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A STUDY ON THE INFLUENCE OF TARGET LANGUAGE'S IDEOLOGY AND POETICS ON THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF *THE DARK FOREST* FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF REWRITING THEORY

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ABSTRACT

Lefevere's rewriting theory holds that translation dominates and also serves certain ideologies and poetics. The paper carries out a study on the English translation of *The Dark Forest* from the perspective of rewriting theory with the focus on the manipulation of ideology and poetics. It is found that English translation has been partially handled by the skills of deletion, transliteration, and free translation, to adapt to the cultural background and reading habits of the target language readers. The ideology of politics, religions and translator's translation viewpoints is the main influential factors to the manipulation. Moreover, the poetics of scientificity, imagination, and literariness also exert a great impact on the rewriting. Last but not least, translators' rewriting works in the process of translation promote the spread of the translated text in foreign markets and provide reference for other translators.

Keywords: *The Dark Forest*; English Translation; Ideology; Poetics; Rewriting Theory

1. Introduction

Liu Cixin's *The Dark Forest*, as the second volume of *Remembrance of Earth's Past Trilogy*, is world-famous science fiction. It not only has a large circulation in China but also is well-received in English-speaking countries since its English version translated by Joel Martinsen was printed in the United States of America in August 2015 (Liao, 2017). As mentioned in the front cover of the English version of *The Dark Forest*, *The New Yorker* has praised *The Dark Forest* with the adjective of Extraordinary. The law of the dark forest illustrated in the fiction provokes enormous repercussions at home and abroad as the extra-terrestrial civilizations have always been a heated topic. And the reflections about the future of humans and even the Earth is deadly

practical and significant for the sustainable development of the whole Earth. The popularity of fiction also indicates the tremendous vitality of Chinese science fiction, which is beneficial for foreigners to get access to Chinese science fiction. To sum up, English translation of the novel is of great importance in the whole process of being known by more and more people around the world. Concerning of the immeasurable value of the English version of *The Dark Forest*, the paper carries out a descriptive analysis of the influence of English ideology and poetics on English translation of *The Dark Forest* in the light of Lefevere's rewriting theory, that is to figure out how the target text is expressed under the influence of ideology and poetics of the English language.

2. Rewriting Theory

There are plenty of research achievements and diverse research perspectives over the past three decades. Andre Lefevere's rewriting theory is a typical research finding which is officially put forward in his book named *Translation, rewriting and the manipulation of literature fame* (2004). From then on, translation studies are not only limited to the linguistic level and the source text itself but pay more attention to the cultural factor and the target text. Lefevere's view fundamentally changes our traditional translation concept, greatly expands the research field of this subject, and gradually becomes the mainstream of western translation studies.

Andre Lefevere's Rewriting theory adopts a descriptive research method, which enhances the explanatory power of translation phenomena (Li, 2018). That is to say, rewriting theory focuses on describing translation phenomena from the perspective of ideology, poetics and sponsorship system of the target language system and tries to reveal the underlying regularity in translation by explaining the causes of existing translation phenomena. Therefore, rewriting theory focuses on the target text with all existing translations having reasonable reasons for their existence. Once translated, the translated text becomes an independent body and the object of study (Wang). In addition, the target text is considered into a more grand socio-cultural context. The translation process, regarded as part of the subsystem of the cultural system, interacts and restricts with other subsystems of the cultural system. Therefore, the translator's translation is not simply a linguistic transformation from one language to another but bound to be influenced by social and cultural factors, such as ideology and poetics, outside the linguistic level.

3. Influence of Ideology of Target Language on English Translation of *The Dark Forest*

In Lefevere's view, ideology refers to the forms, norms, and beliefs that command us to act, which restricts the translator's choice of linguistic forms and themes in translation (1992). The mainstream ideology related to politics to a large extent exerts an obvious control over the translator's practice in social life, meanwhile, the individual

ideology that is hidden in the translator's thought also makes a difference in translation. The manipulation of ideology is inevitable when there are conflicts between the ideology of the target language and that of the source language. In the English translation, the manipulation of ideology is verified from the aspects of the dominant social ideology and the translator's translation viewpoints.

3.1. Social Ideology and its Manipulation on Translation

The manipulation of social ideology in the English version of *The Dark Forest* is mainly on account of the factors of politics and religions. The two aspects are analyzed in-depth as follows.

Politics is the dominant ideology in the whole society, and undoubtedly gives a huge impact on translation strategies. Moreover, it is well-known that material determines consciousness, which means each nation's different material and cultural life shapes its unique ideology. The ideology of the source-language countries is applicable to the target-language countries and may even be excluded. Therefore, the translator can not be blamed for rewriting the target text properly.

Example 1:

Chinese version:

建国初期，刚刚成立的海军用木船击沉过国民党的驱逐舰。(Liu, 2008: 53)

English Version:

After independence, the newly founded navy used wooden boats to sink Nationalist destroyers. (Martinsen, 2015:71)

In the example above, “建国” and “国民” are closely connected with the politics of the Chinese. With reference to the context and the political history, it is seen that “建国” refers to the early founding of New China which is in the period from the year of 1949 to 1956. In this period, China is established as a socialist country with an extremely complicated international and domestic situation. At home, the war of liberation fight against Kuomintang was not over with many areas in China were under the rule of Kuomintang. The translator takes the

political factor into consideration as China is a socialist nation headed by Chinese Communist Party while the countries the target text aims at are mostly capitalist, so the complex political background hidden in the example sentence is beyond the understanding of the reader of the target text and may bring about some misunderstanding. So here “建国” is rewritten as “independence” which is a positive word in Western culture and not associated with the variety of political systems. In addition, “国民党” is generalized as “Nationalist” without referring in particular to Kuomintang or Nationalist Party of China. In doing so, the English version is concise and clear for English readers by avoiding the divergence of politics.

Except for the political factor, the strategy of rewriting might be employed on account of religious belief. Religious belief as a special social ideology refers to the unshakable belief and wholehearted conversion of people who believe in a particular religion to the sacred objects they believe in. This kind of ideological belief and wholehearted conversion are manifested and run through specific religious ceremonies and activities and used to guide and regulate their behavior in secular society. So the religion concepts or objects in the source language may be not intelligible for the reader of the target language especially for those who have different faiths. Therefore, rewriting is a feasible way to prevent religion collision.

Example 2

Chinese Version:

见鬼！就差几秒钟，我就能确定中止发射了！
(Liu, 2008: 14)

English Version:

Damn it! Just a few more seconds and I'd have confirmed a launch interrupt! (Martinsen, 2015:27)

“见鬼” is a Chinese pet phrase which originally refers to what some religious or superstitious people call the soul after death. And it in daily life indicates is used in the face of a negative event. The ideas of immortal and Deities are Chinese traditional religion culture and there is no corresponding phrase of “see ghosts” in the target

language. So “见鬼” here can't be interpreted literally but converted to the English idiom called “damn it”. and the latter is from Latin damnatio is the concept of divine punishment and torment in an afterlife for actions committed on Earth. In Ancient Egyptian religious tradition, citizens would recite the 42 negative confessions of Maat as their heart was weighed against the feather of truth. The rewriting of “见鬼” as “damn it” not only effectively help English readers to establish semantic coherence, but also impress the readers with a vivid novel character.

Example 3

Chinese version:

你们精英，又不是神仙，凭啥？(Liu, 2008: 32)

English version:

There's no reason elites should get a, you know, free lunch, right? (Martinsen, 2015:47)

It is clear that “神仙” is unique to Chinese, referring to extraordinary existence or human beings with supernatural forces. In folk myths and Taoism. they refer to the persons who transcend the secular world, jump out of the three realms and live forever. So “神仙” is rewritten as “free lunch” in consideration that Taoism is not widely acknowledged in English-speaking countries. Moreover, “free lunch” origins from No Free Lunch Theorems (no free lunch theory) put forward by Wolpert and Macready in 1997, which is used to compare the relationship between two optimization algorithms, that is, how to determine one algorithm is better than the other. “No free lunch” means that no pay, no gain, or that it's impossible to gain without giving. So it is understandable that there is a common connotative meaning between “神仙” an “no free lunch”, that is to indicate that something is impossible to happen.

3.2 Translator's Translation Viewpoints and its Manipulation on Translation

Joel Martinsen, the translator of the English version of The Dark Forest, is the research director for a media intelligence company and also a productive translator who has translated several Chinese science fictions, such as Ball Lightning and The Thinker and others. He talks about what kinds of material he loves

translating in an interview (2009). He says that he enjoys translating writing that has a good sense of natural language, which means that the dialogue in the text flows naturally and the scene descriptions do their job without calling attention to themselves, or an article whose author is clear about what the text is supposed to convey and achieves it clearly and concisely. He enjoys himself much more during the actual translation process when I'm working on something graceful and well-crafted. It is seen that Martinsen tries to achieve the expression of concise and smooth in his translation text.

Example 4

Chinese version:

畏敌如虎、对战争的未来缺乏信心，是相当一部分同志的心态。(Liu, 2008: 59)

English version:

The mentality of a sizeable proportion of our comrades consists of terror toward the enemy and a lack of confidence in the future of war. (Martinsen, 2015: 77)

“畏敌如虎” is a Chinese set phrase which means to be afraid of enemies as of tigers. The set phrase is deleted in English translation. If the image of the tiger is retained in translation, there would be a lengthy note to explain the meaning of the set phrase, and then the translation text would be prolix. However, without the image of a tiger, the meaning of terror toward the enemy can be expressed clearly and briefly.

4. Influence of Poetics of Target Language on English Translation of *The Dark Forest*

Poetics in Lefevere's rewriting theory consists of two elements: one is a list of literary techniques, including genres, themes, symbols, typical characters, situations, and others while the other is an idea of what role literature plays or should play in the overall social system (2004). Since the influence outside the literary system only involves the second element, the second element will inject new vitality into the literary system, while the first element mainly maintains the status quo of the literary system. In the English translation of *The Dark Forest*, the manipulation of poetics is mainly

presented in the three aspects, namely, scientificity, imagination, and literariness.

4.1 Scientificity and its Manipulation on Translation

As science fiction, *The Dark Forest* conforms to some objective facts and is grounded on certain scientific basis, which distinguishes science fiction from other genres of literary works. To be specific, there are two implications in the scientificity of science fiction: one is the widely accepted scientific theories including the space station, space ship, and others, applied as the background for the open of the fiction plots while the other is some deduced scientific theory, such as the rule of the dark forest, which is postulated to drive the plot of the novel forward. Undoubtedly, there are a large number of scientific terms in the fiction, and the translator does his best to translate those scientific terms accurately and precisely in accordance with the ruling poetics in the target language. So the strategy of rewriting is resorted to interpret the scientific concepts which are expressed differently in the source and target language.

Example 5

Chinese version:

不用，我做过那个课题，观测它对旋臂运动背景的吸收，发现有二百毫米的吸收峰，可能是碳微粒，密度在 F 级。(Liu, 2008: 165)

English version:

Observing the absorption of the background stellar radial movement, there's an absorption peak at two hundred millimeters. It may be a carbon microparticle, F-class density. (Martinsen, 2015: 183)

The sentences describe the speculation to the track of Trisolarians' space ships. In Martinsen's translation, “旋臂运动背景” is interpreted as “the background stellar radial movement”, “吸收峰” as “an absorption peak” and “碳微粒” as “a carbon microparticle”, which shows the scientificity of the speculation successfully. The accurate interpretation can be attributed to the abundant scientific knowledge of the translator. That is to say, a good command of the background disciplinary knowledge lays a firm foundation for the rewriting of translators.

4.2 Imagination and its Manipulation on Translation

It is often said that novels are the product of imagination. That is to say, art comes from life, and art is higher than life. Everything written into novels is based on the prototype of things in life. Through the highest form of phenomenal force, one story after another is constructed with various shaped characters. Especially, science fiction is a complete rejection of our world whether in the past or at present, expanding our imagination, then expanding, to the extreme, to give us a new world that we have never seen, or even thought of. There are plenty of imagined characters or objects in *The Dark Forest*.

“智子” is an imaginative high-tech machine which mainly has the following two functions: first, the intelligent micro-particles of protons after two-dimensional expansion and transformation can carry out communications, reconnaissance, interference particle high-energy accelerator and other tasks; second, the humanoid robot controlled by the intelligent particles of the three-body world can be regarded as the ambassador of the three-body people to the earth. And there are two translations in the English version of the fiction, namely, Sophon and Tomako. The former may originate from the etymology of soph- which means wisdom or intelligence, so as to be correspondent to “智” from “智子”. while the latter is the last name of Japanese which is “智子” by transliteration. Moreover, as the name of a pretty woman, Tomako meets human beings' expectation of the appearance of Trisolarans.

4.3 Literariness and its Manipulation on Translation

Few of the literary writings since the 1980s believe that literariness is unique to the West, nor do they reject it as an alien idea. Literariness, as a universal, worldwide and human wealth, can surpass the inherent locality and geographical limitations (Yu, 2002). In *The Dark Forest*, the literariness is shown in its linguistic style, plot description, and others. And the following part will focus on the manipulation of Chinese set phrases.

It is well-known that set phrases widely exist in Chinese literature, and most of them have no more

than four characters and are unique to Chinese. So as there are no corresponding expressions in the same form with Chinese set phrases, the strategy of rewriting is frequently used.

Example 5

Chinese version:

这些导弹使用的部件虽然都是市场上便宜的大路货，但五脏俱全，具备测高雷达和全球定位功能，在五公里的范围内命中精度不超过五米。(Liu, 2008: 85)

English version:

Although the missiles were made out of parts that were cheap and widely available on the market, they were fully equipped with a radar altimeter and GPS and could hit targets within a five-kilometer radius at an accuracy of within five meters. (Martinsen, 2015: 103)

“五脏俱全” in the sentence is a set phrase which means that though small in size or scale, figurative things have a complete range of contents. It is quoted from a sentence of Qian Zhongshu's *Fortress Besieged*, that is, although sparrows are small, they have all five internal organs. In English translation, “五脏俱全” is rewritten as “fully equipped” with its connotative meaning accurately expressed. As “五脏俱全” is not widely acknowledged by the English reader, it would take a much longer article to explain it, which doesn't match to the concise style of English language.

5 Conclusion

Under the guidance of Lefevere's rewriting theory, the paper finds that, influenced by the ideology and poetics of the target language, the translation has been partially modified to adapt to the cultural background and reading habits of the target language readers, which has proved to be beneficial to the sales of the translated text in the future. The ideology is manipulated from the aspects of politics, religions, and the translator's translation viewpoints, while poetics form scientificity, imagination, and literariness. In view of all those factors, the strategies of deletion, transliteration, and free translation are used. Furthermore, as are bridges connecting two cultures, it is necessary to cater to the

reading habits of the target language readers, and rewrite the source text accordingly on the basis of different ideologies and poetic styles in different countries so that the translation can be more widely used in the target language countries.

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