Social Norms and the (Re-)Translation of Romance Fiction

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Despite its popularity in the market, translated texts of popular romance fictions have not received enough attention in translation studies. While some translation researchers have studied the history of Chinese translation of popular romance (e.g. Liu, 2012) and how Harlequin novels have influenced original Chinese romance novels published after 1990s, very few studies have been carried out to examine the influence of social norms on the translated texts. However, the popularity of romance fictions means that some bestsellers will have more than one version of translation and re-translation, making them the best source for researchers to study the phenomenon of retranslation and to test the “Retranslation Hypotheses” presented by Berman (1990) and Robinson (1999). In this paper, the authors carried out a case study to analyse the data collected from two Chinese translation of the novel “the Bride” by Julie Garwood. The first translation was published in 1991 and the re-translation of same book was published in 2012. In addition to discussion of the “Retranslation Hypotheses”, the authors will also discuss the social background behind the two different translations. The data collected from the two translated texts will be used to test the “Retranslation Hypotheses” and examine how the social norms of the two different eras have influenced the translator’s strategies in translating and re-translating the novel.