

Original Paper

The Study of Translation Variation in *The Dark Forest* from the Perspective of Consciously Creative Treason

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Abstract

“Creative treason” is a major view in translation studies, and is divided into consciously creative treason and unconsciously creative treason. From the perspective of consciously creative treason, the paper studies translation variation in English version of *The Dark Forest*, and focuses on compilation, abridged translation and rewriting. Thus, we come to the conclusion that the preeminent translation skills of the translator help the spread of the English version.

Keywords

The Dark Forest, consciously creative treason, C-E translation, translation variation

1. Introduction

In recent years, the series of *Three-Body Problems* created by Liu Cixin has attached wide attention. Moreover, since Ken Liu translated the *Three-Body Problem* in 2014, the book became more popular. It not only won the Hugo Award, but also set off a wave of science fiction fever in China. The success of the book contributes to the translation. In previous studies of *The Dark Forest*, the research topics were limited to metaphor, culture-loaded words and discourse consciousness. Based on the theory of “consciously creative treason”, this paper analyzes the phenomenon of translation variation in the English version of *The Dark Forest*, and explores how translators utilize their translation skills as to promote the English version to go abroad.

2. The Introduction of *The Dark Forest* and the Translator

The Dark Forest, which was first published in May 2008, is a full-length science fiction novel written by Liu Cixin. In 2005, John Martinson translated and published it in America.

The book consists of three chapters: “THE WALLFACERS”, “THE SPELL” and “THE DARK FOREST”. The whole book tells that, as the Trisolaran Fleet attacks the solar system, humans are in

face of an unprecedented crisis with cutting-edge technology being locked up. Humans can solve it only by one way---to utilize transparent thinking of the Trisolarans. Therefore, humans stimulate the mysterious Wallfacer Project to counterattack the Trisolarans. In this cruel competition, Luoji realized his responsibility as a Wallfacer and changed his initial escapism and hedonism. He confirmed the Dark Forest rule, i.e., any civilization whose position is exposed will soon be destroyed, whereby he temporarily stopped the invasion of the Trisolaran to the solar system so as to establish a fragile strategic balance between them (Liu Cixin, 2008).

The translator Joel Martinsen is an American, whose growing environment has great advantages for translation processing. At the same time, he made several attempts to translate Chinese on his own and has served as the editor of Danwei.org to translated articles from media and websites. He has translated Liu Cixin's *Ball Lightning* (excerpt), *The Thinker* and other science fiction novels. With years of translation experience and understanding of Liu cixin's writing style, he can choose translation strategies flexibly and grasp the differences between the source language and target language. All of the above lay a solid foundation for the wide spread of the translation.

3. The Consciously “Creative Treason”

The concept of “creative treason” was originally proposed by the French literary sociologist Robert Escarpit. In his book *The Sociology of Literature*, he pointed that “Translation is betrayal in that it places the work in a completely unexpected frame of reference [language]; translation is creative because it gives a work a new look which brings an echo with audience. Also because it not only extends the life of the work, but gives it a second life” (Robert Escarpit, 1987, p. 137). This ignores the situation of translators and readers themselves.

Professor Xie Tianzhen is one of the first domestic scholars to note that concept. He further added “If the creativity in literary translation shows the efforts made by translator to reproduce the original work, we can say the work obtains a new life in a new language, ethnic and social and historical environment. Then in most cases, the treason in literary translation reflect the objective deviation from the original work caused by the translator in order to achieve a certain subjective desire in the translation process” (Xie Tianzhen, 2018, p. 72). He illustrated two types of “creative treason”: consciously creative treason and unconsciously creative treason.

Consciously creative treason refers to the translator's initiative to “deviate” from the original work for specific purposes when he is familiar with both languages and cultures and can translate the original work faithfully. The following will focus on how translation variation is reflected in the English version of *The Dark Forest* under “consciously creative treason”.

4. The Analyses of Translation Variation under “Consciously Creative Treason”

Translation variation is a translation activity in which the translator absorbs the relevant content of the original text by adding, subtracting, editing, reciting, reducing, combining and modifying, according to

the special needs of specific readers under specific conditions (Huang Zhonglian, 2002, p. 19). As the core concept of translation variation theory, translation variation expounds seven flexible means of addition, subtraction, compilation, description, contraction, combination and modification, as well as eleven flexible ways of translation based on these seven flexible means: compilation, abridged translation, rewriting, contraction, summarization, review, revision, critique, explication, translation writing and reference translation.

The following analyses will explore three ways under consciously creative treason. They are compilation, abridged translation and rewriting.

4.1 Compilation

Compilation is an activity that selects the main content of the original text or the part of the content that the target text readers are interested in according to the specific needs of the translator. Of course, it can also be subdivided. But the paper focuses on sentence translation excerpting from sentence group and sentence and sentence group translation excerpting from a paragraph.

4.1.1 Sentence Translation Excerpting from Sentence Group

A sentence group is a complete unit of meaning, consisting of two or more sentences with a meaning center. Any sentence inconsistent with or not closely related to the meaning center can be deleted.

E.g.,

舰队司令：“还有别人需要负责吗？”

FLEET COMMANDER: Is anyone else responsible?

章北海：“没有,只有我一人,这次事件与‘自然选择’号上的其他成员没有任何关系,东方延绪舰长在关键时刻做出了正确的决定。”

ZHANG BEIHAI: No. Responsibility is mine alone. The situation has nothing at all to do with anyone else aboard Natural Selection.

This is a conversation between Zhang Beihai and the fleet commander after the ship was derailed by his unauthorized operation. When translating, translator doesn't translate the underlined content intentionally as the central meaning of the question is “relevant person in charge”. Obviously, the sentence underlined is not closely related to the content of the dialogue, so it is reasonable for the translator to delete it

4.1.2 Sentence and Sentence Group Translation Excerpting from a Paragraph

The compilation in the paragraph pays more attention to facts and conclusions, thus the sentences describing the process and reasons are not so important. In general, sentences (sentence groups) that are irrelevant to the content of paragraph can be omitted.

E.g.,

所以,无论是前往海王星开采油膜物质的太空船队的组建,还是恒星型氢弹的制造(雷迪亚兹的计划所遗留下来的五千多枚氢弹中,在两个世纪后只有不到一千枚还能使用,对于雪地工程而言数量远远不够),都进展迟缓。

As a result, both the construction of a fleet to gather the oil film material on Neptune and the

manufacture of sufficient stellar hydrogen bombs to supplement the fewer than one thousand from the Great Ravine that were still usable made very slow progress.

First of all, both the building of the space fleet and the production of the stellar hydrogen bomb are big projects in their own right. They take a lot of time, money and other resources, so it is obvious that people make little progress. Second, Ray Diaz once pointed in the UN hearing that the entire deployment of his Wallfacer Project would require at least a million stellar-type hydrogen bombs. While in the underlined content, the stellar-type hydrogen bombs made previously are only 5,000, now they are less than 1,000. It further confirms the difficulty of the two projects. Therefore, the translator removed the content in parentheses without affecting the general meaning of the paragraph.

4.2 Abridged Translation

Abridged translation is a way to process the original text, which can be analyzed from micro and macro aspects. Here focuses on the micro level, that is the specific operation of abridged translation. The following analysis pays attention to how to narrate the event in an orderly way. That is to say, we should have a logical mind.

E.g.,

①章北海笑笑说,仍然是那种让吴岳看不懂的笑,②但他可以肯定这微笑是发自内心的,既然发自内心的东西都看不懂,那就根本没希望懂得他这个人了。③成功的合作不等于成功的了解。④当然,吴岳自己在章北海的眼中肯定是全透明的,⑤从舰上的水兵到他这个舰长,章北海总是能轻易地看到他们内心深处,⑥他肯定是最称职的政委。章北海在工作上也是很坦诚的,对于舰长,每件事前前后后都有很详细的交底。

Zhang Beihai laughed as he said this, but it was the sort of laugh that Wu Yue couldn't read. Zhang Beihai's eyes could easily read deep into the heart of everyone aboard the ship, be they captain or sailor. Wu Yue was entirely transparent to him. But Wu Yue could not read what was inside Zhang. He was certain that the man's smile came from within him, but had no hope of understanding him. Successful cooperation does not equate to successful understanding. There was no question that Zhang Beihai was the most capable political commissar on the ship, and he was forthright in his work, exploring every last issue with complete precision.

The adjustment of logic is vividly reflected in this translation. If the reasoning of the original work remains intact for readers, they may be puzzled about it. Therefore, the translator has adjusted the order of translation to a large extent. The present order is ①⑤④②③⑥. The translator first narrates that "Zhang Beihai could easily read deep into the heart of everyone aboard the ship", while Wu Yue could not read Zhang Beihai's, then concludes that "Successful cooperation does not equate to successful understanding." At last, the translator translated the appreciation for Zhang Beihai. By arranging the paragraph with a reasonable logic, readers can be easily understand what the writer wants to talk about. Therefore, the translator's deliberate departure from the original text is a sound behavior.

4.3 Rewriting

Rewriting is an activity that changes the form or part of the content or even the style of the original text

according to specific requirements. It is an authentic domestication method to meet the needs of specific readers at specific levels. The most fundamental and common change in translation is the change of content.

E.g.,

.....用大众更容易明白的话说：你要消灭地球太空军,让他们的量子幽灵去抵抗三体舰队。您认为他们是不可战胜的,因为已被摧毁的舰队不可能再被摧毁,已经死去的人不可能再死一次。所以,您所寻求的自我牺牲精神,不是在与主的战争中发扬,而是保证那些太空军人在被自己的人类同胞杀死后,其量子鬼魂仍能忍辱负重,仍以拯救地球文明为己任,继续完成那些本应由活着的他们完成的使命。

let's talk about the mosquito swarm. You went around the world seeking to establish a kamikaze force for humanity, but your efforts failed ... Let's talk about the water now. In the Doomsday Battle, the ETO-controlled mosquito fleet would likely launch a sneak attack on Earth's fleet and then flee to the Lord's fleet. Because they had just demonstrated their disloyalty to earth, Trisolaris might be willing to let them join the fleet, but the Lord would not be so fast to accept the turncoat army. A sufficiently meaningful gift would be required to win them over—water ... When Earth's fleet draws close to the Lord's fleet, you would take over control of the fighters from the ETO pilots and switch them to drone mode, ordering the fighters to strike their chosen targets. The superbombs would be detonated at point-blank range, annihilating all of the Lord's ships.

Rewriting is best reflected in the plan of Wallfacer Taylor and the above is a partial excerpt. Taylor's original plan, based on macroatomic theory and quantum ghosts, was to create a self-dedicated space force while annihilate them and use their ghosts to counter the Trisolaran fleet. But the plan involves materials from Liu Cixin's another novel *Ball Lightning*, which will be difficult to understand for readers who have not read the novel. Therefore, the translator changes the original plan and redivided it into two parts: the mosquito swarm and water. The content are changed as receiving members of the Earth Trisolaran Organization (ETO), gaining the trust of the Trisolaran fleet, then attacking and h-bombing the Trisolaran fleet. In the translation is more acceptable and readable, and the translator's creative treason is brought into full play.

5. Conclusion

The paper briefly introduces the research background and analyzes the translation strategies adopted by the translator from the perspective of consciously creative treason to deal with the English version of *The Dark Forest*. The most typical strategies adopted are compilation, abridged translation and rewriting. But some of the analysis in this article is also out of my own personal understanding, so it may be not so objective and comprehensive, thus requiring some adjustments. I hope this this paper can provide some ideas for the researchers to better discuss some contents of the Three-Body Problems, so as to better promote the excellent Chinese literary works to go out.

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