

## *Original Paper*

# A Study on the Creative Treason of Media-translatology in the Translation of Western Fairy Tales —The Case of Grimm's Fairy Tales

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### **Abstract**

*Compared with adults, children have different reading levels, acceptance abilities and special aesthetic and growth needs, which means fairy tale translation has its particularities. Because of this characteristic, the translator cannot translate the original work completely and faithfully according to the traditional translation theory. The "creative treason" theory of media-translatology believes that there are differences between languages, which means translators inevitably "treason" against the original work in different degrees. Thus, it is necessary to treat the translation of children's literature from the perspective of "creative treason". This paper focuses on the connection between translation of children's literature and creative treason, taking the fairy tale Grimm's Fairy Tales as an example, and focuses on the specific application of "creative treason" in fairy tales. Through the analysis, it is found that the "creative treason" is in line with the requirements and purposes of children's literature translation, which is indeed a new idea for children's literature translation.*

### **Keywords**

*media-translatology, creative treason, children's literature translation*

### **Literature Review**

There is not much research on children's literature translation in China. This may be due to the fact that children's literature is on the fringe of the literary hall of fame, and on the other hand, it may be due to the fact that people think that children's literature is easy and simple to translate. But the theories of literary translation are blooming everywhere, and fairy tale translation, as a kind of literary translation, can be more or less inspired by these translation theories. For example, Mr Xie Tianzhen, a domestic scholar, first introduced the concept of creative treason into China and pointed out that "creative treason is the subjective motivation of the translator to approach or restore the style of the original work." Treason is "the objective deviation from the original work by the translator in order to reflect the connotation of the work, as it is difficult to have equivalent vocabulary between the target language

and the original language due to the constraints of various factors such as cultural background". This kind of deviation seems that the language is not equivalent, but it is actually grasping the artistic realm of the original text, being faithful to the content of the original text on a higher level, filtering and converting the source language by choosing words and sentences, and also more in line with the reading needs of children's readers' groups.

Foreign translation theories also play an important role in guiding children's literature translation. For example, Steiner, a representative of hermeneutic translation theory, in his book *"After Babel: Aspect of Language and Translation"*, believes that "understanding is translation", and that the hermeneutic process is an action of guiding and converting meanings, which is divided into four steps: trusting, intruding, absorbing and compensating, which represent the selection of the translated text, the comprehension of the text, the output of the translation and the perfection of the translation, which represent the choice of the translated text and the comprehension of the text, respectively. The third step is especially important for children's literature translation. In the third step, the translator should adopt appropriate translation strategies to convey the style and content of the original text to the maximum extent, and at the same time, he should give full play to the subjectivity of the translator, and take into account the special characteristics of the target readers to make appropriate "creations" of the original work, so as to make it more in line with the readers' reading needs. The translator should take into account the special characteristics of the target readers and make appropriate "creation" of the original work so as to make it more in line with the readers' needs. Steiner's theory coincides with the needs of children's literature translation, which provides translators with the theoretical basis for children's literature translation and has profound guiding significance.

### **Introduction**

Childhood is a critical period in a person's life, so it is vital to pay attention to cultivating children's aesthetic interests and establishing correct values for children's growth. Children's literature can subconsciously bring certain benefits to children, so its roles in children's growth should not be underestimated. The influence of children's literature on children is mainly the following: firstly, it delights children with its rich and wonderful imagination, vivid plot and interesting language; secondly, it cultivates children's moral quality and values; thirdly, it stimulates children's creativity and imagination. Therefore, the translation of children's literature is crucial.

However, compared with the translation of poetry, prose and novels, the translation of children's literature is not given much attention, and the translation theories adopted are not advanced enough, so many works translated for children cannot really serve the purpose of children's reading needs. However, the "creative treason" theory of media-translatology is an alternative approach, which can take into account the special characteristics of children's literature readers and make the works better meet the needs of the readers through personalized translation and retranslation. The application of "creative treason" theory in children's literature translation has injected fresh power into the development of children's literature translation theory and promoted the further development of

children's literature.

Grimm's fairy tales is one of the fairy tales widely circulated in China, but the original works are violent, bloody and even obscene, and there are also some unique Western values that are unacceptable in China. These contents are not in line with the aesthetic and value cultivation needs of Chinese children, so it is necessary to properly delete and modify these contents in the translation. Since ancient times, the translation of children's literature has not received much attention compared with the mainstream literary translation. Therefore, although translation theories abound, it is not easy to find suitable translation theories to translate children's literature works. However, with the attention of the translation circle to the theory of creative treason increasing in recent years, I find that this theory runs counter to the traditional translation theory and creatively rebels against the original text, which meets the requirements of the translation of children's literature works such as Grimm's fairy tales. Therefore, this paper takes Grimm's fairy tales as an example and extracts from the text to explore the specific application of creative treason.

### **1. Introduction to Creative Treason in Media-translatology**

Media-translatology is an emerging discipline of translation studies in recent years, and the theory of creative treason of it has attracted considerable attention in the translation circle. However, when it comes to creative treason, few translators adopt this theory in children's literature translation. In fact, the theory is necessary in the translation of children's literature because it is creative and rebellious, which fully conforms to the characteristics of children's literature, and its characteristics and forms also provide translation basis for children's literature. As such, the emergence of creative treason brings new possibilities for children's literature translation.

#### *1.1 Definition of Media-translatology*

Professor Xie Tianzhen's Media-translatology marks the birth of the translation studies—Media-translatology. In this book, he mentions that "media-translatology is different from translation studies in the general sense, and if we want to define it concisely, we may say that media-translatology starts from the perspective of mesology in comparative literature, and nowadays, it is more and more from the perspective of comparative culture to study translation (especially literary translation) and translation literature. Strictly speaking, the study of translation is not a linguistic study, but a literary study or a cultural study, and it is not concerned with the question of how the source language and target language are converted, but with the loss, deformation, addition, and extension of information in the process of language conversion. It focuses on the unique value and significance of translation (mainly literary translation) as a practical activity of human intercultural communication." Broadly speaking, the so-called translation studies is a sub-discipline of comparative literature that studies the variations produced in language, mainly focusing on the various linguistic variations that occur in the process of translation across languages and countries, and exploring the historical, cultural and social reasons behind these variations. Looking back at contemporary translation theories, we will find that the translation discussed in these theories has moved away from the original text's language

limitations and has taken into account other "non-textual" elements such as the translator, the reader, and the cultural environment, etc. With the development of translation theories, people have slowly stopped considering literary translation as a purely linguistic problem, and "instead, it is a problem in the society of target language. It is a unique political, cultural, literary, and commercial act in the society of target language, and the translation is the result of many factors in the society of target language, and sometimes plays a pivotal role in the political life, cultural life, commercial activities, and even daily life of the society of target language." Therefore, media-translatology believes that translation should be explored in a specific cultural context. It is necessary to focus on the text itself as well as the elements beyond the text in order to accomplish the goal of looking at translation activities from a more comprehensive perspective.

### *1.2 Definition of Creative Treason*

The "creative treason" is a central idea in Media-translatology, first proposed by French literary sociologist Robert Escarpit, who wrote in his book *Sociology of Literature*: "If one is willing to accept that translation is always a kind of creative treason, then the problem of translation may be solved. Translation is regarded as treason because it places the work in a completely unanticipated system of reference (the language); it is creative because it gives the work a new look and creates an opportunity of making a new literary communication with a wider audience; and because it not only prolongs the life of the work, but also gives it a second life." Creative treason is both "treason" and "creation". Treason is translation, and creation is the translation of the original text in the process of intercultural communication, taking into account various factors such as the translator, the reader and the receiving environment or cultural background. It is not a translation of the original text, but a conscious effort to make a new interpretation of the original text.

### *1.3 Characteristics of Creative Treason*

The term "creative treason" refers to a necessary "departure" or "deviation" from the original text in the translation. It may result in several ways: a superior translation, such as the translation of the famous American cosmetic brand Revlon into “露华浓”; mistranslation, omissions, and even nonsense translation; of course, there is another phenomenon, such as the translation of Milky Way into “牛奶路”, which is not a nonsense translation but it indeed does not meet the purposes and requirements of translation. This shows that creative treason is not a translation technique and a positive word, but to be exact, a neutral word. It is more like a viewpoint or perspective, which reveals the essence of the act of translation and translation activity, rather than a criterion for judging good or bad translations, and this is where it differs from the traditional translation theory. The perspective of "creative treason" can actually provide a good idea of translation, since the translation of fairy tales has to take into account the special characteristics of readers. The "creative treason" can selectively "deviate" and "create" from the original work, so that the translation can be more in line with the culture and aesthetics of the readers of the society of target language.

### *1.4 Forms of Creative Treason*

Regarding creative treason in translation, Professor Xie Tianzhen believes that creative treason can be divided into two types: conscious and unconscious, which are manifested in personalized translation, mistranslation and omission, abridgement and compilation, and transcription and adaptation.

The key to personalized translation lies in the translator, and the subjectivity of the translator is especially obvious in literary translation. The translator's personal style, education level and cultural background are different, so they will have different degrees of interpretation and translation of the text, which is called personalized translation. For example, in the translation of Bacon's *On Reading*, different translators have shown different styles. Mr. Wang Zuoliang's translation is very beautiful, not only maintaining the elegant and simple style of the original text, but also using classical Chinese to translate, making the translation read in both prose and poetic style, while Mr. Shui Tiantong's translation is a bit more straightforward. The translation styles of the two translators are different, and the translations presented are naturally different. The mistranslation and omission of translation are usually unconscious acts of the translators, which belong to the unconscious type of creative treason. Abridgement and compilation are conscious types of "creative treason", and they are done because the translator has to take into account the cultural customs, political environment, values, and readers' acceptance level of the target language. It is not uncommon for translators to use abridgement and compilation. For example, ancient Chinese translator Lin Shu translated the vernacular texts that he was told into the classical language used by people at the time, and he consciously deleted the fragments of the original text that violated the feudal rituals of the time. A common feature of both transcription and adaptation is that the translation goes through two changes. An example of transcreation is the Grimm's *Fairy Tales*, the original version of which was written in German and then translated into English and transmitted to China, where the Chinese translators used the English as a reference for their translation. One of the most important features of the adaptation is the change in literary genre after translation. For example, Ibsen's *The Group of Ghosts* was originally a play, but Lin Shu adapted it and translated it into the novel *Gengangere* in the literary language. In conclusion, creative treason is broadly divided into two types: conscious translation and unconscious translation. No matter which type it is, it provides translators with different ideas for translation.

## **2. Introduction to Children's Literature Translation**

Children's literature translation belongs to literary translation, but unfortunately, the children's literature translation has not been paid much attention by the translation circle since ancient times. The studies on Children's literature translation are scarce. The biggest reason for this situation is that children's literature has its particularity. Since its readers are children, it poses a challenge to translators. Translators must consider children's characteristics and values to adopt the most appropriate translation strategies. In order to achieve this, translators should follow some special translation principles when translating children's literature.

### *2.1 Definition and Characteristics of Children's Literature*

Children's literature includes children's songs, fairy tales, fables, children's essays, etc.. It is first of all a special form of literature, and its special feature is that the creators are adults, and the readers are children. Secondly, its language has artistic infectiousness and aesthetic value. Finally, it can give people aesthetic satisfaction and a sense of pleasure. Because of children's lack of life experience and limited comprehension, children's literature is also relatively simple and straightforward, written from children's point of view, based on their character, with simple plots and a blend of reality and imagination. Children's literature is a book of children's life, helping them to gain knowledge of life experience and develop language skills, so the translation requires lively language that reflects the emotions and thoughts of children.

### *2.2 Shortcomings in Children's Literature Translation Study*

Throughout the ages, there have been only a handful of translation studies of children's literature, and only a few of them have been included in China's core journals. Domestic translators' research on children's literature translation is in shortage: The research on the translation history of children's literature mainly focuses on the embryonic period: the late Qing Dynasty, the developing period: the May Fourth Movement, and the new period: 1976 to the present. Few translators have compiled a general history of children's literature translation.

There are many famous translators of children's literature, such as Lu Xun, Mao Dun and Ye Junjian, etc., but few people study the translation theory of children's literature. Most children's literature translators adopt domestication and foreignization translation strategies. In terms of diversity and innovation of mainstream literature translation theories, the research on children's literature translation theory is indeed lagging behind.

## **3. Manifestation of Creative Treason in Grimm Fairy Tales**

The Grimm's Fairy Tales originates from German folk literature collected, organized and processed by German linguists, brothers Jakob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm. Most domestic editions of Grimm's Fairy Tales are now abridged, as the original Grimm's Fairy Tales were filled with a lot of brutality, horror, and bloodshed. But even though the book has been abridged, some of its elements still do not fit into our cultural environment and do not reach the acceptance level of children, so it is not suitable to be presented to children. However, some translators tend to ignore the fact that the readers are children and translate the original work completely without any choice, which is obviously not desirable. However, it is gratifying to see that there are also translators who are thoughtful and take a different approach to translation. In some excellent translations of Grimm's Fairy Tales, translators treason against the style and content of the original text, achieving the purpose and requirements of the translation very well.

### *3.1 Treason against the Style of the Original Text*

The readers of Grimm's fairy tales are children, so translators should take the acceptance level of children into account when translating. The language style of translation must be childlike and

straightforward, so they should to some degree treason against the original text in words, rhythm and sentences.

### 3.1.1 Vocabulary

Example 1:

“One day the woman was standing by this window and looking down into the garden, when she saw a bed which was planted with the most beautiful rampion (rapunzel), and it looked so fresh and green that she longed for it, and had the greatest desire to eat some.”

Translation: 一天，妻子站在窗户那儿，向花园看去。她看见花园里种着最可人的莴苣，看上去绿油油的，特别新鲜。她很想吃莴苣。(Wang Yan, 2018)

This fragment is taken from the first few paragraphs of the chapter "The Lettuce Girl". The translator "deviates" from the original phrase "green" and translates it into “绿油油的” instead of “绿色的”. The translator uses the phase structure "ABB", which is very vivid and childish. This translation is in line with the psychological characteristics of children. Instead, “绿色的” is ordinary and humdrum in language style, so it can not meet the requirements of children literature whose language style is lovely and lively. In addition, children literature is very important for children to acquire writing skills, so a good translation can help them to appreciate the beauty of words, cultivate their sense of beauty and sensitiveness for words.

### 3.1.2 Rhythm

Example 2:

“Princess, youngest princess,  
Open the door for me!  
Do you not know what you said,  
Yesterday by the cool water of the fountain,  
Princess, youngest princess,  
Open the door for me!”

Translation:

公主，小公主！  
请你给我开开门！  
你可曾记得昨日清凉的井水边  
你许下的诺言？  
公主，小公主！  
请你给我开开门！(Wang Yan, 2018)

This fragment tells the story of a princess who promises a frog to be her playmate, but she is unwilling to keep her promise, so the frog comes to her home. In original text, language is not in the form of a children's song, but the translator "creatively treason" against the original language and translates it in the form of a children's song with the same number of words per line, which is very much to the liking of children. The translator has translated "open the door" into the reduplications “开开门”，which

creates more rhythm to the original text and makes it easier to remember and more catchy. Also, the phrases “by the cool water of the fountain” and “what you said” are translated into “井水边” “诺言”. By this way, “井水边” rhymes with “诺言”, reading more like listening music.

### 3.1.3 Sentence

Example 3:

“They found the wolf, and beat him so mercilessly, that he went to the fox limping and howling. “You have misled me finely,” said he; “I wanted to fetch the other lamb, and the country folks surprised me, and have beaten me to a jelly.” The fox replied, “Why are you such a glutton?””

Translation: 他们看见了狼，把它痛打一顿，狼跛着脚，大声喊叫，跑到狐狸那里。狼说：“你真会骗我，我要去偷另外一只羊，农人们捉住了我，把我打得浑身都软了。”狐狸回答说：“你为什么这样贪心不足呢。” (Wei Yixin, 2015)

This selection tells the story of a wolf who asks a fox to help him steal a sheep, but he is not satisfied with eating the sheep, so he goes to steal it himself, but the farmer finds him and beats up him. As we all know, there are a lot of modifiers in English sentences. But the translator mostly uses short sentences, simple vocabularies when translating, making the original text easily to be understood. For example, “They found the wolf, and beat him so mercilessly, that he went to the fox limping and howling.” This sentence is a long sentence, but the translator has broken it into several short sentences, using several verbs to describe the scene. Because of children’s age, their understanding abilities are not strong so they tend to read articles with straightforward language and simple sentences. As such, compared with long and complex sentences, short sentences apparently are more accepted by children.

## 3.2 *Treason against the content of the Original Text*

Grimm's Fairy Tales is a foreign children's literature work, whose values and cultural background are different from those of China. Therefore, translators should not directly translate the original text, but should deal with its language, cultural context and figurative techniques, so as to make the texts suitable for Chinese children.

### 3.2.1 Language

Example 4:

“Then came the black dwarf and said to the old man: “Have you brought with you that which you have promised me?” He was silent, but the son asked: “What do you want here?” Then said the black dwarf: “I have to speak with your father, and not with you.” The son replied: “You have betrayed and misled my father, give back the writing.” “No,” said the black dwarf, “I will not give up my rights.””

Translation: 小黑矮人按时来了，他对孩子的父亲说道：“你答应我的东西，带过来了吗？”商人一言不发，但儿子却反问他道：“你究竟要什么东西？”小黑矮人说：“我在跟你父亲说话，不是跟你。”儿子回应道：“你欺骗我的父亲，引诱他和你签下合约。现在，快把那合同拿出来。”“不行，”小黑矮人说，“属于我的权益，我绝对不会放弃。” (Wen Zeer, 2018)

This fragment is about a little black man who comes to the merchant to ask him to fulfill his promise, but the merchant's son does not agree with his father to do it. The original text mentions "dwarf black"



several times, which is “黑人侏儒” in literal translation, but obviously “小黑矮人” is more appropriate, which sounds less prejudicial and discriminatory. Because in the social background of the time, black people often appeared as slaves, and in literature, black people were mostly the negative image. The original word "dwarf black" implies contempt for black people, but the translator did not translate it directly in consideration of the mainstream values that all people are equal in China, regardless of skin, race. If not, children are more likely to be misled and develop a bias for colored people. Meanwhile, “侏儒” is also an impolite word because this word is a kind of syndrome. If “dwarf” is translated into “侏儒”, then it will make people feel that the “dwarf” is physically impaired, which sounds like a curse.

### 3.2.2 Cultural Context

#### Example 5:

“But it wasn’t long before the cat felt a craving for the delicious fat, so he said to the mouse, ‘Oh, by the way, I’ve been meaning to tell you: my cousin has just given birth to a little boy kitten, white all over with brown spots and they’ve asked me to be godfather.’”

Translation: 但是没有很久, 猫想吃猪油, 对老鼠说: “亲爱的老鼠, 我告诉你一件事, 我的表姐生了一只小雄猫, 它要请我去做干爹。这只小雄猫, 毛是白的, 带有褐斑。” (Wei Yixin, 2015)

This fragment is from "The Cat and the Mouse as Friends", which is about a cat who wants to steal lard, and he lies to the mouse that his cousin has a baby and needs his help. The translator does not translate the exotic word "godfather" directly into “教父”, but into “干爹”. Many westerners are Christian, so “godfather” is a common word in their cultural context. But most Chinese are not familiar with Christianity, so Chinese children will be confused if “godfather” is translated into “教父”. Moreover, children still are in the process of learning the mother tongue. Their language system is not fully developed. Too much exotic words in original texts will increase the reading difficulties and burden on children. And the text mentions that it is the cat’s cousin who has a baby, and he is invited. So it is reasonable to translate “godfather” into “干爹” considering their genetic connection. In this regard, this translation “干爹” conforms to Chinese cultural values and tradition, and we can see that the translator fully considers the cultural differences and children’s accept receptivity, creatively rebelling against the exotic vocabulary used in the original text.

### 3.2.3 Metaphor

#### Example 6:

“Soon after, she had a little daughter. The daughter was as white as snow, had a mouth as red as blood, and had hair was as black as ebony. She was called Little Snow White. When the child was born, the queen died.”

Translation: 这之后不久, 她便诞下了一个女儿: 这个女孩的肌肤, 果真如雪般洁白; 她的嘴唇, 果真如血般艳丽; 她头发的颜色, 果真如窗棂乌木般漆黑。因此, 人们都叫她白雪公主。 (Wen Zeer, 2018)

The excerpt is from the chapter “The Snow White”. The original text uses three colors to describe the

beauty of the Snow White, but it does not explain in detail the specific parts described by the first two colors. If it is translated literally, it will confuse children readers, who do not know what these three colors correspond to. Out of this consideration, the translator adopts the method of amplification, defining White's skin as fair and rosy. Through the creative treason of the original text, a beautiful image can be presented to children more vividly. Children can see a pretty girl with creamy skin, red lips and white teeth, and black thick hair from the translation. So this translation strategy meets the requirements of children's literature translation, bringing great benefits to the cultivation of children's aesthetic feeling.

### Conclusion

The particularity of children's literature readers determines that children's literature translation is different from mainstream literature translation. If children's literature is translated according to the traditional translation standards based on the concept of faithful translation, it is difficult to achieve success without considering the reading habits and acceptance level of target readers. Therefore, translators should translate children's literature with a new perspective, and the theory of "creative treason" in media-translatology can give translators a new way of thinking. This thesis focuses on the theory of "creative treason", analyzing its characteristics, forms and so on, and taking Grimm's Fairy Tales as an example to discuss the embodiment of "creative treason" in the translation of fairy tales.

So translators should take into account the special characteristics of children readers and make the translation of fairy tales as simple and easy to understand as possible, as well as lively and interesting, so that the children readers can be inspired, get the feeling of beauty and be taught, and thus the purpose of children's literature translation can be achieved.

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