

DOCTORAL THESIS

Translating as transculturating: a study of Dai Wangshu's translation of Lorca's poetry from an integrated sociological-cultural perspective

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ABSTRACT

Dai Wangshu 戴望舒 (1905-1950) was a prolific translator, working on both French and Hispanic literature. However, his translation work has often been considered relevant only to the extent that it helped him to develop a self-fashioned modernist style in his own poetic writing. Moreover, no systematic study has been conducted on his interest in Hispanic literature, particularly on his translation of Federico García Lorca's poetry, a project to which he dedicated over half of his professional career but left unfinished. In addition, investigations on Dai have been generally approached from a narrow theoretical perspective that has risked overlooking the social factors that affected his literary activities. This thesis, therefore, aims to reveal the extent and the way in which translating Lorca into Chinese contributed to the establishment and consolidation of Dai's position as a social agent in the field of literary production in China.

The methodology is constructed in an attempt to reconcile a sociological perspective on translation drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theory with a more interpretive understanding of literary writing based on the notion of transculturation inherited from Latin American cultural studies. Examining Dai's translation of Lorca's poetry from this integrated perspective allows foregrounding the heterogeneity and multiplicity of Dai's literary dispositions, at both a macroscopic and a microscopic level, without ignoring the social factors involved in his translation practice.

By embedding Lorca's poetry in the field of literary production in China, Dai privileged a particular set of possibilities over the others, both literary and ideological at the same time. This kind of behaviour in Dai can be interpreted in terms of transculturation and observed in various textual domains, involving formal literary elements, discourses and worldviews. Furthermore, Dai's project of translating Lorca's poetry, which expanded over a three-decade period, allows establishing striking connections among literary journals and groups at various temporal and spatial locations, each of them associated with different and often competing views on translation, literature and politics. In sum, Dai's translation project of Lorca played a pivotal role in establishing and consolidating Dai's position in the literary scene to the extent that his status as a literary figure was more determined by his translation work than by his own poetic writing. Dai's translation of Lorca involved not only transculturating a specific text-type, the *romance*, but also a particular view on the role of literature in society that, unexpectedly, positioned him as an author opportunistically committed to the Communist cause.

This investigation contributes new evidence that helps to question some long-standing assumptions both in studies on Dai and in reflections on the role of translation in Chinese literature. In addition, it allows arguing for a study of such a role at large without the need to subsume translation to any other sort of practice.

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