



The Embodiment of the Translator's Creative Treason in the Translation of Idioms in Xianxia Novel *A Will Eternal*

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Abstract

This paper studies the English translation of Chinese online novels at the time of their overseas dissemination and popularity. This paper takes the idioms translation in Xianxia novel *A Will Eternal* as the research object, specifically analyzes the translator's creative treason, and mainly analyzes how the translator's personalized translation is reflected based on the translator's creative treason in Medio-translatology. It comes to the conclusion that when translating idioms, the translator gives full play to his creative treason. Domestication and foreignization are used in the translation of such idioms. The former promotes the quick understanding of target language readers, while the latter retains the characteristics of the original text and promotes the dissemination of Chinese culture.

Key words: *A Will Eternal*; Creative treason; Idioms; Domestication; Foreignization

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1. INTRODUCTION

With the establishment of an online novel translation website named WuxiaWorld at the end of 2014, Chinese online novels opened its way of overseas communication.

The communication effect was unexpectedly good and Chinese online novels became popular in western countries. After that, another two major Chinese online novel translation websites Gravity Tales and Volare Novels were established, speeding up the overseas dissemination of Chinese online novels. The main translators of Chinese online novels are overseas Chinese or western native whites. They actively translate these novels out of their interest and love for Chinese online novels. In the process of overseas dissemination of Chinese online novels, the most popular is Xuanhuan and Xianxia. Target readers like the plot of this kind of novels very much and have a strong sense of identity and worship for the protagonist of this type of novels. Chinese online literature is popular literature and it was spread through online channels at the beginning. After being translated into western countries, it is also spread through online platforms, which improves the convenience of reading for target readers. The translation and dissemination of Chinese online novels have achieved relatively good results due to many advantages.

The basis of communication is translation. Only when the works are translated can they be spread. The quality of translation depends on the translator. In the process of translation, the translator will more or less have his/her own creative treason in order that the translated works can be better accepted by the target readers. The reason why this paper takes the translator's creative treason as the basis is that one of focus of Medio-translatology is the translator's creative treason. The reason why I choose the novel *A Will Eternal* for analysis is that the translation of this novel has received many readers' comments on the website and the rate of good comments is very high after investigation. This paper focuses on the embodiment of the translator's creative treason in Xianxia novel *A Will Eternal* and specifically analyzes the embodiment of the translator's creative treason in the translation of idioms.

2. CREATIVE TREASON IN LITERARY TRANSLATION

The theoretical basis of Medio-translatology research is creative treason in literary translation. Therefore, in this chapter I introduce both Medio-translatology theory and creative treason in literary translation.

Medio-translatology is different from translation studies in the general sense. At first, Medio-translatology started from the perspective of media in comparative literature. At present, more and more studies are carried out on translation (especially literary translation) and translated literature from the perspective of comparative culture. What it focuses on is not the specific problem of how to convert between the source language and the target language at the language level but it focuses on the loss, deformation, addition and expansion of the source information in the process of conversion between foreign language and native language. It cares about the unique value and significance of translation (mainly literary translation) as a practical activity of cross-cultural communication. Medio-translatology is a branch of comparative literature research, which specializes in cross-cultural translation especially the bridge role of literary translation in cross-cultural communication and "creative treason".

Literary translation consists of both creativity and treason, which can not be separated. The creativity of literary translation is obvious, which gives a work new life in a new language, nation, society and historical environment. However, in addition to the creativity, literary translation also has the rebellious side. The treason in literary translation in most cases reflects an objective deviation from the original caused by the translator in order to achieve a subjective desire in the process of translation. However, in practical literary translation, creativity and treason cannot be separated at all and they are a harmonious organism. Escarpit (1971) said, "translation is always a creative treason". Creative treason in literary translation includes the creative treason of the translator and the creative treason of the receiver and the receiving environment. This paper aims to analyze the translator's creative treason so only the translator's creative treason is introduced here. The translator's creative treason is embodied in personalized translation, mistranslation & omission, abridgement & compilation and translation & adaptation. Among the above four manifestations, personalized translation is the most common in the translation of *A Will Eternal* which I will analyze in the following parts. Personalized translation includes domestication and foreignization, next I will analyze the translator's domestication and foreignization translation respectively.

3. THE EMBODIMENT OF THE TRANSLATOR'S CREATIVE TREASON IN THE TRANSLATION OF IDIOMS

There are many idioms in Xianxia novel *A Will Eternal*. When translating these idioms, the translator uses different translation strategies. Next, this paper specifically analyzes how the translator's personalized translation, namely domestication and foreignization, is reflected in the translation of idioms.

3.1 Introduction to the Translator of *A Will Eternal*

The translator of *A Will Eternal* is a senior translator of WuxiaWorld website, whose pseudonym is Deathblade. He has translated a number of Xuanhuan and Xianxia novels including Xianxia novels *I Shall Seal the Heavens* and *A Will Eternal*, Wuxia novels which include *7 Killers*, *Dragon King with Seven Stars* and *Heroes Shed No Tears* and so on. Deathblade is an American from California. He likes Chinese Kungfu movies very much. The movie "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" made him want to know martial arts culture. After reading Jin Yong's *Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils*, he had a strong interest in Chinese culture, especially martial arts culture. In order to read more Wuxia novels, Deathblade has learned Chinese for more than ten years and his Chinese level has reached a certain height. Because he has translated several classic works and has formed his own translation style, the quality of his translated novels is very high.

3.2 The Embodiment of Domestication in Idioms Translation

In the following part, I will focus on idiom translation in *A Will Eternal* and analyze how domestication is used in it.

Example 1:

Source Text: 没走多远, 他就看到这条破破烂烂的小路尽头, 有几口大黑锅窜来窜去, 仔细一看, 那每一口大黑锅下面, 都有一个大胖子, 脑满肠肥, 似乎一挤都可以流油..... (第2章)

Target Text: Before long, he caught sight of the end of the decrepit path, where he saw several huge black woks running around. After a moment, he realized that the woks were actually attached to the backs of several incredibly fat men. These men were so obese that it seemed like squeezing them would cause pure fat to ooze out. (Chapter 2)

"脑满肠肥" comes from the *Book of Northern Qi Dynasty: Biography of King Langya* by Li Baiyao in Tang Dynasty. "脑满" refers to fat head and big ears, and "肠肥" refers to fat body and big belly. The translation of "脑满肠肥" in Oxford-FLTRP English-Chinese Chinese-English Dictionary is "with heavy jowls and a pot Belle", which is a literal translation and directly and vividly

translates the two expressions of “heavy jowls” and “a pot belly” to highlight fat. Here, the translator gives full play to his creative treason, adopts the domestication and the free translation and translates “脑满肠肥” into “so obese”. The purpose of the translator is to actively approach the target language readers and translate the original text with the expressions that the target language readers can easily understand, which is conducive to promoting the readers to quickly understand the translation. Here, according to the context of the original text, the author of the original text uses the idiom “脑满肠肥” only to describe that they are very fat so it is more appropriate for the translator to translate it into “so obese”.

Example 2:

ST: “速战速决，早些杀了此人，免得节外生枝！”（第61章）

TT: “I need to get this battle done with and kill him,” Chen Heng thought, eyes glittering coldly. “That way no other complications will arise!” (Chapter 61)

“节外生枝” comes from *Li Kui Proffers A Birch* by Kang Jinzhi in Yuan Dynasty. “节外生枝” refers to a branch that should not have been born and it is a metaphor for deliberately producing a new problem in addition to the problem. The translation of “节外生枝” in Oxford·FLTRP English-Chinese Chinese-English Dictionary is “muddy an issue”, which is a relatively free translation. Here, according to the context of the original text, the author gives full play to his creative treason and adopts the domesticating strategy and free translation, translating “节外生枝” into “no other complications will arise”. The reason why Deathblade translates it in this way is that the translator takes the target language readers as the center and tries to make the translation simple and easy to understand so that the readers can easily understand the translation.

Example 3:

ST: “弟子陈飞，拜见白师叔，白师叔功高盖世，千秋万代，寿与天齐，天下无敌！”陈飞哆嗦中，立刻抱拳赶紧拜见。（第181章）

TT: Sect Uncle Bai, you are the most powerful person in the sect, a cultivator whose legend will be passed down through the ages, someone who will live as long as the heavens, invincible in the whole world!” (Chapter 181)

“功高盖世” comes from *Zeng Guofan* by Tang Haoming. “功高盖世” means great contributions and no one can compare in the contemporary era. Here, the translator closely combines the context of the original text and adopts the domestication and the translation method of free translation, translating “功高盖世” into “the most powerful person in the sect”, which is more appropriate and consistent with the meaning of the original text. “千秋万代” comes from *Han Feizi · Xianxue* and its translation in Oxford·FLTRP English-Chinese Chinese-English Dictionary is “generation after generation”. Here, because this word is used to praise the protagonist Bai

Xiaochun, the translator gives full play to his creative treason in combination with the context and translates “千秋万代” into “a cultivator whose legend will be passed down through the ages”. In this way, the translation is more accurate, more consistent with the meaning to be expressed in the original text and better understood, which is conducive to the better dissemination of the novel.

Example 4:

ST: 不是一人得道，鸡犬升天，而是一将功成万骨枯！（第191章）

TT: They didn't believe that a person achieving their Dao could benefit everyone. They believed that success came only after climbing a mountain of bones! (Chapter 191)

“一人得道，鸡犬升天” comes from *Lun Heng· Dao Xu* written by Wang Chong in Han Dynasty. The literal meaning of this idiom is that when a person gets Dao and meets the immortal, the whole family even chickens and dogs will rise to heaven. In Oxford·FLTRP English-Chinese Chinese-English Dictionary, the translation of “一人得道，鸡犬升天” is “when a man gets to the top, all his relatives also rise to power”

Here, the translator also uses the translation method of free translation and the domestication and translates it into “a person achieving their Dao could benefit everyone”. The translator moves closer to the target language readers and the translated version is simple and easy to understand, which is very in line with the expression habits of the target language. This is because the translator Deathblade is an American and he deeply knows how to translate to let readers better accept it.

3.3 The Embodiment of Foreignization in Idioms Translation

Besides domestication, foreignization is also commonly used in translation. In this part, foreignization will be analyzed in the idiom translation in *A Will Eternal*.

Example 5:

ST: 白驹过隙，时日流逝，当一个月后寒风渐起，顺着通天河吹过灵溪宗，秋叶飘然而落时，白小纯才恍然发现，自己来到这灵溪宗已有一年。（第9章）

TT: According to an ancient saying, time flying by is like catching a glimpse of a white colt flashing past a chink in a wall. That is exactly what happened for Bai Xiaochun. A month later, cold winds blew down the Heavenspan River and through the Spirit Stream Sect. All of a sudden, Bai Xiaochun realized that he had been in the sect for a year already. (Chapter 9)

“白驹过隙” comes from *Chuang Tzu-the North Tour*. In the “白驹过隙”，“白驹” refers to a white pony and “隙” refers to the crack in a wall. In *New Century Chinese-English Dictionary*, the translation of “白驹过隙” is “a glimpse of a white colt flashing past the crack in a wall”，which is literal translation. Here, the translator also adopts the foreignization and literal translation method to translate “白驹过隙” into “According to an ancient

saying, time flying by is like catching a glimpse of a white colt flashing past a chink in a wall". The purpose of the translator is to move closer to the author of the original text, retain the cultural image of the source language, let the target language readers understand the specific cultural image and profound cultural connotation in the idiom, and promote the dissemination of Chinese culture.

Example 6:

ST: “以冯炎的修为，暗中坑杀这白小纯易如反掌，白小纯……你草木造诣是不错，可惜，你没有成长起来的可能了，此番，你必死无疑！”（第47章）

TT: “With Feng Yan’s cultivation base, secretly killing Bai Xiaochun should be as easy as flipping over his hand. Bai Xiaochun... you might have exceptional skill with plants and vegetation, but unfortunately, you’ll never have a chance to do anything with it. You’re dead!” (Chapter 47)

“易如反掌” means it’s as easy as turning one’s hand. In *New Century Chinese-English Dictionary*, it is translated into “be as easy as turning one’s hand over”, which is a literal translation. Here, the translator also adopts the foreignization, translating “易如反掌” into “be as easy as flipping over his hand”. The translator’s literal translation can vividly express the easy degree, convey the meaning of the original text to the greatest extent, retain the characteristics of the original text, and promote the target language readers to further understand Chinese idioms.

Example 7:

ST: 轰鸣间，三道光柱爆发，一路势如破竹，……（第330章）

TT: The three beams of light cut through everything like razor-sharp knives slicing through bamboo. (Chapter 330)

“势如破竹” comes from the *Biography of Du Yu in Book of Jin*. The literal meaning of this idiom is that the situation is like splitting bamboo. After the upper sections are broken, the lower sections are separated along the blade. In *Oxford-FLTRP English-Chinese Chinese-English Dictionary*, it is translated as “with crushing force”, which is a free translation. Here, the translator gives full play to his creative treason and applies the foreignization to directly translate “势如破竹” into “like razor-sharp knives slicing through bamboo”, which is more vivid and can better reflect the state described in the original text. The translation is closer to the original author and the original text, which is conducive to promoting the readers to understand some Chinese idioms and some specific images in these idioms.

Example 8:

ST: 在白小纯诧异时，陈曼瑶找来了，此女从一出现，就对外声称自己是青龙魁首的道侣，更是以白夫人自居，如今青龙会势大，青龙魁首更是如日中天，以至于陈曼瑶这里，……（第391章）

TT: Even as he contemplated the matter, Chen Manyao

showed up. She simply walked through the entrance of the immortal’s cave and said that she was Madam Bai, the Daoist partner of the Azure Dragon Society’s boss. Considering that the boss of the Azure Dragon Society was like the sun in the noonday sky, that made Chen Manyao extremely important as well. (Chapter 391)

“如日中天” comes from *The book of Songs*, which means it looks like the sun at noon. In *New Century Chinese-English Dictionary*, there are two translations of “like the sun at high noon” and “be at the apex / zenith / height of one’s power, career, etc. The former is literal translation and the latter is free translation. Here, the translator adopts the foreignization and the literal translation to translate “如日中天” into “like the sun in the noonday sky”, which is similar to the first translation in the dictionary. The translation is very close to the original text, vividly showing Bai Xiaochun’s current development state and making the protagonist’s role fuller and character more distinctive, which is also conducive to the dissemination of Chinese culture.

CONCLUSION

By applying the translator’s creative treason to analyze the translation of Xianxia novel *A Will Eternal* and specifically analyze the translation of idioms, the following conclusions can be drawn. In *A Will Eternal*, there are many idioms including some proverbs containing specific cultural images, four-character idioms, historical allusions and so on. When translating these idioms, the translator actively exerts his creative treason to decide whether to use domestication or foreignization. When the translator uses domestication, his aim is to approach the target language readers and promote the readers to understand the content of the original text more easily. In addition to the domestication, foreignization is adopted in translation of other many idioms. Most idioms contain the character “如” or “若”. When the translator uses foreignization, the purpose is to approach the original author, faithfully convey the meaning of the original text, retain the characteristics of the original text and retain the specific cultural image of the original text, which is conducive to promoting the target language readers to understand Chinese idioms and Chinese culture. As a result, it can better promote cross-cultural communication.

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