

On the Howard Goldblatt's Translation Thoughts

Changhong Zhai

School of Foreign Languages, Wuhan Polytechnic University, Wuhan, 430028, China

594561792@qq.com

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Abstract. This article will analyze translation thought of Howard Goldblatt, and how his translation thought will impact the spreading of Chinese literature. Then we can better understand the relationship between faithfulness and creation in translation process and further understand translation strategies. At the same time, a thorough analysis of the works of Howard Goldblatt can better serve the purpose of promoting Chinese literature toward the international literature.

Introduction

Howard Goldblatt, American sinologist, translated many Chinese literary works, such as: *I did not kill my husband*, *the Wolf Totem*, *the frog*, *the Red Sorghum family* and so on. Firstly his most distinctive feature in the process of translation is to translate the original text in his own language and style. Meng Xiangchun once said: "the author of original text created the story, and Howard Goldblatt restated the story creatively." (Meng Xiangchun, 2015, 77) Secondly, he pays great attention to the market orientation. This tendency clearly shows in the process of literature work selection and translation techniques he took. Such kind of translation thought inevitably leads to a lot of controversies: such as the excessive deletion of the original text by Howard Goldblatt is his special way to translate literature work or it is a kind of behavior that disobey original work; In Howard Goldblatt's work, there are a lot words that reflect the dark side of Chinese society, does this means that he is tend to welcome the initial impression of foreign reader on Chinese society? Though there do exist many disagreements, the fact that Howard Goldblatt has gained great success is no doubt true. In terms of this aspect, what inspirations we can get from the translation thoughts of Howard Goldblatt on promoting Chinese literature toward international stage?

The Factors Influencing the Formation of the Translation Thought of Howard Goldblatt

From the Point of Translation Materials Selection. A translator's preference on translation materials typically shows his translation thoughts, or in some degree, a translator's selection on translation material is an important part of his translation thoughts. Because the materials he choose to translated might affect the translation techniques he would like to acquire and what kind of image he will build. For example: Howard Goldblatt mainly choose some novels which carry many Chinese characters, and a lot Chinese culture load words, in this way, he have to acquire free translation, or the translated text will be hard to read.

The following part will discuss some factors which have great influence on his choices on selecting materials.

It is well-known that in every era literature is closely linked with its economic, political, and cultural conditions, literature works are just like a mirror of society at its own time. However, all these conditions will change with the passage of time, so the literature of each era will also be different. There are ten million different styles of literature in China, but only certain specific Chinese literature can completely attract the attention of foreign readers. Howard Goldblatt deeply understand the relationship between social backgrounds and literature works and wisely make advantage of this Golden Rules, especially when choosing translation materials-- the translation materials he selected

could clearly show China's specific social condition, while well meet the reading needs of western readers at that period. From the reform and opening up to the present, Chinese literature can be roughly divided into three phases, and each of which has its own historical mark.

The first phase is from the reform and opening up to 1990, when the social background of China was still in a relatively closed. At this period, the wildly accepted impression of western readers on Chinese literature is that all Chinese literature only focus on promoting the Chinese Communist Party and socialism. All novels in this era indicated the Chinese people's hard work, the Chinese Communist Party's hardships in the war of resistance and the special period of Chinese politics. Literary works of this period(1978-1990) mainly shows tragic of Chinese people. This period is a totally disaster of Chinese nation, all Chinese people can't wait to forsake it and forget it. However it is very attractive to Western readers. Because the history of the period is very oriental, mysterious and bloody, which are the elements that foreign readers love. And literature works in this era were very different from romance and critical realism literature of other countries in its era. Howard Goldblatt wittily captures the market fashion and chooses all those novels which shows the common and true social backgrounds of China. And at the same time those novels contains all elements that attract foreign readers most. Hegel once said: Howard Goldblatt is very keen to select works that meet the tastes of Western readers, and his translations are both vivid and accurate (Zeng Xiaofeng, 2017, 78).

The second stage was from 1990 to 2000, When China's reform and opening up has been booming. The reason why the literature of this period will attract western readers is that China has gained a lot unprecedented changes during this period. These changes undoubtedly aroused the curiosity of western readers who are eager to know what those changes are or how they actually took place. The translation works of Howard Goldblatt in this period are described the life of the ordinary people and their confusion and entanglement in the face of reform and opening up. All these novels just show peoples truly reaction about reform and opening up, in other word, those novels shows the background of China as well as satisfy foreign readers.

The third stage is from the early 20th century to the present, When China has completely adapted to the reform and opening up and has entered a new and prosperous era. Howard Goldblatt's works in this period mainly consisted of Mo Yan and Su Tong's novels.

The literary works are inextricably linked to the background of the era to which they belong, and they can well reflect the characteristics of its own times. Howard Goldblatt is very clear about this rule and he has made good use of it. But this "Golden rule" also caused many controversies because there are so many political factors existed in Howard Goldblatt's translation works. Some sinologists believed that Howard Goldblatt intends to choose the novels which reflect the ugly and dark side of the society of China, thus discouraging China to please western readers. Howard Goldblatt once said: the literature works are mean to make us feel uncomfortable, they are like a mirror that reflect the dark side of humanity (Zeng Xiaofeng, 2017, 78). This might oppose to those people who question him in some extend. Howard Goldblatt repeatedly said in some open interviews that he likes Chinese literature and is very confident about Chinese literature's booming. He thinks that there is still much space for progress in the development of Chinese literature. Besides, Howard Goldblatt though is an American, he married a Chinese wife. Those novels he chose for translation are the works he interested very much, and he felt that those novels could not only reflect the situation in China in it's era but also have enough charm to attract the attention of western readers.

Howard Goldblatt, a native American and a learned sinologist, with enough linguistic knowledge and inherent advantages, is clearer and more accurate than ordinary Chinese translators when selecting translation materials. He is more than a translator, he also has the same reading habits and cultural backgrounds with readers, which are unavailable for Chinese translators. He owns the language skills, the fundamental skills of translators and also knows well the readers' reading habits. These two advantages built the Howard Goldblatt's unique style in selecting translation materials. However this "unique style" in the eyes of many translators who oppose Howard Goldblatt is called "distort" Chinese literary works. Another subjective factor related to Howard Goldblatt is his religious belief. He is a pious Judaism, whose wildly believed principles are that people are born with

sin, human is bound to suffer his whole life. That is to say, Howard Goldblatt prefers to agree with the idea that life is miserable, full of difficulty, bloody or fragility of human. Later, he participated in the Vietnam War which made him personally feel the ugliness and cruelty of human nature, also let him know that everything bad can be happened when people facing death. The experience of war has more or less impact on his ideas of human nature. Howard Goldblatt himself once said that the literature works are supposed to show the real society. Under the guidance of such experiences and ideas, the literary content he chose, the characters in the novels were mostly selfish, poor and lead a hard life.

Skopostheories was first proposed by Vermeer. The theory freed translation studies from the shackles of the original textual theory. Skopostheorie believes that translation is a kind of purposeful act based on the original text. Translation must follow a series of rules, of which the law of purpose is the first one. In other words, the translation depends on the purpose of the translation. Skopostheorie requires translators to adopt different translation strategies under the guidance of different translation purposes. The common translation purposes are: 1. The translator's basic purpose, which is the translator's survival needs; 2 communicative purposes; 3 special purposes, such as: Using translation to show the characteristics of a particular language. The most important thing in the translator's basic purpose is the market, choosing the translation method that both meets the interests of the publisher and the readers' hobbies.

In paper Analysis the relationship between translation theory and practice from the aspect of usefulness, expressiveness, and elegance, Gong Xiaoping proposed that although Howard Goldblatt said that he just wanted to translate his favorite novels, he actually selected the most attractive novels for foreign readers. How does Howard Goldblatt successfully won the favor of western readers? First of all, he is very familiar with Chinese literary works, and he knows how to introduce the right novels in a proper time. For example, at the end of the century of global anxiety, Howard Goldblatt mainly translated works of writers such as Xiao Hong and Mo Yan, because the pessimism reflected in the works of these writers was perfectly suited to the reading psychology of western readers in that time. Gong Xiaoping also pointed out in this essay that under the guidance of Skopostheorie, the literary works translated by Howard Goldblatt and the image of China constructed by him are imaginary and untrue. The "Chinese culture" and "China" described in his works are not totally real, or truly reflect real China and Chinese culture. His novels only show a tiny part of Chinese culture and China. But in the eyes of foreign readers is the whole and real China, which is the reason why many translators oppose Howard Goldblatt. They think that he only reflects the dark and backward aspects of Chinese society, but does not show China's prosperity and development in such a general and partial manner. Also, his descriptions in the novels will distort the images of China or have a bad influence on driving Chinese literature toward international community.

From the Point of Translation Techniques. Translation techniques are also important factors which causes a lot influence on the formation of translation thoughts. For instance, there are some deletions in Howard Goldblatt's translated works, he deletes some parts of original novels to satisfy the reading habits of foreign readers and narrowing structures of foreign novels. Meanwhile, contributing some not good images of China. In this way, the translation techniques plays an important role on the formation of translation thoughts. The following part mainly discuss why Howard Goldblatt has acquired such kind of translation techniques from the perspective of cultural differences.

Howard Goldblatt has loved Chinese literature since his university years. During his study in Taiwan, he began to translate Chinese classical literature under the encouragement of his mentor. From then on, Howard Goldblatt has been engaged in Chinese literary translation. Through a long period of accumulation, he is very familiar with Chinese literature and has owned a great deal of translating experience. In addition, his richness in knowledge, and widely reading interests, give him more priority than other translators. All these advantages enable Howard Goldblatt not only to translate the original meaning of the text, but also creative rewrite them. If there is no profound literary conservation, he can hardly do this. The creation and the faithfulness of literary translation

have always been difficult and balance, even can not exist at same time. But Howard Goldblatt successfully made it. With his literary reservation and creative thinking, he rewrote some of the original content or chapters in the process of translation. However, the purposes of his rewriting and deleting is not arbitrary, they are based on the reader's reading habits, the narrative habits of English novels and aimed to make the translation more fluent and authentic.

Summary

Howard Goldblatte's translation thought has undeniably caused many controversies. The most typical one is "faithfulness and creativity". Howard Goldblatt's translated works show the dark side of Chinese society but he is not deliberately discrediting China, in fact he just chose the novels he like or the novels most attractive for foreign readers. This essay reviews the researches of scholars at home and abroad first, and then explains controversies caused by Howard Goldblatt's translation thoughts. Then analyze Howard Goldblatt's choice on translation materials selection and his translation skills, so as to understand why he has formed such translation ideas. Finally, it mainly focuses on what influence Howard Goldblatt's translation model will have on the internationalization of Chinese literature. As a successful American sinologist, Howard Goldblatt's success can be regarded as a new way for promoting Chinese literature toward international stage.

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