

# Exploring the Barrier between Language and Culture from the Perspective of Postmodernist Aesthetics - Taking the Translation of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Huang Jinyan and the Translation by Fan Ye as an Example

Hung Cheung Hin<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Foreign Languages, Shandong University, Shandong, China

\*Corresponding author: 202102073255@mail.sdu.edu.cn

## Abstract:

Focusing on the translations of Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Huang Jinyan and Fan Ye, this paper explores how language shapes and reflects cultural differences, thus influencing cross-cultural communication from a postmodernist aesthetic perspective. The opening chapter briefly describes the relevance of postmodern aesthetics to translation studies, with a special focus on the strategies of naturalization and alienation in magical realist translations and their role in conveying cultural connotations. Subsequently, a comparative analysis of the two translations reveals the differences in the translators' strategies in dealing with the complex symbols and cultural elements of the original work: Fan's translation tends to alienate, retaining the exotic and magical qualities and preserving the uniqueness of Latin American culture, but it may increase the barriers to comprehension for Chinese readers; Huang's translation is inclined towards naturalization, which is closer to local reading habits and enhances the readability of the text, but it may diminish the cultural shock and depth of the original text. The core of the article emphasizes that translation is a dual process of cultural selection and re-creation. It requires the translator to strike a balance between preserving the original style and transmitting the cultural essence within the framework of postmodern aesthetics. The article further discusses the crucial role of this balance in enhancing cross-cultural communication and expanding horizons. It also proposes guidelines for future translation practice and research, advocating for a harmonious and symbiotic translation strategy that respects the original work while adapting to the target culture, particularly in the translation of cross-cultural literature.

**Keywords:** Postmodernist aesthetics; magic realism; naturalization and alienation; cultural transmission

## 1. Introduction

The rise of postmodernist aesthetics, with its deconstruction of traditional narratives and experimental exploration of language, has brought about far-reaching effects on literary creation and theoretical research. Especially in the field of translation, postmodernist aesthetics has challenged the traditional concept of translation, prompting translators to find a new balance between naturalization and alienation. Magic realism, as an important branch of postmodernist literature, has become the focus of translation practice in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* because of its unique artistic style and rich cultural connotation. This study will focus on how postmodernist aesthetics influence translation strategies and what the differences are between the two translators' approaches in dealing with

the complex symbols and cultural elements of the original text. It will also explore how these differences impact the readers' understanding and experience of the original text. The study will address the two main questions.

In the twenty-first century, when globalization has reached an unprecedented level, and there is a gradual increase in the demand for cross-cultural communication, understanding the role of translation in cross-cultural communication is crucial for constructing effective communication in multicultural contexts. This study aims to present a comprehensive and in-depth exploration that guides readers to understand how language and culture are intertwined within the framework of postmodernist aesthetics. This influence extends to cross-cultural communication of literary works, revealing the alignment between literature

in postmodernist creative styles and alienating translation strategies.

## 2. Literature References

### 2.1 Postmodernism and Magical Realism Literature

#### 2.1.1 Overview of Postmodernism Theory

Postmodernism, as an important trend in Western culture, philosophy, and art since the mid-20th century, has sparked academic controversy due to its complex and diverse theoretical implications [1]. It challenges the universality, certainty, and essentialism of modernism, emphasizing plurality, heterogeneity, relativity, and rupture. This subversive aesthetic perspective is notably evident in literature, particularly in magic realist literature [2]. Magical realism is a significant branch of postmodernist literature, and it mirrors postmodernism's deconstruction and reconstruction of reality through innovative literary forms. As Zeng Yanbing [2] points out, postmodernist literature is the inheritance and development of modernism, which does not completely abandon modernism but deepens and expands on its basis. Magic realism literature, as exemplified in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, is the concrete practice of postmodernist aesthetics in the field of literature. This form of literature blends reality and illusion, phantasmagoria and history, blurring the boundaries between reality and fiction and reflecting postmodernism's skeptical attitude towards reality.

#### 2.1.2 Overview of Magical Realism Literature

Magical realism literature is an important genre of Latin American literature in the 20th century, blending reality with supernatural elements to create a literary world that is both familiar and strange. In his masterpiece *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Márquez utilizes magical realism techniques to intertwine the Buendía family's legend with the vicissitudes of the small town of Macondo, creating a parallel universe that is both realistic and surreal. These elements enrich the literary artistry and imbue the work with profound philosophical meaning. Through Marquez's non-linear narrative technique, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* transcends the novel itself and becomes a cultural phenomenon. In translating *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, how Huang Jinyan and Fan Ye dealt with these symbolic and magical elements was key to their translation strategy. The different translation tendencies embodied by the two translators in their translations reflect the delicate balance between cultural selection and artistic re-creation in the translation process.

#### 2.1.3 The Connection Between Postmodernism and

#### Magical Realism Literature

Postmodernism and magical realism literature share remarkable similarities in many aspects, reinforcing their close ties in theory and practice. Both challenge traditional narrative and realism, with magical realist literature favoring a non-linear, multi-layered narrative structure that blurs the boundaries between reality and fiction. This allows for multiple interpretations of events and characters in the work. In postmodernism, this is manifested as a deconstruction of authoritative narratives, while in magical realism, it is seen as a poetic deformation of reality. Firstly, as Zou Guangsheng and Gao Gongrong [1] have pointed out, a distinctive feature of postmodernist literature is the shift from the ephemeral to the diachronic, i.e., the emphasis on the present moment and the instantaneous, which is closely related to the denial of historical continuity and historical stability. And this innovation, in the concept of time is reflected in magical realist literature. Secondly, the disappearance of grand narratives and the erosion of deep structures that characterize postmodernist literature are also reflected in the treatment of theme and plot in magical realist literature. Just as the uncertainty of postmodernist literature is embodied in the four aspects of theme, image, plot, and language [2], in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, using these elements, Marquez constructs a world full of mystery and unpredictability, creating a fantasy world and revealing the cycle of history and the multiple facets of human nature. This echoes the pluralism and diversity of postmodernist aesthetics [3]. Finally, the exotic space-time in magic realist literature embodies the co-temporality of space-time and maintains a delicate balance between reality and fiction. Li Xue [4] points out that the complex interweaving of "lightness" and "heaviness" in this space-time is not only the aesthetic practice of magic realism but also a reflection of postmodernism's challenge to the depth and universality of reality. This intricate blending of "light" and "heavy" in time and space is not only the aesthetic practice of magic realism but also the embodiment of postmodernism's challenge to the depth and universality of reality.

#### 2.1.4 Naturalization and Alienation Translation Strategies in the Translation of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

In translating *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Huang Jinyan and Fan Ye employ the strategies of naturalization and alienation, respectively, to cater to different readerships and cultural environments. This reflects the translators' varying interpretations and applications of postmodern aesthetic concepts. Sun Zhili [5] proposes that translation strategies encompass the "alienation method" and the which prioritizes proximity to the author and the reader,

respectively. In her dissertation, Tan Huijuan [6] explores the long-standing debate in the translation community about how to find a balance between fidelity and fluency in language delivery. In the translation of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the practices of Huang Jinyan and Fan Ye demonstrate the real-life manifestation of this debate. Their choices reflect not only their personal translation philosophies but also how postmodernism's aesthetics influence translation practice. The different translation strategies of the two translators show different interpretations of postmodernist aesthetics.

### 3. Theoretical frameworks

#### 3.1 Postmodernist Aesthetics in Relation to Translation

Postmodernist aesthetics have profoundly impacted translation studies, challenging the traditional concept of translation, especially the fidelity and universality emphasized during the modernist period. From the postmodernist perspective, translation is no longer merely a mechanical process of language conversion but a dynamic practice involving cultural selection and re-creation. Postmodernist literature often incorporates language play, collage, and parody, challenging the coherence and profundity of tradition by creating linguistic plebeianism and diversity [7]. The emergence of literary genres like magical realism has introduced translators to novel text forms and aesthetic approaches, enriching the variety and intricacy of translation methods.

At the same time, the status of readers is elevated, and they are no longer just passive receivers but participants in artistic creation, becoming subjects of interpretation and re-creation [1]. This change has had a significant impact on translation strategies. Translators are no longer just "mediators" of fidelity to the original text but must also consider how to engage readers in different cultural contexts. This engagement can be achieved through the alienation strategy to maintain the exoticism and cultural identity of the original text or through the naturalization strategy to make the text more accessible to readers in the target culture [8].

#### 3.2 Naturalized Alienation Strategies in a Postmodern Literary Perspective

Alienation strategy, as a translation method that intentionally preserves the linguistic features, cultural imagery, and expressions of the original text, can maximally preserve the original text's exotic flavor and cultural depth. It provides readers with an "unfamiliar" reading experience, motivating them to step out of the familiar cultural framework and view the foreign culture from a more open and

critical perspective. This facilitates readers' awareness of the foreign attributes present in translated texts, which, in turn, stimulates readers' thinking and enhances the diversification of cultural identities and reading experiences in cross-cultural communication [9]. Advocates of this strategy, such as the Italian translation theorist Umberto Eco and the American translation theorist Lawrence Venuti, they believe that such translations may overlook the importance of the source language's culture and could reinforce cultural hegemony. They advocate for translations to reveal their cultural significance and remind readers that they are engaging with a translated work. This approach aims to facilitate the dissemination of the source culture and deepen cross-cultural understanding [10]. In the context of postmodernist aesthetics, this strategy is particularly significant as it not only aligns with postmodern culture's pursuit of difference and diversity but also fosters mutual understanding and respect among cultures. It helps avoid the risks of cultural hegemony and homogenization. In contrast, the naturalization strategy may be influenced by the translator's subjectivity, which, to some extent, weakens the cultural characteristics and uniqueness of the original text and limits the reader's in-depth exploration and experience of the exotic culture. In the postmodernism era, with its emphasis on pluralistic coexistence and opposition to single narratives, translations dominated by the naturalization strategy seem too conservative and fail to satisfy contemporary readers' desire for non-mainstream cultural experiences.

### 4. Analysis of the Chinese translation of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

#### 4.1 Comparison of the article's style (differences in mood conveyed in the overall text)

On the whole, the author believes that Huang Jinyan's translation creates a more atmosphere for storytelling. The high degree of colloquialism in the text is evident through the use of conjunctions and Chinese idiomatic expressions throughout. These expressions enhance the natural flow of the translation, drawing readers closer to the story and facilitating their immersion in the plot, akin to listening to an old friend recounting a family tale. However, incorporating traditional Chinese elements in Huang's translation may create a more familiar cultural ambiance for Chinese readers, overshadowing the original text's intended Latin American cultural essence. While this shift aids in readers' comprehension and acceptance of the story, it may simultaneously diminish their exposure to the distinctiveness of Latin American culture as portrayed in the original text. In contrast, Fan Ye's translation is more like using the parchment scrolls in the text as clues to present the stories

recorded on them. Fan's inclination towards written expression is evident in his removal of numerous repetitive expressions and conjunctions in Chinese. Specifically, the translation's language is relatively more concise and elegant: the translator has enhanced the translation's conciseness and power by eliminating sentence elements and adjusting punctuation.

### **4.2 Comparison of words and phrases used (naturalization and alienation in concrete terms)**

In terms of vocabulary selection, the Huang translation tends to opt for words that align with the preferences of the target language readers, with the goal of enhancing the comprehensibility of the translation. This approach reflects a naturalization strategy, where culturally significant words in the original text are substituted with expressions that are more familiar to the target audience, thereby easing readability. Moreover, the vocabulary used in describing objects is rich in specific meanings, rendering the text more vibrant. In contrast, the Fan translation leans towards preserving the lexical nuances of the original text, even if they are uncommon or challenging for the target language audience to grasp. This inclination reflects an alienation strategy, which seeks to maintain the exotic essence and cultural nuances of the original text. Additionally, abstract vocabulary is employed more frequently in the Fan translation to convey profound meanings or concepts. Referring to syntactic structure, the differences between the two translations are more often found in sentences where there are multiple translations of one sentence. In translating such sentences, Huang's translation adjusts the original text's word order and sentence structure. It uses repetitive vocabulary and conjunctive phrases to enhance the force of the language, such as changing the passive sentence into an active one, splitting a long sentence into a shorter one, and changing the order of sentences in the passage to improve the fluency and readability of the translation. The Fan translation, on the other hand, reflects the translator's advocacy of maintaining the syntactic structure of the original text as much as possible. Although the grammatical structure of the Spanish expression may seem more awkward or complex when applied to Chinese, this practice helps preserve the stylistic features and style of the original text.

In addition, Huang's translation skillfully incorporates a range of rhetorical devices, including metaphor, personification, hyperbole, and more. This enhances the expressive impact and appeal of the translation, aligning it with familiar literary styles and increasing its acceptance among Chinese readers at the time. In contrast, Fan's translation prioritizes preserving the original text's rhetorical style,

a relatively novel approach within the Chinese cultural sphere.

### **4.3 Subtext analysis (role of footnotes, annotations, commentaries)**

In the process of translating *One Hundred Years of Solitude* into Chinese, Fan Ye and Huang Jinyan adopt different cultural transmission methods, using footnotes, annotations, and commentaries to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers. Fan Ye tends to translate in-depth, and footnotes and annotations are extensively used in the translation to supplement the cultural background and preserve the exoticism and Latin American cultural qualities of the original text. He provides detailed annotations on special place names, character names, historical events, or cultural practices, revealing the multiple meanings and cultural details of the text to challenge linguistic homogeneity and certainty, so that readers can understand its deeper meanings and cultural values. This reflects Fan's translation's respect for cultural plurality and difference in postmodernist aesthetics. In contrast, the footnotes and annotations in Huang's translation are mostly concise overviews of that content, relying more on text-internal interpretations and linguistic adjustments to achieve the effect of keeping readers' attention focused on the storyline.

## **5. Differences between naturalization and alienation strategies in cultural communication**

### **5.1 The Cultural Barrier Effect of Naturalization Strategies and the Cultural Communication Advantages of Alienation Strategies**

During cross-cultural communication, the choice of naturalization or alienation strategy significantly influences the communication of the aesthetic style and cultural connotations of the original text. By adapting linguistic and cultural elements to align more closely with the target readers' familiar cognitive framework, the naturalization strategy reduces comprehension difficulties. It promotes the widespread dissemination of the work in the new cultural context. Sun Zhili highlighted in his thesis that as Chinese society becomes more open and international exchanges deepen, the translation strategy may transition from the previous predominance of naturalization to the predominance of alienation. This shift is beneficial for enhancing the artistic quality and depth of translated works, as well as meeting readers' desires for multicultural experiences [4].

Excessive naturalization may lead to the loss of exotic features and deep cultural information of the original text.

As mentioned by Wang Dongfeng in Cultural Intervention in the Translation Process, translators may choose to neutralize or abridge when dealing with ethically or culturally sensitive content. This adaptation helps to align with the target culture but may diminish the cultural complexity of the original text [8]. While translators also need to consider specific cultural backgrounds, reader groups, and translation goals when choosing naturalization or alienation strategies, they must also consider the complexity and plurality requirements of postmodernist aesthetics for translation practices [11]. Therefore, compared with the naturalization strategy, the alienation strategy is more in line with the postmodernist aesthetics' appreciation for difference and plurality. This approach encourages readers to engage in profound reflection and cross-cultural dialogue during the reading process by revealing the heterogeneity of the original text.

From the perspective of postmodernist aesthetics, both strategies are responses to linguistic and cultural barriers. However, based on the differences in the forms involved, the naturalization strategy reproduces the story itself in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* while limiting the dissemination of the Latin American cultural elements in it. In contrast, the alienation strategy disseminates the cultural phenomena embedded in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and its postmodernist aesthetics.

### 5.2 Case Study: A Specific Comparison of the Different Translation Strategies of Huang Jinyan's and Fan Ye's Translations

#### 5.2.1 The effect of conveying the literary style of magical realism

Original text: Pero el visitante advirtió.....un deslumbrante resplandor de alegría.

Huang's translation: But the guest perceived his insincerity.....a glow of delight came over his face.

Fan's translation: But the visitor saw his artifice.....his face was radiant with delight.

This passage is taken from a time when insomnia was rampant in Macondo, and Melquiades arrived in the city to help his old friend Buendía cope with the pain caused by insomnia and memory loss. The following three points will be analyzed to compare the variances in the two translations.

#### 1. Language Expression and Fluency:

The language expression of the Huang translation is indeed more traditional, such as the use of the four-letter word "insincerity" and the construction of the long sentence "Forgetting is not the kind of emotional estrangement that can be bridged". In the former case, although

the superficial meaning of the word "insincerity" corresponds to that of the original sentence, if we consider it carefully, we will find that it carries the "pejorative colors of Chinese culture (the word originates from Journey to the West, where it is used to describe a demon). Although the latter does not correspond to the original sentence, its expansion of the meaning of the original reflects the depth of its Chinese language and unique rhetorical techniques. This style of translation not only preserves the literary color of the original text but also makes the reader feel the rhythm and beauty of the original text. The Fan translation, on the other hand, is more inclined to the modern style, such as the concise and clear phrase "saw his artifice" and the vivid description of "baggage stuffed with rare objects", which makes the language concise and flowing and at the same time more comprehensible. This way of expression is close to contemporary readers' reading habits and helps improve their reading experience. This reflects that while pursuing fidelity, Fan's translation also pays attention to the vividness and imagery of the language so that readers can easily understand and enjoy the reading process. Therefore, for contemporary readers, the Fan translation may be more advantageous in terms of fluency of language expression. The traditional style and elaborate wording of Huang's translation, on the other hand, have a more obvious personal cognitive tendency and subjective color.

#### 2. The Impact of Cultural Transmission on Words and Phrases:

In the original text, "Le dio...a la luz" literally means "to give birth to" or "to give light to" and is followed by "...en su memoria" which means "the birth of memory" . en su memoria" means "birth of memory". In the original, this corresponds to "el olvido de la muerte", i.e., "the oblivion of death". In contrast, "memory" is matched by "oblivion", and "death" by "birth". This is an expression in the Hispanic cultural circle, which is omitted in the Huang translation, while in the Fan translation, "the birth of memory" is translated as "the light of memory". In this respect, the naturalization strategy advocated by Huang's translation eliminates some of the exotic, culturally loaded words shaped by the original text, which is not conducive to the dissemination of the source language culture.

#### 3. Flexibility and adaptability of translation strategies:

The Huang translation pays more attention to localizing the translation in the process, advocating the use of traditional Chinese elements in linguistic expression. It employs a more elaborate and traditional vocabulary,

while adjusting the sentence order according to Chinese expression habits. For instance, the original text uses a series of verbs to depict the continuity of Buendía's actions, leaving tears in her eyes immediately after drinking the potion and regaining her memory. In contrast, the Huang translation portrays Buendía shedding tears after drinking the potion and observing the absurd scene. This change in order significantly reflects the translator's subjective cognitive tendency, suggesting that Buendía may have cried only after realizing her past actions' absurdity. However, the original text loses the continuous action expression of "the strong emotional shock that accompanied Buendía's memory recovery led to tears. the other hand, the Fan translation maintains the sentence order of the original text, allowing the original text's tendency to be more evident to the reader.

### 5.2.2 Cultural loss when the original language enters the cultural circle of the target language

As mentioned above, the translation strategy of naturalization has not only become an obstacle to the readers' understanding of the source language's culture to a certain extent but has even caused the loss of cultural and textual meanings in the replacement or deletion of some culturally loaded words. The following is a further classification:

1. When describing bird species, the Huang translation adopts a localized approach to non-global species names in the American dialect, rendering them as "reed birds", "bee-eaters", and other birds more familiar in China. This is done to eliminate cultural barriers and improve the readability of the translation. In contrast, the Fan translation incorporates distinctive South American birds like "oriole" and "blue robin" to underscore the geographical and cultural gaps between the original author and the readers' different cultural circles.
2. In the translation of the word "Castellano", Huang translates it as "Spanish", while Fan translates it as "Castilian", reflecting the intercultural communication between the two translations. This reflects the difference in the cross-cultural transmission of the original terminology between the two translations. In Latin American countries, locals sometimes prefer to use the word "Castellano" ("Castilian") because "Español" ("Spanish") is the most common word in Latin America. " ("Español") sounds more like the name of an ethnic group than the name of a language. Fan chose a direct translation in order to maximize the content of the original text, while Huang translated it into the well-known name "Spanish" out of a desire to simplify the culture of the source language for domestic readers to understand.
3. In terms of the depiction of erotic content, Huang's translation adopts the method of omission or non-transla-

tion to reduce the content of the original text, while Fan's translation conveys the original text meaningfully through the use of abstract vocabulary. The disparity between the two approaches highlights the dilution of the cultural intricacies of the original text in Huang's translation.

## 6. Summary

### 6.1 Summary of the study findings

It is found that the translation strategies, whether Huang Jinyan's naturalization technique or Fan Ye's in-depth translation and alienation, reflect to a certain extent the challenge to the traditional concept of aesthetics in post-modernist aesthetics and the reinterpretation of the relationship between language, culture, and text. The naturalization strategy advocated by Huang's translation helps the cross-cultural dissemination of the story itself and realizes the value of the literary work as a spiritual product. However, it shields the cultural dissemination ability possessed by the literary work itself, which is not conducive to the people of the target language countries' in-depth understanding of the culture of the source language and is confined to the surface level of the story. Under Fan Translation's alienation strategy, the translator's subjectivity is restricted so that the details and even the literary style of the original text can be restored to the greatest extent. This allows the people of the target language countries to experience the source language culture from a closer distance and understand the power behind the language.

### 6.2 Limitations of the study and perspectives for the future

Although the study reveals the importance of translation strategies in intercultural communication, it also has its limitations. Firstly, the study is limited to a comparative analysis of the translations of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by two translators, Huang Jinyan and Fan Ye, which may not be sufficient to cover the diversity of post-modernist aesthetics in translation practices fully. Despite the significant differences in the translation styles of the two translators, other translators may employ more sophisticated strategies in dealing with the exact original text, and the exploration and comparison of these strategies will enrich our understanding. Although the study highlights the role of naturalization and alienation strategies in the transmission of cultural information, it does not delve into the quantitative assessment of reader acceptance. This pertains to readers' acceptance of alienation strategies and how they process foreign cultural information during the reading process.

## References

- [1] Zou Guangsheng, Gao Gongrong. Four basic features of postmodernist literature[J]. Journal of the College of Literature, Nanjing Normal University, 2003,(01):14-19.
- [2] Zeng Yanbing. On the Uncertainty Characteristics of Postmodernist Literature[J]. Journal of Taizhou College, 2002,(05):10-14. DOI:10.13853.
- [3] Gou Guangfei. The Double of Magical Realism Literature--A Test of the Family Resemblance between *Pedro Páramo* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*[J]. Journal of Philology, 2006,(10):109-111.
- [4] Li Xue. The Lightness and Heaviness of Magical Realism Literature in „Exotic“ Time and Space--Taking Three Representative Works as an Example[J]. Modern Language (Academic General Edition), 2014,(10):88-91.
- [5] Sun Zhili. Literary translation in China: from naturalisation to alienation[J]. Chinese Translation, 2002,(01):39-43.
- [6] Tan Huijuan. Alienation and Naturalisation of Translation from the Perspective of Cultural Differences and Penetration[J]. Chinese Translation, 1999,(01):45-47.
- [7] He Jiangsheng. Language games in postmodernist literature[J]. Contemporary Foreign Literature, 2005,(04):97-102. DOI:10.16077/j.cnki.issn1001-1757.2005.04.014.
- [8] Wang Dongfeng. The Cultural Status of Translated Literature and the Translator's Cultural Attitude[J]. Chinese Translation, 2000,(04):3-9.
- [9] Wang Dongfeng. Naturalisation and alienation: A clash of spears and shields? [J]. Chinese Translation, 2002,(05):26-28.
- [10] Ge Zuqin. The Postcolonial Perspective of the Current Discussion on Naturalisation/Identification Strategies--A Reminder to Domestic Naturalisation/Identification Theorists[J]. China Translation, 2002,(05):34-37.
- [11] Wu Bing, Zhu Jianping. Identity and dissimilarity: A study of the acceptance of in-depth translation in China[J]. Language and Translation, 2018,(03):73-79.