

Original Paper

A Study on the Translation Strategies of Beijing Opera' s Songs from the Perspective of Stylistics—The Case of the English Version of *Farewell My Lady*

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Abstract

Stylistics is a discipline that examines the characteristics and nature of text genres and their governing principles, closely related to various fields. While stylistics has a long research history in other countries, it has only gained traction in China over the past few decades. Despite the emergence of multiple schools of thought, research on the integration of stylistics with specific disciplines remains in its early stages. From a stylistic perspective, translating Beijing Opera songs and lyrics is a complex and challenging task. It requires translators to accurately convey linguistic information while considering factors such as musicality, cultural connotation, character features, and performance style of Beijing Opera. Therefore, in the process of translation, translators must employ various strategies, such as domestication and foreignization, to achieve optimal translation outcomes. This paper discusses the translation strategies of Beijing Opera lyrics, taking 'English Translation Series of a Hundred Beijing Opera Classics (First Series) - Farewell My Lady' as an example, examines the translation strategies of Beijing Opera lyrics from the vocabulary and syntax levels, and combines them with the characteristics of Beijing Opera songs and lyrics.

Keywords

Stylistics, Beijing Opera Lyrics, Beijing Opera Songs, Translation Strategies, Farewell My Lady

1. Introduction

Since the 1980s, China's economic growth has highlighted traditional Chinese culture globally. Beijing Opera, a national treasure with over two hundred years of history, is a key representative of this culture, gaining international acclaim as a valuable cultural heritage. Scholars at home and abroad have

extensively studied its translation.

The charm of Beijing Opera lies in its popular songs, which are widely sung in the world. The translation of Beijing Opera songs is vital for enhancing global appreciation and promoting cultural exchanges between China and the world.

At present, China is increasingly emphasizing cultural construction, especially the promotion of excellent traditional Chinese culture. Beijing Opera has received substantial support, but its translation is challenging due to its performative, programmatic and rhythmic characteristics. Cultural elements like rhyme and allusion further complicate song translations. In addition, research on translating Beijing Opera songs also need to consider cultural factors such as rhyme, counterpoint and allusion, which undoubtedly increases the difficulty of translation. Therefore, at present, the research on the translation of Beijing opera songs is still insufficient. According to the statistics of China Knowledge Network, there are more than one hundred studies focusing on the translation of Beijing Opera, but there are only six studies on the translation of Beijing Opera songs. China is still in the preliminary stage of development in the translation of Beijing Opera songs.

1.1 Significance and Objectives

Stylistics, a theory of style that has long appeared in ancient Greece and Rome, has evolved into a relatively complete theoretical system in the world so far. In recent years, stylistics has been applied to various writing styles in translation, research on Beijing Opera song translation remains limited. The Beijing Opera Hundreds of Classics Translated into English Series experts who clarify script meanings and provide suitable translations. Translating Beijing Opera is very challenging; the translator needs to be familiar with traditional culture while mastering the translation skills. As the country emphasizes promoting traditional Chinese culture globally, enhancing Beijing Opera translations and exploring diverse methods is crucial. The importance of the songs in Beijing Opera highlights the need for further research on the translation of Beijing Opera songs based on the perspective of stylistics. This study is conducive to the understanding of Beijing Opera by more people in the international community. The process of translating Beijing Opera songs is not only a process of language conversion, but also an important way of cultural dissemination and art sharing. The advancement of this study will help its dissemination on a global scale, which will improve international understanding. Translating these songs involves language conversion and cultural dissemination, aiding global outreach and preserving this intangible cultural heritage. This study also provides scholars with the opportunity for in-depth research, promoting academic discussions on Beijing Opera's literature, history, and theories of Beijing Opera theoretical academic exploration.

This paper explores effective strategies for translating Beijing Opera songs from a stylistic perspective, focusing on the stylistic perspective. Taking the series of Beijing Opera translation books “English Translation Series of a Hundred Beijing Opera Classics (First Series) - *Farewell My Lady*” jointly published by the People’s University of China Publishing House and the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Publishing House as the object of the study, this paper will systematically analyze

methods for addressing language, culture, and rhythm in translation.

1.2 Research Object

Beijing Opera's Songs and Lyrics: The artistic expression of Beijing Opera is fundamentally rooted in the interpretation of narratives through song and dance. In performances of Beijing Opera, music plays a pivotal role, particularly the vocal component, which integrates two of the four essential skills in Beijing Opera performances: singing, reciting, dancing, and combat. Specifically, "singing" pertains to the performance of songs, while "reciting" involves recitation imbued with musicality. These two elements complement one another and collectively form the core of song and dance within the performing art of Beijing Opera. The practices of singing and reciting in Beijing Opera are distinguished by their musicality and chant-like qualities.

In Beijing Opera, songs and lyrics play a pivotal role. The linguistic characteristics of Beijing Opera songs are primarily manifested in the aesthetic quality of their rhymes, the precision of their counterpoints, and the extensive use of rhetorical devices, including metaphors and allusions. Additionally, these songs are imbued with rich traditional Chinese cultural connotations, drawing from sources such as Confucianism, Taoism, and classical Chinese poetry and songs. These attributes render the translation of Beijing Opera songs a particularly challenging endeavor. The local populace of Beijing traditionally refers to the act of watching opera as either smooth and clear or heavy and resonant, possessing a distinct richness. The singing primarily comprises two styles: Xipi and Erhuang. Xipi is predominantly employed to evoke a tense atmosphere and is narrative in focus, whereas Erhuang emphasizes lyrical expression. The melodies of Beijing Opera are noted for their richness and variety, exhibiting a high degree of expressiveness and emotional resonance. Performers are attentive to their vocal delivery and emotional expression, skillfully integrating the feelings of their characters with their singing, thereby allowing the audience to profoundly experience the characters' emotional states. Furthermore, the singing in Beijing Opera adeptly utilizes various musical elements, such as melody, rhythm, and dynamics, to depict character traits and emotional changes of the characters.

Farewell My Lady: A traditional Beijing Opera play, based on the Historical Records of Xiang Yu, narrates the events surrounding the decline of the Qin Dynasty and the ensuing conflict between the Chu and Han Dynasties. Liu Bang, the ruler of the Han Dynasty, venerates Han Xin as his general and launches an offensive against the territory of Chu. Xiang Yu, the sovereign of Western Chu, exhibits a headstrong and self-assured demeanor, placing his trust in Li Zuo Che, a duplicitous general of the Han Dynasty. Consequently, he hastens to go on the expedition himself, despite the objections of his consort, Yu Ji, and the counsel of his ministers.

In the context of the historical narrative, it is observed that Xiang Yu was compelled to accompany his advisor. During the duel at Jiu Li Mountain, he encountered a surprise attack from multiple directions and subsequently found himself besieged at Gaixia. The Chu army also succumbed to Zhang Liang's strategic maneuvers, which led to their disarray and fragmentation. As the situation worsened, Yu Ji, fearing for the king's safety, took her own life, weeping as she did so. Overcome with shame at the

prospect of returning to Jiangdong in the presence of his parents, Xiang Yu likewise chose to end his life by sword. Thus, the renowned hero of his time met his demise at the Wu River. This thesis aims to examine the translation of Beijing Opera songs in relation to the musical compositions of this classic play.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *The Status and Trends of Stylistic Studies at Home and Abroad*

Research on stylistics in foreign contexts has its origins in the study of rhetoric during the ancient Greek and Roman periods. As early as 100 A.D., Demetrius authored which concentrated on the exploration of stylistic issues. The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle also contributed to the field with his work *Cicero* and Longinus expanded upon the principles of oratory and aesthetics. The publication *Western Stylistics* that since the beginning of the 20th century, the adoption of modern linguistic methodologies has enabled stylistic research party got rid of the limitations of traditional impressionistic and intuitive analyses. This evolution has led to the systematic and scientific development of European Historical Linguistics and General Linguistics, which emerged as influential independent disciplines in the beginning of the 20th century. Consequently, stylistics, in conjunction with linguistics, has gradually evolved into a cross-disciplinary field with a recognized degree of independence.

The study of stylistics in combination with linguistics has gradually become a cross-disciplinary subject with certain independent status. Its research has also become more mature, with the emergence of more professional stylistics scholars and research results, such as Finnish stylist Enkvist's "The Definition of Essay Styles", Leach's "Guide to the Linguistic Analysis of English Poetry" (Leach, 1964), and Crystal & Davy's "A Survey of the English Language Styles", In 2014, the first handbook of stylistics appeared in the West, *The Lauterich Handbook of Stylistics* (Burke, 2014), followed by a second handbook from the University of Cambridge. These two handbooks, together with Bloomsbury Press guide to stylistics, have brought the study of Western stylistics to a more mature stage (Guo, 1981), In 2018, Edinburgh University Press published *Contemporary stylistics: language, cognition and interpretation*, a series of textbooks co-authored by renowned stylists Alison Gibbons and Sara Whiteley providing the latest research in stylistics studies (Alison Gibbons & Sara Whiteley, 2018). Stylistics is primarily a study of genre and has been around for hundreds of years. Zhang Zhiqin points out that the main research objects of stylistics are divided into two levels: broadly, stylistics mainly researches the phonological, syntactic, lexical, and chapter features of various literary genres, including narrative, expository, descriptive, and argumentative essays, etc. (Zhang, 2021); narrowly, stylistics mainly researches the linguistic features and styles of literary genres, including poetry, novels, and essays, etc. In addition, stylistics also researches the language of oral communication, the most common language in the world. Moreover, it studies language variants such as spoken language, written language, formal language, and so on. Stylistics emphasizes adapting to the needs of specific

occasions, and its research has a bright future. Therefore, not only are foreign countries developing stylistics research, but many domestic scholars are also paying great attention to it.

Stylistics is also paid great attention by many scholars in China. Domestic stylistics research was revived in the 1980s and developed rapidly under the efforts of a number of scholars, such as Guo Shaoyu (Guo, 1981) who published “Advocating Some Stylistic Taxonomies” in 1981, which showed the initial development of stylistics in modern China; Chu Binjie’s “Introduction to the Ancient Chinese Styles”, published by Beijing University in 1990, which showed that stylistics has already had its own specialised monographs (Chu, 1984); and Kong Xiaoli, who published a book on “Ancient Chinese Style” in 2012, which was published by Beijing University in the same year. Kong Xiaoli’s “Theatre Language from the Perspective of Stylistics”, published in *Language Studies* in 2012, proves that scholars had already used stylistics to carry out related research in other fields during this period (Kong, 2012); Wu Chengxue’s three essays on ‘Research on Chinese Stylistics’, published in *Jinan Journal* in 2013, and his “Construction of Chinese Stylistics with Modern Significance” published in *Literary Review* in 2015, as well as a review of Wu Chengxue’s work on *Zhongshan University’s Literature and Arts in Literary Research* to Sun Yat-sen University (Wu, 2015), Professor Wu Chengxue, Professor He Shihai, and Professor Qian Zhixi of Beijing University in September 2022 also mentioned the vigorous development and innovation of domestic stylistics research can be seen in the interviews, in recent years there have been scholars who attach importance to the innovative research and development of stylistics (Wu, He, & Qian, 2015). There are more than seven hundred studies on stylistic translation in China Knowledge Network, eighteen studies on theatre under stylistic perspective, but no results can be found on the study of Beijing Opera translation under stylistic perspective, which shows that China’s research in this field is yet to be developed.

2.2 The Research Status of Beijing Opera Songs Translation at Home and Abroad

Since its reform and opening, China’s excellent traditional culture has made a big splash on the world stage, and Beijing Opera, as China’s national treasure, has been widely welcomed by the international community. However, due to differences in language and culture, foreign audiences can only appreciate Beijing Opera’s disguise, music, and physical movements, but cannot understand its profound cultural connotations; at this time, Beijing Opera translations have played a pivotal role. Overseas dissemination of Chinese opera began in the second half of the 18th century when an adaptation of *The Orphan of Zhao* was introduced to the West, and since then there have been translations of *The Peony Pavilion* by Cyril Birch of the United States, *The Peony Pavilion* by Ivid of the Netherlands, *The West Wing* by Stephen West of the United States and Xi Ruogu of the United States, and *The Peony Pavilion* and *The Story of the West Chamber* by David Hawkes of the United Kingdom. David Hawkes of the United Kingdom translated *The Peony Pavilion* and *Liu Yi Chuan Shu*, and Yang Xianyi and Dai Nai translated the Beijing Opera *the Palace of Eternal Youth* and *Guan Hanqing’s Selected Plays*. The most famous of these is the foreign scholar Elizabeth Wichmann, who studied opera in China under Shen Xiaomei, a famous actress of the Mei School, from 1979 to 1981

and published a research monograph, *Listen to Theater-the Aural Dimension of Beijing Opera*, under the premise of a full understanding of the Beijing Opera (*Listen to Theater-Aural Dimension of Beijing Opera*). Theater-the Aural Dimension of Beijing Opera).

In 1934, Xiong Shiyi translated the Beijing Opera *Red Brown Horse* into the English play *Wang Baochuan*; in the 20th century, Chinese Beijing Opera masterpieces were translated into English one after another, and the quality of the script translations was greatly improved, with a number of more complete scripts produced after the 1960s, and more and more scholars have been researching Beijing Opera translations in the present era, such as Cao Guangtao, who published a book entitled *Listen to Theater-the Aural Dimension of Beijing Opera* in 2011. *Beijing Opera English Translation and English Beijing Opera Based on Performance Perspective* published in *Jishou Journal* in 2011 (Cao Guangtao, 2011); Du Xiaojie's *Theatre Style Requirements and Character Image Shaping of Beijing Opera Farewell My Lady* published in *Sichuan Drama* in 2014 (Du, 2014); and Li Siqing's *Research on the Effectiveness of Beijing Opera Script Translation Based on Purpose Theory* published in *Theory and Modernisation* in 2015-- "Taking the Translation of Beijing Opera Script of *Farewell My Lady* as an Example" (Li, 2015); "More than Two Hundred Years of Salary and Flame, the New Phoenix Wins Again Over the Sound of the Old Phoenix - A Study on the Translation and Interpretation of Chinese Beijing Opera" published in *Art Hundred* by Xiao Weiqing and Xiong Xianguan in 2016; and "Trial Analysis of the Translation of Beijing Opera The Problems of Beijing Opera Translation and Its Response Strategies"; "The Practice of Beijing Opera Translation under the Theory of Functional Equivalence--Taking the English Translation of the Beijing Opera *The Gate of the Great Mansion* as an Example" published by Qiang Hao in 2022; and so on. 2012 also saw the authoritative Beijing Opera Translation Series, 'English Translation Series of a Hundred Beijing Opera Classics' (the First Series). The series has Xu Yuanchong as the general advisor of English translation, Guo Hancheng, an opera theorist, as the general advisor of Beijing Opera art, and Mei Baojiu, the heir to the Mei School, and other authoritative figures as the advisors of Beijing Opera art. This thesis will take the English translation of *Farewell My Lady* as an example of this series of books to explore the translation strategy of the songs of Beijing Opera.

Beijing Opera, as a kind of drama, has unique genre characteristics, such as condensed, with intense and violent conflicts, compact structure, etc. Its language characteristics also reflect colloquialism, poetic, personalized and action, and because Beijing Opera integrates singing, reading, acting and playing, it also reflects comprehensive and programmatic characteristics overall. Beijing Opera possesses unique stylistic features and high literary value, and belongs to one kind of literary genre, and according to the, stylistics stresses the adaptation to the needs of specific occasions, so Beijing Opera can be studied under the perspective of stylistics. There are more than one hundred studies on the translation of Beijing Opera in China Knowledge Network, but there are only six studies on the translation of Beijing Opera songs, which shows that China is still in the preliminary stage of development in the translation of Beijing Opera songs. To sum up, this paper will combine the stylistic

theory to study the translation of the songs of Beijing Opera.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Stylistics

“Stylistic” is defined as “style” in literary criticism, and stylistics is primarily a study of style. Stylistics draws on linguistic theories and methods to analyze the use of language in literary works, and is interdisciplinary in nature, centered on a detailed linguistic analysis of the text, including aspects of grammar, syntax, lexical choices, and rhetorical devices. By such analyses, stylists seek to understand how particular linguistic features contribute to the overall meaning of a text and to the reader’s interpretive process. Stylistics is concerned with how an author’s linguistic choices affect the reception and interpretation of a literary work. This includes the study of how language is used to create specific emotional responses, thematic depth, or narrative effects, and how these elements affect the reader’s understanding and experience.

Bloomsbury Press’ 2015 guide to stylistics points to the broad interdisciplinary scope of stylistics, which is reflected in the variety of methods employed in the linguistic study of texts, which draw on the traditions of linguistics, literary theory, literary criticism, critical theory, and narratology (Sotirova, & Violeta, 2015).

Stylistics has become an indispensable tool in the study of modern literature. By analyzing texts in detail, stylists can reveal the author’s creative intentions, the cultural connotations of the text, and the reader’s reading experience. This interdisciplinary research method not only enriches the theoretical basis of literary criticism, but also provides new perspectives and insights for literary creation.

With the rapid development of artificial intelligence and computer science, the research methods and techniques of stylistics are also being constantly innovated. For example, computer programs based on natural language processing can automatically analyze the linguistic features of texts, thus providing stylists with more objective and accurate data support. This kind of interdisciplinary cooperation not only promotes the progress of stylistics research, but also demonstrates the great potential of disciplinary cross-fertilization.

In conclusion, stylistics, as an interdisciplinary discipline, plays an important role in literary criticism and literary research. It helps us to deeply understand the linguistic features of texts, and reveals the complex relationship between texts and authors, readers and social culture. In the future, as interdisciplinary research continues to deepen and develop, stylistics will surely reveal more mysteries about literature and language for us.

3.1.1 Vocabulary

Akmajian et al. summarized the various features of words and found that the features of words are formal, morphological, semantic, pragmatic and regular. In terms of stylistics, vocabulary is divided into formal and informal vocabulary, and written and spoken vocabulary (Zhang, 2021).

Beijing Opera, as a literary genre, has songs that are like ancient poems, and some of the songs contain

some local dialects or archaic words. Local dialects require the translator's attention to screen whether to use written or spoken vocabulary. When dealing with dialect words, the need to use spoken words is more frequent; when dealing with archaic vocabulary, the choice must be discretionary according to the specific cultural background and the preceding and following plot.

On the other hand, as there are different kinds of characters in Beijing Opera performances, there are four trades: Sheng Dan, Jing and Chou; and in Beijing Opera performances, the social class of the characters is also affected by their performances. Positive characters and characters of higher status usually use rhyming characters, while characters of lower status or characters other than Han Chinese in Beijing Opera often use Jingbai. In this case, the translator needs to know the Beijing Opera well and be familiar with the context to choose the appropriate translation method.

3.1.2 Syntax

In stylistic theory, the stylistic role of the syntactic level is reflected in the following aspects:

3.1.2.1 Complexity of Sentence Structure

Different genres tend to adopt different degrees of sentence structure complexity to express their contents. The syntax of Beijing Opera songs is usually not complicated due to its popularity and simplicity of expression.

3.1.2.2 Characteristics of the Order of Words

Some styles of writing may follow specific rules of order of words, such as inverted sentences, emphatic sentences and so on, to highlight the special effects of their language.

3.1.2.3 Omission of Sentence Components

Depending on the context and tone, different genres may omit certain sentence components, such as subject and object, at the syntactic level. Such omission is particularly common in spoken and informal writing. For example, in the English translation of *Farewell My Lady*, a line from Xiang Yu's lyrics: "Although several outstanding officers of the enemy camp have been killed, we haven't been able to avoid being ambushed on all sides. Pass my orders that soldiers should stay in camp". In the songs, the phrase "Although several outstanding officers of the enemy camp have been killed" is omitted for the sake of rhyming. The subject "I" is omitted for the sake of rhyme. In the translation, this sentence is translated as a passive sentence, which neither affects the rhyme nor the image of Xiang Yu's bravery.

3.1.2.4 The Use of Parallel and Subordinate Clauses

Through the clever combination of parallel and subordinate clauses, the author can build up a complex argumentative structure or narrative pattern on the syntactic level, thus affecting the reader's reading experience and depth of comprehension.

3.1.2.5 Sentence Rhythm and Rhyme

In some genres, sentence rhythm and rhyme are given special significance, they can be used to simulate the rhythm of natural language, to enhance the musicality of the language, or to express a particular emotion or atmosphere.

3.1.2.6 Variation in Sentence Length

By controlling the variation in sentence length, writers can create an undulating rhythm in their texts, which guides the flow of the reader's attention or is used to separate information and make it clearer and more readable. This is especially evident in Beijing Opera songs because they originally embodied the characteristics of poetry.

3.1.2.7 Choice of Passive and Active Clauses

The use of passive and active clauses not only affects the semantic focus of the sentence, but also reflects the different ways in which the author treats form and content at the syntactic level, thus giving the text a different style and tone.

3.2 *Characteristics of Beijing Opera Songs*

Translation of Beijing Opera songs is different from traditional cultural translation, which needs to consider the cultural loaded words, rhythm, stage presentation, etc. And translation of Beijing Opera songs is also different from ordinary theatre translation, whose rhyme, simplicity, and the harmony of lines and steps need to be taken into consideration by the translator.

3.2.1 Rich Cultural Connotation

Beijing Opera incorporates many Chinese cultural elements, which can reproduce historical stories, integrate poems and songs, embody regional cultures, and pass on life stories, etc. Beijing Opera songs also contain Confucianism, Taoism. Scholar Li Siqing's team has conducted an experimental survey, which found that language and culture are the main barriers for foreigners to appreciate Beijing Opera. (Li, 2015) When translating, translators need to find a suitable way to convey these cultural features to the readers of the target language.

3.2.2 Rhyme and Rhythm

In Beijing Opera performance, the use of rhythm and rhyme is extremely important. Actors need to flexibly use rhythm and rhyme to express the inner world and emotional changes of the character according to the character's personality, mood and the needs of the plot. At the same time, actors also need to work closely with the orchestra to ensure that the rhythm and rhyme of the lyrics are harmonized with the musical accompaniment to create a perfect artistic effect.

3.2.3 Performability

Beijing Opera songs are not only a vehicle for emotional expression, but also an important means of advancing the plot. Lyrics often contain key information, such as plot twists, character relationships, etc. Through the advancement of the lyrics, the audience can understand the progress of the story and the interaction between the characters. The performability of Beijing Opera lyrics is realized through the organic combination of various factors such as character, plot development, stage movements, performance occasions, rhythmic strength and stage props, making Beijing Opera performances both highly artistic and strongly ornamental. The translator also needs to flexibly adjust the length of the sentences according to the pace, speed and slowness of the script to meet the needs of the actors in terms of breath changes and sentence breaks (Tang, 2015).

4. Translation Strategies

“Drama has the commonality with other forms of literature, that is, readability, but also has its own characteristics, that is, performativity, so the translation of drama should be both readability and performativity, which requires the translator to fully understand the specific characteristics of the drama, and the flexible use of translation methods (Zhanq, 2021).

When translating, translators usually use the translation strategies of “domestication” and “foreignization”, and the main translation methods are “phonetic translation”, “free translation” and “direct translation”. The main translation methods are “phonetic translation”, “free translation”, “direct translation” and so on. The purpose of adopting various translation strategies is to fully respect the original text, maximize the semantic meaning of the original text and at the same time have a sense of aesthetics (Venuti, 1994)

4.1 Translation Principles

Since its inception, Beijing Opera has attracted audiences around the world with its unique art form and deep cultural heritage. However, the appreciation and understanding of Beijing Opera, especially the translation of Beijing Opera songs, is often a challenging task. The songs of Beijing Opera not only promote the development of the plot, but also incorporate the rhythm of poetry and the melody of music, which makes it necessary for the translation work to be faithful to the original text while maintaining the beauty of the sound. When translating Beijing opera songs, translators need to understand the connotation and context of the original text. Since the songs of Beijing Opera are often rich in history, culture and character emotions, a literal translation is not enough. The translator needs to accurately convey the deeper meanings and emotional colors of the songs through in-depth study of the background of the play, the characters’ personalities and the development of the plot. Only in this way can the translated text maintain the meaning of the original text and at the same time have the corresponding artistic influence. Secondly, the translator also needs to consider the beauty of the rhyme. The musicality of Beijing Opera’s songs is an important part of its charm, therefore, in the process of translation, the translator needs to keep the original text’s phonetic characteristics as much as possible, so that it can still show the unique rhythmic beauty of Beijing Opera in the translated text. This may require the translator to make clever adjustments and treatments to the target language to ensure that the phonetics of the translated text is in harmony with the original text. In addition, translating Beijing Opera songs requires attention to maintaining the performative nature of the drama. As a stage art form, the performativity of Beijing Opera is an important part of its charm. Therefore, in the process of translation, the translator needs to take this into full consideration and maintain the theatricality of the original text as much as possible. This may require the translator to make some innovative attempts in the translation process, such as enhancing the performativity of the translated text by adding appropriate stage cues or adjusting the linguistic style of the translation. This paper explores the translation of Beijing Opera songs, which belongs to the theatre and carries a heavy cultural heritage. The songs of Beijing Opera not only promote the plot but also have the characteristics of poetry and music. Therefore, this paper will

uphold the principle of faithfulness to the original text and beautiful phonetics when exploring the translation of Beijing Opera songs, to faithfully convey the connotation of the script and fully reflect the linguistic characteristics of the script without reducing the performativity of the drama.

4.2 Vocabulary

Domestication and foreignization strategies can be used in translation. The two core concepts of translation theory, domestication and foreignization, were first proposed by the American deconstructionist translation theorist Lawrence Venuti in his 1994 book *The Invisibility of the Translator: A History of Translation* (Venuti, 1994). In the translation of Beijing Opera songs, domestication and foreignization are embodied in different treatments.

4.2.1 Transmitting Cultural Connotations

The translator tries to retain the original flavor of the Beijing Opera songs, including the specificity of the vocabulary and the complexity of the sentence patterns, and even some cultural elements that may be difficult for the target readers to understand. In the English translation of “Farewell My Lady”, the singing section is preceded by the singing style of the section or the words, such as “粉蝶儿牌” is translated as “fendie’erpai”, “西皮散板” is translated as “xipisanban” and so on. These culturally specific terms cannot be translated by domestication, but can only be translated phonetically using the strategy of foreignization. Even though the target readers may not understand the meaning of these words.

In practice, domestication and foreignization are not completely opposed to each other, but can be combined appropriately according to the specific situation and the needs of the target readers. (Sun, 2012) For example, the domestication strategy can be used in some places to make the translation easier to understand, while the foreignization strategy can be used in other places to retain the flavor and cultural characteristics of the original text. The key is to find a balance so that the translation is faithful to the source text while appealing to and satisfying the target readers.

4.2.2 Retaining Performativity

The translator will transform the cultural elements and regional characteristics of the Beijing Opera songs into the corresponding expressions in the target language, or express them in a way that is more general and easier for the target readers to accept. For example, in the sentence “Gnashing my teeth, I curse that Han Xin’s name. If I catch him, I will cut his body to pieces”. The phrase “胯夫” is derived from the allusion to Han Xin’s “crotch humiliation” (the humiliation of having to crawl between the legs of one’s adversary), which the audience most likely does not understand. If we translate “胯夫” directly, it is not only cumbersome, but also affects the enjoyment of Beijing Opera, and may cause the audience to be unable to understand it. On the other hand, since “胯夫” in this sentence is the same person as “韩信” in the above sentence, it can be translated directly as “him” by foreignization (Zhang, 2019). Example (1):

汉兵已略地，四面楚歌声。君王意气尽，贱妾何聊生。

Liu Bang’s soldiers have encircled the land, Songs of the Chu Kingdom are heard everywhere.

The Conqueror has lost his will to fight, How can I console myself.

The word “略” in the first sentence of the song does not simply mean “occupied”, but “encircled” is chosen to correspond with the plot and later text, preserving the flavor of the original and not affecting comprehension. Instead of simply using the word “occupied”, the translation chose the word “encircled” to match the plot and the subsequent text, retaining the flavor of the original without affecting comprehension.

4.2.3 Presenting Rhyme and Rhythm

Rhyme is a commonly used rhetorical device in poetry and songs. By rhyming, it can make the verses or songs more harmonious and beautiful, and enhance the sense of rhythm of the language. Because of its rhyme and rhythm, the songs of Beijing Opera can be used in translations.

Several words in a line (stanza) start with the same consonants, creating a consistent rhyme scheme, example (2).

项羽

(唱)

力拔山兮气盖世，时不利兮骓不逝。骓不逝兮可奈何，虞兮虞兮奈若何。

Xiang Yu (sings)

Could pull down mountains with might and main But my good fortune wanes, and my steed won't fight
Whether my steed will fight or not, I no longer care

What can be done about it, my lady fair!

The translation of this chorus with /m/, /w/, and /f/ alliteration vividly reflects Xiang Yu's talent, Xiang Yu's feelings about the unfavorable situation, and his helplessness under the siege of the Han army. The literary value is preserved in the context of the original text. In addition, the singing here is at a slower pace, and the interpreter has translated it in longer sentences to make it easier for the actors to keep pace.

4.3 Syntax

In the process of translating the lyrics of Beijing Opera, the translator should not limit his attention to the words only, but should study them with a connected viewpoint. If the sentence cannot be constructed to the best of its ability, then it is difficult to realize the beauty and performativity of its lyrics, and it is impossible to bring out the cultural connotation of Beijing Opera. Therefore, it is especially important to think about the translation of Beijing Opera lyrics from a syntactic point of view.

4.3.1 Transmitting Cultural Connotations

Beijing Opera chants often contain proverbs, which are usually colored by traditional Chinese culture and are often difficult for the audience to understand, in which case the use of the translation strategy of naturalization becomes especially necessary. For example, when the Chu army was trapped under Gaixia, Yu Ji sang, example (3):

虞姬：【西皮二六板】

劝君王饮酒听虞歌，解君愁闷舞婆娑。自古常言不欺我，富贵穷通一刹那，宽心饮酒宝帐坐。

Yu ji: (xipi'erliuban)

You drink there while listening to my singing,

As a relief from distress, I start dancing gracefully for you.

An old saying goes never cheat us common people.

One's good fortune may change to disaster in an instant.

Drink at ease in the tent.

In this sentence, the phrase “富贵穷通一刹那” requires the translator to fully understand its meaning. And obviously, it cannot be translated directly, so it needs to be translated from Mandarin to Chinese and then to English. In the four words of “富贵穷通”, “通” is a verb, but it is placed after two nouns, which belongs to the predicate postposition in ancient Chinese, and in the translation, it is necessary to adjust the word order to make it conform to the expression habit of English. The word “一刹那” is a religious and cultural noun that describes a short period of time, and it is also necessary to find a suitable word to correspond to it. The English translation chosen in this paper presents these two points, translating the sentence as “One's good fortune may change to disaster in an instant”, which not only conveys the meaning of the original text, but also facilitates the audience's understanding.

4.3.2 Retaining Performativity

In the example cited above, the translation of “君王意气尽，贱妾何聊生”. changes the active sentence into a passive sentence, the song of Chu comes from the Han, which corresponds to the subject of the previous sentence, and the passive sentence emphasizes the stratagem of the song of Chu on all sides. In the first two sentences, “Liu Bang's soldiers” and “Songs of the Chu Kingdom” are used as the main phrases, and in the second two sentences, “The Conqueror” and “I” are used as the main phrases.

The Conqueror and “I” are used as the main phrases in the first two lines of the translation, skillfully separating the two camps, reflecting the sense of the situation being aggressive and hopeless.

It is short, but not fast-paced when sung. The translator considered the actor's need for rhythm in translating this famous chant, and did not just shorten the translation for the sake of what the phrases look like, but also preserved its performability.

4.3.3 Presenting Rhyme and Rhythm

When Yu Ji heard that Xiang Yu was going to send his troops to destroy the Han Dynasty, she sang a passage to describe her concern about Xiang Yu's strong personality and his failure to accept his advice, which resulted in the annexation of the Chu land. She sang, example (4):

虞姬：【西皮散板】大王爷他本是刚强成性 平日里忠言语就不肯纳听怕的是西楚地被人吞并 辜负了十数载英勇威名

Yu Ji: (xipisanban)

The Conqueror is stubborn in his opinions.

He won't listen to sincere advice

I'm afraid the land of Chu might be annexed

And that his good reputation earned after a decade of heroic deeds will be ruined.

In the translation of the verse, the translator retains the rhyme through clever vocabulary selection and sentence adjustment, so that the translation conveys the original meaning while maintaining the rhythmic beauty of the original text. Such a way of translation not only reflects the translator's professionalism, but also shows his respect for the original text and his responsibility to the readers.

5. Conclusion

Through the stylistic analysis of Beijing Opera songs, this paper finds that Beijing Opera songs have the characteristics of general drama but also have their difference. The singing of Beijing Opera as a stage art at the same time contains a wealth of excellent traditional Chinese culture, focusing on rhythm and rhyme. When translating, this paper finds that it is necessary to find expressions in the target language that can match this kind of counterpoint to maintain the beauty and rhythm of the sung words. Translation strategies should be used reasonably. While pursuing fidelity to the original text, translators also need to consider the acceptability of the target audience. This means that some translation strategies, such as domestication and organization, can be adopted when necessary to enhance the readability and appeal of the work on the international stage. Beijing Opera is a constantly evolving art form, with new means of performance and creation emerging. Translators need to maintain a passion for learning and constantly update their knowledge to meet new translation needs and challenges. Although this thesis fails to put forward a set of translation theories that can be used or referred to by others, this thesis analyzes the stylistic characteristics of Beijing Opera sung songs, analyzes the examples of script translation, and thus puts forward the above points of suggestions for this kind of translation activity, hoping that they can provide some help for the study, research, and teaching of Beijing Opera songs and lyrics translation.

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Author Contributions

Lin Aiai: Conceptualization and Writing

Conflicts of Interest

“The authors declare no conflicts of interest.”

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