兵：各位先生、夫人请原谅，我是奉皇命进行追捕。

(Back translation: Excuse me, Ladies and Gentlemen, but I'm on a chase in the name of the emperor.)

The translated version changed the name of the king to “emperor”. Similar cases are found in the following. When the blacksmith's wife asked why the guards were looking for the blacksmith, the soldier mentioned “king” again,

Officer: Mrs, speaking for myself, I shall reply for the honor and pleasure of this fine acquaintance. Speaking for the king, I answer, a little job done.

士兵：夫人，作为我个人来说，今天跟你见面是很荣幸的。作为公事来说，找他有点事。

(Back translation: Mrs, speaking for myself, I shall reply for the honor and pleasure of this fine



acquaintance. However, I have something to deal with him for official duties.)

When Joe went to London to visit Pip, the conversation between the two men was more specific,

Joe: Pip, dear old chap, you growed and you swelled and you gentle old folk, that's to be sure, you are an honor to your king and country.

乔：匹普，老朋友，你长高了，变俊了，是个上等人了。说实话，你是我们皇上跟国家的荣誉啊。

(Back translation: Joe: Pip, dear old friend, you grew, became smart and turned into a gentleman. To be frank, you are an honor to our emperor and our country.)

Joe's words indicated that the king or the highest political power in Victorian Britain was also known as "Emperor" as in ancient China, while "your king and country" was translated into "我们皇上跟国家" (our emperor and our country). Translated scripts exaggerated the authority of the British king into that of ancient Chinese emperors. As John Fairbank (1995) observed, China was different because of "the strength of the Chinese tradition of comprehensive imperial rule", and the imperial rule was officially regarded as a psychological burden of cultural inferiority, thus preventing China from developing (p.22). While "absolute anti-feudalism had a full display in Chinese literature" (Zhang, 2018, p.6), a translated work featured absolute monarchy, reminding an "Old China" for the nation to transcend. Joe's identity as a citizen indicated that "the city as the embodiment of all social evils and moral corruptions, as a monolith threatening to crush the natural purity of the countryside" (Meisner, 1982, p.100). The altered script with the dark atmosphere linked cities to the embodiment of a capitalist regime, similar to the ancient China with absolute monarchy. The evils in cities posed a threat to the socialist regime. For Chinese audiences who had not been exposed to the real Western societies, these changes in the lines were persuasive.

The Chinese version strengthened class characteristics. In various reviews of *Great Expectations*, one of the most prominent clues was the protagonist Pip's pursuit and disillusionment of "gentleman". For instance, in *An Introduction of Great Expectations in Movie Story*, a dominant film magazine in China in the 60s, one commentator Wu Yang (伍洋) took advantage of "the life of a gentleman" to comment on the film:

".....匹普常常感到自己出身低微，艾司得拉比他高贵多了。为了她的缘故，匹普梦想做一个上等人。.....匹普到了伦敦.....他的梦想达到了。成了个上等人，可以去爱艾司得拉了。.....然而铁匠的忠厚与朴实，使匹普觉得惭愧。上等人的生活在他心里开始有了阴影。.....匹普做梦也想不到自己的大恩人原来就是一个逃犯。匹普的思想混乱了；上等人的名誉也动摇了。....." (Wu, 1957, p.8-9)

(Back translation: Pip often felt that he was of humble origin and that Estella was much nobler than him. For her sake, Pip dreamed of being a gentleman. ...Pip arrived in London...his dream came true. He became a gentleman, and could fall in love with Estella. ...but the blacksmith's honesty and simplicity made Pip feel ashamed. The life of a gentleman began to have a shadow



in his heart. ...Pip never dreamed that his benefactor turned out to be a fugitive. Pip's mind was confused; the reputation of a gentleman was shaken. ...)

In the short comment, “上等人” (gentleman appears four times. The word was taken from a translation rather than the original script. In the movie, “gentleman” appeared at Pip's first sight of Estella, who was humiliated by the latter and later appeared in his dreams. At that time, Pip was still a child. In the dialogue with Biddy, he said,

Pip: Biddy, I want to be a gentleman.

Biddy: A gentleman? Oh, I wouldn't if I was you, Pip. I don't think it will answer.

匹普：比蒂，我想做一个上等人。

比蒂：上等人？我要是你才不想，匹普。这是空想。

(Back translation: Pip: Biddy, I want to be a superior person.

Biddy: A superior person? I wouldn't if I were you, Pip. That is nonsense.)

The concept of gentleman in the translated film was different from that in English. It referred to a privileged individual who gained admission to powerful positions through wealth, or the bureaucratic examination system in ancient China (Cornelius & Smith 2002, p. 18). Translators further provided the antonym of “gentleman” in Pip's lines,

Pip: Biddy, I have a particular reason for wanting to be a gentleman.

Biddy: Well you know best, Pip. But don't you think you are happy as you are?

Pip: I'm not happy as I am. I am coarse and common.

Biddy: Coarse and common, are you, Pip? Who said so?

Pip: Beautiful young lady in Miss Havisham's. I want to be a gentleman for the sake of her.

匹普：比蒂，我要做上等人是有特殊缘故的。

比蒂：当然可以了，匹普。不过你现在这样不也很快活吗？

匹普：现在这样不快活。我是一个下等人。

比蒂：你是个下等人，谁说的？

匹普：哈莫森家那个漂亮小姐说的。为了她，我要做一个上等人。

(Back Translation: Pip, Biddy, I have a particular reason for wanting to be a superior person.

Biddy: Well you know best, Pip. But don't you think you are happy as you are?

Pip: I'm not happy as I am. I am an inferior person.

Biddy: An inferior person, are you, Pip? Who said so?

Pip: Beautiful young lady in Miss Havisham's. I want to be a superior person for the sake of



her.)

The antonym of “gentleman” refers to vulgar and ordinary people. But the Chinese audience had no access to it. Instead, they concluded that Pip was “下等人” (inferior person). Translators cleansed British cultural features of “gentleman” by not translating it into “绅士”, but emphasized the social status using the Chinese word “等” (rank, or level). This change revealed the profound distrust of the cities as sites of foreign dominators and their servants, urban intellectuals, as their lives were destined to be unhappy (Meisner, 1982, p. 98). The translated version denied citizens’ pursuit of happiness by labeling them with tags of “gentlemen”, a symbol from the capitalist world under criticism in the socialist regime.

The translated version of the following two lines further strengthened the class gap between Pip and Joe and Pip’s attitude towards Joe,

Pip: As I watched Joe that Tuesday morning, dressed grotesquely in a suit, let me confess, that if I could have kept him away by paying money, I certainly would have paid money. In trying to become a gentleman, I succeeded in becoming a snob.

匹普：那个星期二的早晨，当我看见乔乡里乡气穿了套新衣服，说实话，如果我能给他点钱打发他走，我宁愿给他钱。我一心想当上等人，可是我却成了一个势利的人。

(Back translation: That Tuesday morning, when I saw Joe in his new suit, like a village man in the countryside, I must confess that if I could have kept him away by paying money, I certainly would have paid money. In trying to become a gentleman, I succeeded in becoming a snob.)

The word “grotesquely” was translated into “乡里乡气” (a village man in the countryside). Seeing a countryman filled Pip with disdain and made him uncomfortable. The change was in line with the national attitude towards the West, as they were portrayed to treat the working class as “full of whims and good at grotesquery and absurdity”, revealing their fear of the socialist revolution (Mao, 1958, p. 58). To emphasize the value of rural over urban life is a typical feature of Occidentalism (Cowan, 2020, p.244). In Pip’s confession, he imagined that Estella thought in the same way,

Pip: Long after I’ve gone to bed that night, I thought of Estella, and how common she would consider Joe, a mere blacksmith. I thought how he and my sister would sit in the kitchen, and how Miss Havisham and Estella never sat in the kitchen. It was far above the level of such common things.

匹普：那天晚上我睡在床上，久久还想着艾司得拉。她一定觉得乔是个很下贱的铁匠，跟我姐姐坐在厨房里，可是她们可不会坐在厨房里。她们比我们可高得多了。

(Back translation: Pip: Long after I’ve gone to bed that night, I thought of Estella, and how wretched she would consider Joe, a mere blacksmith. I thought how he and my sister would sit in the kitchen, and how Miss Havisham and Estella never sat in the kitchen. They are far nobler than us.)



Translators made a significant change by translating “common” into “下贱” (wretched). The confession of a child indicated that the identity of the working people was “wretched”. It was in 1958 when “criticism and rejection of the Western literature replaced the initial positive reception” (Cui, 2009, p. 314). Translation further widened the gap between classes by degrading Joe, the representative of the working class. Pip, an urban citizen, became a symbol of “Western capitalist corruption, degenerate urban luxury, cultural artificiality, and moral decadence” under the guidance of Occidentalism (Buruma & Margalit, 2004, p.41). Translation helped create the image of rural residents with pure hearts and souls, while urban residents despised the working class and peasants.

Political ideology was the yardstick as well as the most prominent feature of literary translation from the 1950s to the 1970s (Cui, 2009, p. 306). *Great Expectations* were accorded to the ancient Chinese feudal dynasties through translation. The commentaries emphasized not the humanistic feelings, nor the irony to the capitalist society, but the futile efforts to pursue a better life. A comment by Shao Dan (邵丹) in 1957 read, “From the film, I can see some of my own shadows in real life. Many people worked hard to study English, and they decided to go abroad and do something to become gentlemen. But those who study hard could not even earn a living” (p.60). The Chinese dubbed version emphasized different social identities. It echoed a literature of alienation within capitalist societies, to focus on “a disillusioned self”, “the pathos of a lost self and the frustration of an unsuccessful search for such self” (Yuan, Dong & Zheng, 1981, p.9). Furthermore, the translated version valued rural life more than urban life. The protagonist Pip became the target of criticism, and his pursuit of city life was destined to fail.

The translated *Great Expectations* portrayed a twisted image of Victorian Britain. The success of the film was due to its accordance with the Chinese ideology, and taking an exclusive stance to the Western values. Whether the historical “facts” in *Great Expectations* were correct or not was not important. The audience read into the contrasting Other as a hope for remodeling and rescuing their own country and their own selves (Chen, 1995, p.41). For this reason, the translated version was successful in China.

5.2 Reconstruction of the social reality in the United States, taking the adaptation of *Salt of the Earth* as an example

Salt of the Earth was the only American film officially introduced to China in the “Seventeen Years”. The translation of *Salt of the Earth* achieved great success. It presented the life and labor of the American people as well as the administration of the US government, and its appearance coincided with the literature vacuum of the related period. The film was completed in 1954 and introduced to China in 1960. It immediately triggered heated discussions in Chinese film and literary circles. Critics such as Ming Ye (鸣野) (1954, p. 90-92), Feng Zi (凤子) (1960, p.40-44), Ma Shaobo (马少波) (1960, p.21-22), etc., and anonymous reports (1955, p.94-96; 1960, p.22-23) praised its greatness. It deserves academic attention for being “developed in contrast to their stylized image of the West” (Carrier, 1995, p. 6). The film offered a background where “American citizens be found possessors of capital, or property in the means of production”, and “an increasing misery was imposed upon the working class” (Eastman, 1955, p.59). It echoed the social situation in China, justifying its economic and political reform.



Salt of the Earth was a story of confrontation between the workers and the mining company. The workers' union meeting served as the most important plot in the film. The workers were dissatisfied with their working conditions, and they went on strike. During the 6-month strike, the company never negotiated with the workers and refused to meet their demands. At the same time, the company applied to the court for an injunction, requiring workers to return to work and threatening that if they did not return to work, they would be arrested. Under this circumstance, the workers held a union meeting to discuss countermeasures. When the protagonist Ramon called on the workers to continue the strike, he said:

If we give up now, if we obey this rotten Taft-Hartley, we are fools and cowards. There is only one way, fight them! Fight them all!

The workers reacted differently to his call, and the lines of the original text were:

How?

We gain nothing.

They'll arrest us!

Afterward, the discussion faded and was replaced by the narration of the protagonist's wife, Esperanza. The workers were still fiercely discussing relevant issues, but the audience could only hear the narrative:

Esperanza's voice: The men quarreled. They made brave speeches. It seems that Brother Barnes was right -- the company had them coming and going. It seems the strike was lost.

The Chinese version mentioned several important details, including women joining the picket line, and the fighting spirit of the working class, etc. But the narrative and several lines before it was changed. The narrative was a combination of limited and omniscient viewpoints, showing that the workers could not of themselves arrive at a socialist consciousness (Lu, 2022, p.57). The scene could be used as a powerful image against the official conservative Other, whose view was that China should learn from the economic and political stance of the West (Chen, 1995, p.58). The Chinese version of *Salt of the Earth* was a revolutionary film and followed the style of the enlightenment-revolution-liberation film. Therefore, translators changed the quarreling lines and the narrative, altering the key plots and contents. To show the education of the protagonist's wife, her Hispanic dialect was also erased. The lines of the workers were replaced by these words:

得了! 斗也没用!

他们要抓人。

抓就抓好了。

我们必须团结。

(Back translation: Leave it! Fighting is useless!

They want to arrest people.



Let them do it!

We must unite.)

Translators added several lines to the original script, and the original narrative by Esperanza was erased. The translated lines showed the fighting spirit of the working class which did not appear in the original film and highlighted braveness, such as “we must unite” and “in short, we must unite together”. They were intended to build up an ideological strength and alleviate the traumatic outcomes caused by the weaknesses of the workers. Key plots such as workers were scared and the strike failed were deleted, and translators added lines of braveness to make up for the blank after the deletion. The struggle of the working class in the film visualized an international war of communism against imperialism, embodying a “revolutionary aesthetics of heroism” (Chan, 2019, p.2). Translation had an impact on the audiences’ responses to the film. Ma (1960) wrote in his review “This film is full of fighting spirit and great enthusiasm. Every worker’s image is full of resistance and optimism”, whereas the original plot was totally different (p.21). The review was affected by translation, not the original film. It also showed that the workers’ reconciled spirit added by translators had successfully stayed in the hearts of the Chinese audience.

Any scripts and plots violating China's national policy at the time were altered. The protagonist Ramon complained about the working conditions of the workers:

The safety of the men -- that's more important! Five accidents this week, all because of speed-up.

工人们的安全——那才更重要! 就这个星期, 五起事故了, 公司管都不管!

(Back translation: The safety of workers - that is more important! This week, five accidents, and the company does not care!)

It was Ramon’s response to the manager on site when he asked the workers to check the explosives and pipelines to prevent accidents. Ramon’s words highlighted the company’s indifference to employees’ safety for better efficiency. In the translated version, the cause of the accident was dropped. At the time, China was undergoing a vigorous Great Leap Forward movement and efficiency was paramount, as “the initiative and creativity of the labor people have always been abundant” (MacFarquhar, 1983, p.54). Under such circumstances, accidents triggered by the company’s accelerating production speed did not conform to the socialist ideology. In addition, the translated version disputed the intellectuals’ ambition of creating a new Westernized culture as a solution to China’s social, economic and political plight. The workers in the film were portrayed as objects. They were constantly threatened by accidents, violence, and indifference, but they showed a vigorous revolutionary spirit. The image justified China’s pursuit of socialism, making those who seek to become more like the West illegitimate (Thomas, 1992, p.225).

Another example, one worker was excavated from the mine and sent to the ambulance. His wife rushed up, but the comforting lines of the workers for her were removed in the translation:

Now Mrs. Kalinsky, he's gonna be all right...

His leg's broken, that's all...



Come on now, you can see him in the hospital...

In the Chinese version the lines were removed and replaced with the actions of the fellow workers. The fellow workers were more concerned with the miners' hats, and translators added the lines “帮他 把帽子戴上” (Back Translation: Helping him put the hat on). The altered lines maintained the image of brave and revolutionary workers. The image of pro-socialism workers makes socialism elements in the US noteworthy, building a different social reality in the US.

Salt of the Earth displayed darkness, decay, and sins in America and strengthened China's political and cultural discourse. The workers had anti-Western, pro-socialist, and pro-communist stance in the film. Their images were different from those in the origin film. *Salt of the Earth* displayed an Occidental West, which was that of Socialist Realism, and showed the new reality of a socialist world, the new political, economic and cultural conditions and the leading role of the working class. Translators helped create an image of people who were actively shaping their destiny instead of believing that fate could change their world (Thomson-Wohlgemuth, 2004, p.499). In both examples, the Occidental revised Western worlds generated a tone of absolutism and essentialism that helped to make the notion of China unexceptionable and expected, even in the Western sphere (Carrier, 1995, p.4).

Translators adjusted three main areas of the film: the workers' union became closer to the Chinese socialist workers' organization; the humanity of workers gave way to fighting spirits and class struggles; the political structure of the United States was also changed. These changes were successful because the film has been highly effective in its educational mission of uniting people and resisting the ideological invasion of foreign powers (Zhang, 2018). The film was distorted in systematic ways in order to bring it in line with the Chinese notions of pro-socialism political and economic society. As Pearce pointed out, “Americans were only talking to themselves about themselves”, the Chinese were doing the same (Pearce 1965, p.232).

In general, the characters in *Salt of the Earth* were positive. And the Chinese mainstream media required an omnipotent heroic image. One should not be afraid of difficulties and had to be resourceful, smart and poised. None of the characters in any of the films could meet the standard. They were criticized for their selfishness and cowardness (Cheng, 1958, p.10-12). This also happened to another dubbed film imported from Britain, *The Proud Valley*. Its theme was basically the same as that of *Salt of the Earth*. The “no recruitment” signs hanging on factories represented the sluggish performance of the capitalist economy. But the workers did not organize a union to fight, instead they wandered around for the sake of living. At the end of the film, in order to save the mining workers, the protagonist decided to blow up the collapsed tunnel, which was a heroic movement. However, film critics emphasized his inability to fight against the capitalists. Cheng Yuli (程毓里) (1958) wrote “.....promoting class reconciliation, thus objectively weakening and reducing the role of the working class struggle” (p.11). Even though the protagonist sacrificed himself, the film could not meet the standard of both the authority and critics. It was not until such films evoked “the romance of revolution and a heroic future”, could it become a media with glorified and revolutionary cause (Donald, 2000, p.62). As a result, dubbed and subtitled films from the West in the “Seventeen Years” suffered setbacks and difficulties.



The two translated films, *Great Expectations* and *Salt of the Earth* altered plots, lines and narratives with an Occidentalism approach, demonstrating how China in the “Seventeen Years” portrayed the West as doomed societies in economic and political senses. In *Great Expectations*, the historical British society was twisted into the ancient dynasties of China. In *Salt of the Earth*, the reality of the United States was changed to meet the desires of Chinese audiences. In both cases, translation had shown its transformative powers. As Nornes (2007) put it, “the global volume of translation is marked by inequity when broken down by language group” (p.66). By actively participating in altering backgrounds, plots, lines and narratives, translation had given the translated films a new afterlife in the Chinese culture.

6. Retention of Profound Literary Content and Humanism in Translation

In the “Seventeen Years”, the aesthetic principles and thematic scope of art and literature were established and taken for granted (Larson, 2011, p.113-114). Screen translation of China became “a translation from a source text in which the translator had spotted the new and the positive and had transferred it correctly, i.e., with respect to a socialist reality” (Thomson-Wohlgemuth, 2004, p.502). As Lin observed, “‘Seventeen Year’ literature took an absolutely repudiated attitude towards any attempt or complex concerning bourgeois, liberalization and privatization of all kinds.” (Lin, 2022, p. 55). Humanism as a value of the bourgeois gave way to propaganda and political constraints. The films imported were “speak bitterness” stories of workers and peasants against the feudal and imperialist present in a vocabulary supplied by the state (Hershatter, 1993, p.105). Translators did their best to portray humanistic spirits in imported films. To retain the humanistic values was a symbol of counter-Occidental discourse. It repelled the authoritative Chinese Occidental discourse and acknowledged the humanistic values. Despite altered lines and narratives in the two films, the literary contents and humanism, “the true value of our own artistic tradition” were retained in the corresponding Chinese versions (Hong, 1983, p.191-194). Translation helped to keep these elements in the following three aspects.

6.1 Female images

The female images in Chinese literature during the “Seventeen Years” followed the guidelines of state policies. Instead of serving family members the females helped men grow into excellent revolutionaries (Pan, 1993, p.39-44). They were made into ideal beneficiaries of the new order (Chen,2003, p. 289). The female images created not only “a national cinematic style”, but also “renegotiated with the demands of cinematic realism since the Republican era” and “created the desire for and pleasure of communion with the Party” (Chan, 2012, p.206). A socialist feminist vision attempted to disrupt gender and class hierarchies, and usually employed the party as a benefactor-father for their growth.

Salt of the Earth presented Esperanza, a female character with unique personalities. She shared braveness, thoughtfulness and other characteristics with the idealized socialist female image. At the same time, she was sensitive and melancholy, as she questioned her husband what was more important than the family and union, which was an intolerable speech for a female character. Translation denied the union’s role as a benefactor-father to the working class, when Esperanza questioned her husband:



Esperanza: What has it got me, your union?

Ramon: Esperanza, have you forgotten what it was like before the union came? When Estella was a baby, and we couldn't even afford a doctor when she got sick? It was for our families! We met in graveyards to build that union!

爱丝波朗莎：工会给了我什么好处？

拉蒙：爱丝波朗莎，你难道忘记了有工会之前是什么样子的吗？当爱斯特拉生孩子的时候，我们甚至都请不来一个医生！那不全靠工会！工会能够成立真是不容易！

Translation retained the lines of the original script, in which Esperanza's opinions on the union were not in line with the mainstream Occidental discourse of China. She questioned the union. She lacked "courage, optimism, and the noble sentiment of brave sacrifice", characterized of the females of that period (Tian, 2018, p.190). Translators made efforts to cover up Esperanza's feminine and delicateness and opinions. She displayed her emotions, longing for love and showing her caring spirits for her husband and children other than the union or the working class, revealing her individual thinking. As an individual, Esperanza made up the image of a truly free, equal woman missing from the screens of Chinese cinema. She filled the hearts of Chinese audiences who could only find dogmatic and stereotyped female characters in all literature.

6.2 Love and affection

The two translated films featured love and affection between human beings. Love in the "Seventeen Years" literature often originated from the common belief and enthusiasm of the revolutionary comrades. Only revolutionary friendship on the spiritual level or mutual idealism could be tolerated, and "love stories" became "political stories" (Cai, 2018, p. 149). Love was suppressed as "bourgeois ideology" (Chen, 1995, p.83). Romance was hinted at occasionally through the shot/reverse-shot convention until the revolutionary goal was accomplished (Chan, 2012, p.226). Liu (2015) observed that in the "Seventeen Years", even films imported from the Soviet bloc encountered severe censorship on the theme of love, which was deleted, silenced or re-dubbed with different scripts (p.20-23).

However, true love originates from the attraction between men and women, and it comes not entirely from the unanimity of faiths, nor from the pursuit of revolutionary goals. Imported films from the West maintained the humanistic values of pure affection between men and women, and allowed love to exist among not only those in the working class, but also between every individual. Ramon and Esperanza in *Salt of the Earth* along with Joe and Bidy in *Great Expectations* were such examples. At the end of *Salt of the Earth*, Ramon said to his wife:

Esperanza ... thank you ... for your Dignity.

埃斯普拉沙，谢谢你，为我所做的一切。

(Back translation: Esperanza, thank you, for everything you did for me.)

Ramon regarded Esperanza as his wife more than his comrade in the dubbed version. He appreciated her deeds as "为我所做的一切" (everything you did for me), not for the union or victory of the working



class. The couple joined their hands out of pure affection towards each other. Similarly, Bidy came to Joe to take care of him, and Joe's life changed significantly after Bidy arrived. They got married out of affection for each other and started to build their family and live a better life. *Great Expectations* also focused on the innocent affections of Pip towards Estella. The first time Pip was invited to Miss Havisham's estate, he fell in love with Estella, a good-looking girl who mocked him bitterly. For a Chinese audience, it was hard to tell why Pip loved that girl because a boy from the bottom of the society needed to go through revolution then could he understand the meaning of love between comrades. Love in the films was reminiscent of the Kantian definition of love: "good will, affection, promoting the happiness of others and finding joy in their happiness" (Singer, 1984, p.377). The effect should be viewed as an important function of literature and art, which encourages one's new vision and a persistent pursuit of a better future (Yang, 1981, p.29). Even an unfamiliar screenshot representing life and love in a remote West offered a welcome dose of relief and recreation. In retaining these lines, translation helped to "leave something to be desired" for the audiences (Robin, 1992, p.259) and enriched the charisma of the characters in the films.

Great Expectations did not affirm the demand of a bright future for the Party and its "triumphant" socialist course. Class struggles were foregrounded between the union and the company, between Pip and Joe but the characters in both films found their true love. The couples were beautifully portrayed representing the humanist spirit, which strives for "individuality, human rights, and freedom against a feudalist autocracy", or as the films indicated, a capitalist society (Zhang, 1981, p.17). Love confronted the Occidental discourse, and earned its place.

6.3 Respect for individuals

The two imported films not only provided illustrations of female images, love and attraction between human beings, but also respect for individuals. It was an official policy that "bourgeois ideology, especially individualism should be cleansed out" from people (Buruma & Margalit, 2004, p.42). A literary character should be distinctive and unique. Marston Anderson (1990) pointed out that the atmosphere of "Seventeen Year" literature "began erasing the distinction between 'I' and 'they', between the self and the society that had been an indispensable basis for the practice of critical realism, subsuming both in a collective 'we'." (p.202). An individual's personal feelings are in the position of being excluded and being obscured (Tian, 2018, p.191). Wang (1997) believed that by highlighting the sublimation of romance to higher political goals—the "recycling of the individual's libidinal energy for revolutionary purposes", romance and ideology worked hand in hand in Chinese revolutionary films to lure spectators into an aestheticized politics, thus denying the existence of individuals (p.124). In the two films, however, the main characters were depicted as individuals with their own principles, and they could not easily be categorized into positive or negative characters. Every single worker in *Salt of the Earth* was depicted as individuals, for they cared about their lives, wealth and happiness more than a successful strike. The Sheriff and his men were not totally villains, because they rushed to aid injured workers, and they also showed their respect for individual life. In *Great Expectations*, Pip was accepted into the bourgeois circle regardless of Pip's family background. Characters in imported films in the "Seventeen Years" were respected as individuals. In such cases, the translators had tried to communicate that neither the East nor the West are, or should be fundamentally privileged over



another, however the specific cultural and historical conditions might be. This was another manifestation of humanistic spirits and it served as a counter-discourse to the Chinese ideology.

The Soviet Union was often considered as the leader and pioneer in Chinese film discourse. Introducing Soviet films into China was an act of mapping which allowed them to construct and represent that affinity along the cultural lines that ordered the world (Chan, 2012, p.26). However, Clark (1987b) argued that the initial appeal of minority nationality films lay in their ability to include the exotic, romance, dance, and other generally colorful elements lacking from politically dourer mainstream films, which was similar to dubbed and subtitled films imported from the West (p.20). Somehow, films from the West were different from those from the Soviet Union, in which at times they could help betray their propagandist purpose and constitute a legitimate space of mild dissent against mainstream aesthetics and ideology (Du, 2015, p.141). Translation helped *Great Expectations* and *Salt of the Earth* achieve that effect. Although the two films partly shouldered the mission to denounce the capitalist world, the language and visual representation of these films made a difference in the Chinese screen.

Translation had the ability to reveal and foreground public consciousness as well as the role in creating solidarity and cohesion between same-culture masses and a schism between various classes (Rashid& Fattah,2020). Characters in these films did not sacrifice individual gains and happiness for the sake of the nation. As Leo Ou-fan Lee pointed out, “it must be incredible to find the linkage between humanism and modernism” (Lee, 1990, p.65). The aesthetic practice in the imported dubbed films from Western countries did not conform completely to the Chinese political discourse. The authorities somehow tolerated these films without enforcing the socialist dogma or classical editing styles. By balancing Occidentalist and counter-Occidentalist discourses, translation legitimized the films to survive.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the paper argues that translation had reconstructed the Western cultural elements in a subtle manner to conform to the authoritative Occidentalist discourse. However, translation repelled the authoritative Occidentalist discourse at the same time. Translation confronted the dilemma of ideology and human nature. As a means of cultural exchange between the East and the West, the images in the production and translation of films are thought-provoking.

Occidentalism had a strong influence on the imported films in the “Seventeen Years”. Although films imported from the West suffered non-linear narratives and plot change, translation helped to retain profound literary content and artistic excellence. As Tina Mai Chen (2009b) argued, the films in the “Seventeen Years” required a rethinking, because they were “not as a period of disengagement from world cinemas, but as part of linked political, social, economic and cultural projects within China that brought the national to the international—and vice versa” (p.159). The translated dubbed films in the “Seventeen Years” functioned as both a straightforward mechanism of social control, and a distraction from the stark foreign social reality and a glorified and heroic revolutionary cause. They featured both Occidentalist discourse and counter-Occidentalist discourse. Translation had played a significant role in helping these films survive. As Chow (1995) pointed out, “the translation between



cultures is never West translating East or East translating West in terms of verbal languages alone but rather a process that encompasses an entire range of activities” (p.192). A study on these films contributes to a closer look into how China viewed the West in the “Seventeen Years”, laying the foundation for further research and studies into the topic.

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