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Foreground and Background: An Analysis of Graham Sanders' Translation of *Fu Sheng Liu Ji*

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***Abstract*—This paper aims to provide insights into translating classic narratives from ancient China. It does so by analyzing Graham Sanders' translation of *Fu Sheng Liu Ji* from two dimensions: foreground and background. First, it examines the translator's foregrounding strategies, including activating images, recreating scenes, and reproducing personal narratives. Second, it analyzes background-recreating strategies, including an elaborate introduction, adequate footnotes, and other paratextual elements. This paper concludes that Sanders' foregrounding strategies help bring out literariness, while his backgrounding strategies make it more accessible to readers.**

***Index Terms*—foreground, background, *Fu Sheng Liu Ji*, Graham Sanders, translation**

I. Introduction

There are currently four English translations of *Fu Sheng Liu Ji*, Qing Dynasty author Shen Fu's autobiography. The first was by Lin Yutang and published in 1935, the second by Shirley M. Black (1960), the third by Leonard Pratt and Chiang Suhui (1983), and the latest by Graham Sanders (2011). With the exception of Sanders' version, extensive research has been carried out on these translations, but most of this has focused on the translation by Lin Yutang (Yang & Liang, 2022). In examining the motives behind the four translations, Xu and Hu (2022) concluded that Sanders produced his translation of *Fu Sheng Liu Ji* to make "the gem of narrative in Chinese literature shine again" (p. 80). Yet very few studies have addressed Sanders' translation version (Liang & Xu, 2017). Sanders' translation is characterized by two features. First, it has been noted that Sanders' version is typical of thick translation (Li, 2023), as it provides historical context (Hill, 2012). Second, Sanders' translation reproduces Shen Fu's elegant sentences and phrasing, preserving Shen's individual style and the flavor of prose written in classical Chinese (Hill, 2012). To date, no research has been devoted specifically to these two features.

There are two objectives in this paper. First, this paper aims to determine the relationship between foreground and background and their respective functions. Second, the paper analyzes Sanders' translation of *Fu Sheng Liu Ji* to understand which foregrounding and backgrounding strategies Sanders employs to achieve the desired effects. To achieve these objectives, literature on the concepts of foreground and background is first reviewed to better grasp their relationship. Then, the use of foregrounding and backgrounding in Graham Sanders' translation of the autobiography *Fu Sheng Liu Ji* is considered to demonstrate that Sanders' translation is better than others' versions because Sanders' version reproduces literariness and is accessible. Several examples from his translation are considered to analyze how Sanders recreates foregrounds and constructs backgrounds.

II. Foreground and Background

A. Foreground

Foregrounding is an unusual use of language intended to attract a reader's attention more closely to the subject matter expressed by the foregrounded means of expression. It stands in opposition to "automatization" by "deautomatizing" a verbal act; an act is more automatized, then it is less consciously executed; when it is more foregrounded, it becomes more completely conscious (Mukarovsky, 1964). Some scholars define foregrounding as "the violation of rules and conventions by which a poet transcends the normal communicative resources of the language and awakens readers by freeing them from the grooves of cliché expression to a new perceptivity" (Childs & Fowler, 2006, p. 102). This definition underlines the difference between foregrounds and the normal communicative elements of texts. Mukarovsky (1964)

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defines foregrounding as "the violation of the scheme" (p. 19) and points out that foregrounding can be commonly seen in the standard language, for instance, in journalistic style, and even more so in essays. That is to say, some elements in a text are pushed to prominence and some are schematized. As Simpson (2014) states, "foregrounding refers to a form of textual patterning which is motivated specifically for literary-aesthetic purposes [and] typically involves a stylistic distortion of some sort, either through an aspect of the text which deviates from a linguistic norm or, alternatively, where an aspect of the text is brought to the fore through repetition or parallelism" (p. 50).

These definitions generally assume that, in a literary text, there are foregrounds and "non-foregrounds"—often called normal, conventional, schematized, or automatized language. These non-foregrounds are sometimes termed backgrounds. Foregrounds are viewed in relation to backgrounds or against backgrounds. In order to understand this dynamic, it is necessary to first clarify the definition of background applied in this paper.

B. Background

In foregrounding theory, the term "background" appears in relation to the term "foreground". For example, according to Mukarovsky (1964), the background which we perceive as comprising the unforegrounded components resisting foregrounding is twofold: the norm of the standard language and the traditional aesthetic canon. The background of a text is the normal language use, whereas the distinct linguistic pattern is the foreground of the text (Xu, 2017). According to Leech, "The norms of the language are in this dimension of analysis regarded as a background, against which features which are prominent because of their abnormality are placed in focus" (Leech, 2007, p. 30). As Childs and Fowler (2006) note, the contrast between foreground and background is relative, and only a subjective response can ultimately determine what is and what is not foregrounded. These definitions confine "background" within the scope of text.

Hakemulder conducted a thorough investigation into the various ways background can be conceptualized. Hakemulder (2020) assumes that a deviation comes into being because of its relation to a background of normality. Based on this assumption, he distinguishes four ways in which the background can be conceptualized: 1) by a norm that is defined by society, the world, the universe, what we know about history, or the environment; 2) by the text (e.g., a novel) or the norm set within the context of a work/text; 3) by the medium, which, in the case of this study, is language, particularly the linguistic norm or the "normal range of available choices" and grammatical rules; 4) by a group of texts, such as those that form a genre. These conceptualizations of background go beyond the scope of the text itself to texts, context, and environment. According to the above definitions, the preface, introduction, annotations, the appendix, other paratextual information, and even the reader's previous reading experience can be understood as background since they provide information about history, the environment, and the society.

The relationship between the foreground and background can be visualized as follows (Short, 1996, p. 11):

Figure 1. The Relationship Between Background and Foreground

C. Respective Functions of Foreground and Background

The defining feature of literary texts is literariness, and the formation of foregrounds is a crucial method for creating this (Xu, 2017). Deviations or parallelisms create foregrounding and are utilized to generate the literariness of a text (Chesnokova & Peer, 2019a). Foregrounds can attract readers' attention, prolong the aesthetic feeling, and alter readers' perceptions (Maill & Kuiken, 1999).

Backgrounds are used to ground what is in the foreground, or, in other words, to give readers the foundation to appreciate the literariness of the text. Background information also offers resources that make the text easily accessible to readers. Thus, backgrounds facilitate readers' entry into the foregrounds, making it easier for readers to experience the text's literary qualities (Appel et al., 2021, p. 185). According to Carter and Nash (1983), the nature of displaced interaction of literary work stands in the way of understanding the text; backgrounding can diminish this barrier and serve as a springboard into the text. It is pointed out that "paratextual information is one of the ways in which literariness is activated" (Appel et al., 2021, p. 185).

In sum, foregrounds create literariness, while backgrounds help readers to access foregrounds.

D. Foreground, Background, and Translation

Toury (2012) proposes three modes of translation to describe the act of translation when a text is literary: 1) linguistically motivated translation, 2) textually dominated translation, and 3) literary translation. As background is based on linguistic norms and textual conventions, a focus on translating backgrounds in a text can be understood as a linguistically motivated and textually dominated mode of translation. In contrast, a focus on translating foregrounds follows what Toury calls "the mode of literary translation".

Several researchers have analyzed translation from the perspective of foregrounding and backgrounding. For example,

Susan Yun Xu (2019) explores the translation of foregrounds in both literary segments and non-literary segments selected from the same book and concludes that how much of attention a translator pays to foreground depends on the text type. She posits that translators equipped with an understanding of the formal and functional significance of foregrounding are better positioned to make informed decisions. Jawad (2009) examines the translation of lexical repetition and finds that backgrounding is used by some translators to neutralize foregrounding, transforming foregrounds into backgrounds. Paratext—including elements like the title, preface, introductions, footnotes, illustrations, cover design, blurbs, dedications, and even interviews with the author (Genette, 1997)—as an aspect of backgrounding has received extensive academic attention in translation studies. However, these studies fail to pay adequate attention to the interplay between foreground and background. To address this gap regarding how the two concepts function in literary translation, this research examines the construction of foregrounds and backgrounds in the translation of *Fu Sheng Liu Ji* by Graham Sanders.

III. Foregrounds: Recreating Literariness

Fu Sheng Liu Ji is an essential part of the canon of late imperial Chinese literature (Hill, 2012). Given that foregrounding is a key means of generating literariness (Xu, 2019), this section analyzes how Sanders reproduces literariness through foregrounding in his translation.

A. Recreating Images

James Dickins (2018) defines "trope" to encompass metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and simile. These literary devices share one thing in common: image. Scholars use the term “image” to refer to conventional referents (Schaffner, 2004). Newmark (1981) explains image and metaphor using the example of “rooting out the faults”: the object, which is described by the metaphor, is “faults”; the image, that is, the item in terms of which the object is depicted, is rooting up weeds; the metaphor, that is, the word(s) used in the image, is “rooting out”, and the sense, which demonstrates in what specific aspects the object and the image are analogous, is (a) remove; and (b) do so with immense personal effort. A literary metaphor is a semantic absurdity, and dictionaries are full of metaphorical meanings that, over the course of linguistic history, have lost their deviant nature and are now known as dead metaphors (Leech, 2008). In other words, metaphors or other types of tropes begin as a foregrounding phenomenon, but as time passes, fresh images become dated and thus lose their ability to stand out to readers. Because these images are culture-bound, scholars have suggested that retention of the source text image is not always possible in translation (Dagut, 1976; Schaffner, 2004). In this regard, Toury (2012) proposes four categories for the translation of metaphors: (1) a metaphor into the same metaphor, (2) a metaphor into a different metaphor, (3) a metaphor into a non-metaphor, and (4) a metaphor into zero. He argues that, from the perspective of the target texts, two additional situations can be recognized: (5) using a metaphor in the target text for a non-metaphorical expression in the source text (a non-metaphor into a metaphor) and (6) the addition of a metaphor in the target text without any linguistic motivation in the source text (zero into a metaphor).

From the perspective of literariness, the addition of metaphors in Category 5 and Category 6 serves to enhance literariness by increasing foregrounds, whereas the removal of metaphors in Category 3 and Category 4 serves to add background by converting foregrounds in source texts into backgrounds in the target text. As mentioned, metaphors are culture-specific. If a metaphor in the source culture is new but old in the target culture, should the metaphor be translated as the same metaphor or a different one? A different, invented metaphor may be a better choice. If a metaphor is old in the source text but new in the target language, Category 1 may be the solution as new images represent foregrounds. In a word, the images should be foregrounded in the recipient culture to ensure that the literariness is retained or enhanced rather than lost or reduced.

The following example from Sanders’ translation of *Fu Sheng Liu Ji* demonstrates how he handles images in the source text to retain literariness:

> Example 1
>
> Source Text: 今年且四十有六矣，*茫茫沧海*，不知此生再遇知己如鸿干者否？..... 襟怀高旷，时兴山居之想。(沈，2009，第 218 页)
>
> Transliteration: *Jīnnián qiě sìshí yǒu liù yǐ, mángmáng cānghǎi, bùzhī cǐshēng zài yù zhīyǐ rú hóng gàn zhě fǒu?... Jīnhuái gāo kuàng, shíxīng shānjū zhī xiǎng.*
>
> Literal Translation: “This year I am already 46. The vast ocean stretches endlessly, and I do not know whether in this life I will meet a soulmate like Hong Gan again ... With a broad and lofty heart, I sometimes entertain thoughts of living in the mountains.”
>
> Sanders’ Translation: “And now I am forty-six years old, adrift in a vast azure sea, without knowing whether I will ever meet another true friend like Honggan in this life again … the two of us harbored such grand aspirations in our hearts, often thinking that we might go off and live a life of reclusion in the mountains”. (Shen, 2011, p. 90)

In the source text, the phrase “茫茫沧海”/“*máng máng cāng hǎi*” (“the vast and boundless blue sea”) is a metaphorical expression that contains the image of the blue sea and refers to the mundanity of the world, where people experience trials and tribulations, flow with the tide, and drift from one place to another. In the source text, the phrasing evokes a feeling of floating alone in a vast, boundless expanse of wilderness, and it is what Newmark calls a “stock metaphor” in the

source culture. Sanders renders this into “in a vast azure sea” to retain the image. The pure image of the “sea” in the target culture is more about freedom, adventure, mysteries, emotional depth, vastness, and infinity. The addition of the word “adrift” adds nuance to the image of the “vast azure sea”. The whole image of “adrift in a vast azure sea” figures prominently in the paragraph, eliciting the feeling of life’s uncertainty. In addition, the word “adrift” also appears in the translation’s title, *Six Records of a Life Adrift*, constituting what Leech terms “coherence of foregrounding” (Leech, 2008, p. 64).

The other metaphor in this example is “怀”/“*huai*”, meaning “hold” or “entertain”, evoking the image of a heart or arms. Sanders did not translate this into “entertain”; instead, he used “harbor”. Although the images are different, conceptually, they are the same: a heart is a harbor. The use of conceptual metaphor serves as a form of foregrounding that enhances the aesthetic impact of a literary work, drawing the readers’ attention and enriching their experience.

Because of their frequent use, foregrounding devices may lose their capacity to surprise readers, and thus they require constant replacement (van Peer & Hakemulder, 2006). An example of this is the translation of “家徒壁立”/“*jiā tú bì lì*”, “the household only has walls standing”, indicating extreme poverty. Sanders translates this as “in a house with little more than four bare walls”. In the source culture, this metaphor is a cliché. However, the translator retains the image with the additional adjective “bare” because the image is more of a stock metaphor in the target culture than a cliché.

The examples above showcase how Sanders maintains and even increases literariness by recreating images without deletions or omissions.

B. Foregrounding Characters’ Feelings

In *Fu Sheng Liu Ji*, the emotions of the characters and setting are intertwined and enhance one another. This integration, distinct from the plain description of emotions or the surrounding environment, foregrounds the characters’ feelings, thereby commanding the readers’ attention. To recreate this effect, Sanders utilizes several techniques, such as adding grammatical subjects and changing points of view.

Example 2

Source Text: 每当风生竹院，月上蕉窗，对景怀人，梦魂颠倒。(Shen, 2009, p. 16)

Transliteration: “*Měi dāng fēng shēng zhú yuàn, yuè shàng jiāo chuāng, duì jǐng huái rén, mèng hún diān dǎo*”

Literal Translation: “Whenever *the wind arises in the bamboo courtyard, and the moon rises by the plantain window*, facing the scenery, missing someone, and the dream soul is turned upside down.”

Sanders’ Translation: “Every time I heard the breeze in the bamboo outside or saw the moon rising through the plantain leaves in the window, she would be called to my mind until my very dreams and soul were shaken”. (Shen, 2011, p. 7)

In the source text, the scene (“the wind arises in the bamboo courtyard, and the moon rises by the plantain window”) is described quite objectively, with wind and the moon as the subjects. Shen Fu, the original author, uses the phrase 对景/*Duì jǐng* (face the scenery) to link the setting with an emotion. Furthermore, in describing the emotion, no subject is mentioned, which is typical of the Chinese language. If this structure is directly reproduced in English, the emotion and the setting would likely be separated and not foregrounded. The use of “I” as the subject and of “heard”, “see”, and “rising” highlight the presence of “I” in the scene. In this way, readers are invited to experience the focalization of the character’s feelings.

C. Foregrounding First-Person Narrative

Before the appearance of *Fu Sheng Liu Ji*, there had been no first-person, book-length narrative in Chinese literary history. As Chen (2003) observes, in general, there is a lack of literary works where “I” is the storyteller, telling “my own” story in ancient Chinese literary history. One of the key characteristics of *Fu Sheng Liu Ji* is its first-person narration, which represents a break from narrative tradition in the source culture and thus constitutes a literarily striking feature. This feature, when transferred into the target text, conforms to what the target system deems as literary. Sanders, therefore, attempted to recreate this foregrounding feature as follows.

Example 3

Source Text: 因抚其肩曰：“姊连日辛苦，何犹孜孜不倦耶？”(沈，2009，第 12 页)

Transliteration: *Yīn fǔ qí jiān yuē: ‘Zǐ lián rì xīn kǔ, hé yóu zī zī bù juàn yē’*

Literal Translation: “Therefore, patting her shoulder, he said, ‘Elder sister, you have toiled for several days; why are you still tirelessly working?’”

Sanders’ Translation: “I stroked her shoulder and said, ‘You’ve been so busy these past few days, Sister. What are you studying there so diligently?’” (Shen, 2011, p. 5)

In the source text, “抚”/“*fu*” (“stroke”) denotes the narrator’s affection and gentleness towards his wife. There is no subject in the original indicating the perspective of the first-person narrator. In the target text, the subject “I” and the word “stroke” imply the change of perspective to the first-person point of view and the gentle movement of a hand over something, usually in a soothing manner, foregrounding the intimacy in the narrative. Hence, Sanders retained or even enhanced the literariness of this excerpt by foregrounding linguistic devices and narrative aspects.

IV. Constructing Backgrounds

Based on the explanation of how Sanders constructs foregrounds, it is now possible to move to his construction of backgrounds. *Fu Sheng Liu Ji* was composed over 200 years ago during the Qianjia period (1736–1821) of the Qing Dynasty. As Li Zehou (1994) points out, literary works of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1910) depict "the everyday life of city dwellers over the past few hundred years, and social customs that were commonplace, yet varied and colorful" (p. 206). As such, it is helpful for readers not familiar with Chinese history, culture, or society if a relevant background is constructed.

Sanders explains that he offers so many footnotes because he translated the book for the general reading public and undergraduates who might be unfamiliar with Chinese culture, and he wants readers to fully appreciate the original author's meaning. In addition, Sanders makes "the footnotes engaging and easy to read so they would not interfere too much with the reader's enjoyment of the narrative" (Sanders, personal communication, Dec. 9, 2022). To do this, he adds footnotes anywhere he feels that readers may become confused. Thus, his rationale for the construction of the background is reader-oriented. He has sought to make the backgrounds interesting to read while also offering as much relevant information as possible.

A. Maximizing Paratextual Information

As mentioned, background makes it easier and faster for readers to access the text. To appreciate the foreground, readers need to carry out the situated interpretation of the text (Gumperz, 1992). To help readers get a situated interpretation, Sanders offers readers an abundance of information via an introduction, footnotes, two geographical maps, a chronological biography, a family tree, and a character list. In other words, historical, societal, and cultural information is interwoven into the background, granting readers easy access to the foregrounds.

The book begins with an eight-page introduction. Here, Sanders presents information about the time when the book was produced, how the book was rediscovered, the social identity and status of the author Shen Fu, and the cultural environment where the book was written. He also highlights the cultural significance and artistic value of the book, thereby emphasizing Shen Fu's cultural refinement and the milieu he grew up in. Furthermore, Sanders notes the language features of the book, particularly its conciseness and poetics. Sanders briefly narrates the love story of Shen Fu (the author) and Yuan Niang (the author's wife) and remarks upon the intimate relationship between Yuan Niang and one of her female friends, which is the focus of current feminist scholarship.

The translation also includes a chronological biography. One of the artistic features of this memoir is that the book proceeds with events arranged thematically rather than chronologically. Since this aspect has artistic value, Sanders adheres to the order of events in the original, unlike, for example, Shirley M. Black, who rearranges the order chronologically in her translation. Nevertheless, this thematically based order may pose challenges to knowing which event happens first. Thus, to facilitate reading, Sanders includes a brief chronological biography, specifying the time of the event and the chapter in which it is described. By checking this list of events, readers can gain a clear picture of Shen Fu's life. Sanders' addition, therefore, represents an effort to create backgrounds that facilitate the accessibility of foregrounds.

Furthermore, Sanders lists the names of those in Shen Fu's social circle, including friends, colleagues, and relatives, and he even includes a family tree. He also provides a table featuring the names of the historical figures mentioned in the book, which are arranged chronologically according to the years of birth and death. There are altogether 51 individuals, among whom there are 17 poets and 12 men of letters. With the name list and name table, readers are offered assistance in recognizing Chinese names. In addition, these social networks can help readers obtain a deeper understanding of Shen Fu's suffering. For example, it is his friends who, several times, lend a helping hand when he is in trouble, while it is his family members who drag him into deep embarrassment. In addition, it could be inferred from the number of poets in his social circle that Shen Fu is a culturally refined individual from the literati class.

Additionally, Sanders includes more than 152 footnotes—more than any of the authors of the other three versions. The lengths of Sanders' footnotes also surpass those of other translations. Leonard Pratt and Chiang Suhui's translation includes 101 notes, which are placed in the endnotes. Sanders opts for footnotes, making the book "much friendlier to students and general readers so that they do not have to choose between flipping between main text and endnotes or ignoring the notes entirely" (Hill, 2012, p. 621). Shirley M. Black offers no footnotes or endnotes.

Adding further context, Sanders provides a map signifying the areas Shen Fu lived and traveled along with modern place names for easy reference.

Finally, the cover of the translated copy is a painting titled "Solitary Angler on a Wintry River" by Ming Dynasty painter Zhu Duan (Figure 2). In the painting, an old man wearing a straw hat fishes on a boat on a snowy river. This solitary fisherman floating in a boat is an apt representation of a life adrift, echoing Shen Fu's life and the theme of the book.

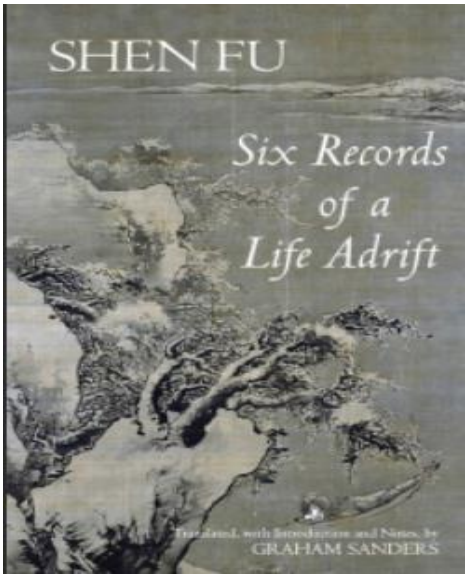

Figure 2. Cover of *Six Records of a Life Adrift*

In sum, these backgrounds contextualize situations for readers, thereby facilitating the connection between them and the translated text and making it quicker for them to access and understand the text.

B. Making Backgrounds Reader-Oriented

Background information in a translation, if not handled wisely by the translator, may disrupt reading flow by "increasing cognitive load" (Sweller, 1988, p. 264), thus reducing the text's readability. Examining the paratext reveals that Sanders attempts to make the footnotes engaging so as not to dampen readers' interest. More specifically, the background in Sanders' translation is characterized by three features: 1) storytelling, 2) establishing relevance, and 3) being culturally sensitive.

(a). Storytelling

Footnotes that fail to be interesting may hamper readers' engagement. When footnotes include short, captivating stories, they immerse readers in an exotic culture, enhancing the reading experience. In Sanders' footnotes about historical figures, he not only provides information about these individuals' contributions but also often offers a striking story about them.

The footnote about Sima Xiangru serves as an apt example. Apart from the information about Xima Xiangru's historical status as an indisputable master of Fu, a literary genre, the footnote narrates the love story between him and his wife Zuo Wenjun. The four-line footnote includes such legendary elements as love at first sight, elopement, rebellion against family, and overnight fame because of genius. The twists and turns are engaging. Another example is the footnote about an episode of a Kun Qu opera. The episode is titled Ci Liang (assassin Liang), and the footnote is one sentence: it tells the story of an old fisherman's courageous daughter who avenges her father's murder by assassinating the most powerful and corrupt official of the Eastern Han dynasty, Liang Ji (d. 159 CE). Just one sentence tells a story of revenge that includes multiple riveting elements: a female protagonist, revenge, murder, and corrupted officials.

(b). Establishing Relevance to Readers

To make the text both accessible and acceptable to target readers, Sanders identifies elements familiar to readers and inserts them into the background to connect readers in the target culture with the source culture.

For example, the footnote about Fan Zhongyan (a Chinese military strategist, philosopher, poet, and politician of the Song dynasty)—apart from routine information about his achievements—includes the line, "He was admired for his sincere remonstrations to the throne and once wrote, 'I would rather speak out and die than live in silence'" (Shen, 2011, p. 117). Sanders chose this particular quotation from Fan Zhongyan due to readers' affinity for it. The value of speaking out is something Western readers likely resonate with. In contrast, Chinese readers may be more familiar with another quotation by Fan Zhongyan about official responsibilities: "They were the first to worry the worries of all-under-Heaven and the last to enjoy its joys." General readers of this book from the target culture may identify less with the latter quotation.

Sanders devotes special attention to female historical figures like Yang Guifei, mentioned above, and Su Xiaoxiao, a female Chinese courtesan and poet, among others. The footnotes for these individuals may appeal to those interested in gender studies and offer material for feminist scholarship. This kind of backgrounding invests the translation with sociological significance.

(c). Being Culturally Sensitive

Sanders advises that a translator should "write a footnote at any place in the narrative that the reader might be confused or unaware of the significance beyond the words on the page." Accordingly, he provides footnotes anywhere he feels

there is a need to do so.

A case in point is the footnote on “风木”/ “fēng mù” (“wind tree”). Shen Fu’s friend Jie Shi returns to his hometown to sweep tombs, and Shen Fu accompanies him. He writes, “I used to compose 12 pictures of the ‘风木’ (wind tree).” “风木” refers to the situation where an individual’s parents die before they grow up and have the capability to take care of them, and so the individual cannot repay their parents by providing for them. Shen Fu mentions the set of pictures to imply that Jie Shi regrets being unable to provide for his parents. If the two Chinese characters “风木” are translated without explanation into “trees and scenery”, as in Lin Yutang’s translation, then target readers probably interpret this as simply referring to the natural landscape, with the deeper cultural implications being lost. Sanders translates the two characters “风木” into “the Wind and Trees” and offers additional cultural information in the background: “Just as a tree longs to be still, but the wind does not stop, so too does a child long to care for his parents even though they have left him behind” (Shen, 2011, p. 126). This explanation conveys the significance of the pictures to the target readers.

Based on the discussion above, Sanders adopts a reader-oriented approach to constructing background by telling stories, seeking relevance, and dispelling any confusion brought about by cultural differences. Through this approach to background, readers are better positioned to enjoy the translated work.

V. Conclusion

Lin Yutang produced the first English version of *Fu Sheng Liu Ji*, which played a crucial role in promoting *Fu Sheng Liu Ji* among English-speaking audiences. However, Lin’s translation contains several notable issues; among other problems, Cai Xinle (2015) points out that culturally significant terms are translated using existing terms in the target culture. Likewise, Shirley Black’s translation includes arbitrary omissions and rearrangements (P. D. H., 1961), which cause the loss of literary devices. Leonard Pratt and Chiang Su-hui’s (1983) translation aims to provide a profile of Chinese society rather than to capture the text’s literary value. Hence, these three translated versions do not do justice to the source text in terms of its literary, cultural, and sociological value. To produce a more nuanced translation, Graham Sanders constructs foregrounds in TTs and therefore recreates the literary attributes of the source text to establish the translation version of *Fu Sheng Liu Ji* as a literary work in the target culture just as it is in the source culture. Sanders constructs informative backgrounds to facilitate target readers unfamiliar with the source culture in accessing the translated text.

The effects of constructing both foreground and background are proven by the reception Sander’s translation has had among critics. Due to its successful foregrounding, Sample (2012) proposed that this translation could be used as reading material for a creative writing course. Regarding the effects of the backgrounding and the abundant background information, Schneewind (2023) remarked that this translation could help guide discussion in courses on Chinese history, world history, gender history, and family history. It is well-researched and readable (Idema, 2011).

By analyzing Sanders’ efforts in constructing foregrounds and backgrounds, this paper illustrates that Sanders’ translation is reader-oriented and possesses literary value, cultural value, and sociological value. Based on this study, future research could go deeper into the interplay between the foregrounds and backgrounds of this translation. Future studies could also go to the application of the model of foregrounds and backgrounds in the analysis of other translated versions of classic Chinese narratives.

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