

Promotion, Opposition, and Self-Projection: Yan Fu's Translation of *Memoir of Montesquieu*

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Abstract

Fayi 法意, translated by Yan Fu 嚴復 at the beginning of the twentieth century, was one of the earliest Chinese translations of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Laws*. While the majority of current research concerns the translated text, little focus has been placed on its paratexts, including Yan Fu's preface. This study argues that the biographic preface *Mengdesijiu liezhuan* 孟德斯鳩列傳 in *Fayi* was not completely written by Yan Fu as is generally accepted, but in fact was translated from an English preface. However, it is at the same time a rewriting of Montesquieu due to the translator's multiple motivations. As a translator, moderate reformist, and renowned scholar, Yan Fu created a new image of Montesquieu out of the need for book promotion, his political stand, and academic interests. By adopting different translation strategies, not only did Yan Fu succeed in advertising the book, but he also conveyed his prudent attitude towards the then-revolutionary movements and his concurring of Montesquieu's academic views. This case study will enrich our understanding of the translator Yan Fu and his work *Fayi*, and also shed light on translation-related paratextual studies in that even a translated preface can be seen as a potential site for the translator's creative intervention.

Keywords

Yan Fu, Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, preface, translation as rewriting