ABSTRACT

The 20th century has seen many new developments in translation practice and theory. In this academic exercise, I will introduce the theories of two different translators, who not only differ in their approach towards translation but also differ in their understanding of translation. The first is Walter Benjamin, a great German philosopher of the early 20th century who sees translation as a way of prolonging the “life” of literary works. The second is Eugene Nida, who approaches translation from a more scientific and analytical point of view. Their theories are the foundations of this academic exercise. Based on these two theories, I give a detailed examination of five different English translated versions of the great Chinese classic, *The Dream of the Red Chamber* 《红楼梦》.

The intention is to see the trend of translation starting from the earliest completed translated version published in 1892 to the latest published in 1980. Based on how these five translators approach customs and festivals, culturally specific factors, proper names and rhetoric, I conclude whether they incline towards either Benjamin’s or Nida’s theory, and discuss how such inclination affects the translation of the classic and relates to social and cultural biases.