

Study on Translation Strategies of Crescent Moon from the Perspective of Translator Behavior Criticism

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Abstract

The critical realism novella *Crescent Moon* is one of Lao She's representative works. The English version of Shapiro is the only one currently available. Based on the theory of translator behavior criticism proposed by Professor Zhou Lingshun, this paper takes the translator and translator behavior as the starting point. Through the analysis of translation, it finds that Shapiro skillfully uses a variety of translation strategies and techniques, and follows the principle of Translator Behavior Criticism. It is of great guiding value to introduce Chinese literature such as *Crescent Moon* to the world and tell "Chinese stories" well.

Keywords

Translator Behavior Criticism; *Crescent Moon*; Sidney Shapiro; Translation Strategies.

1. Introduction

Lao She wrote the novel *Crescent Moon* in 1935, which is one of his masterpieces. It tells the story of a mother and daughter in the old society who were forced to become prostitutes in order to make a living. It reflects the women at the bottom who are unable to escape the tragic fate. It reflects the low status of women in the old society and the general social environment, in addition to relying on men, women have difficulty making a living and must be forced to engage in dishonorable transactions. It was later adapted into TV series and movies, and has immortal artistic value. As an American living in China, Shapiro is proficient in bilingualism and has a lot of practical experience in translation. So far, Shapiro's translation is the only translation. The Translator Behavior Criticism was put forward by Professor Zhou Lingshun of Yangzhou University in 2014. It is a complete set of critical theory to analyze the translator's translation behavior and evaluate the translation from the two aspects of "seeking truth" and "pragmatism". According to CNKI data, there are no scholars who have studied the translation of Shapiro's *Crescent Moon* from the perspective of translator's behavior criticism. We use local theory to study the translation of Chinese literary works which translated by foreign translators. We take the translator's behavior as the breakthrough point, and explore the reasons behind his behaviors. Then we evaluate the quality of the translation, and examine the social acceptance. It has significance for Chinese literature to "go global". The original text is about 15,600 characters, and the translation is about 10,200 words. By comparing and analyzing the original text of *Crescent Moon* and Shapiro's translation, this paper explores the strategies and techniques of Shapiro's translation of Chinese literary works. We can learn from Shapiro's skills in handling such literary works, and contribute to the "go global" of Chinese literature.

2. The Connotation of Translator Behavior Criticism: "Truth-seeking-Pragmatic" Continuum Evaluation Model

The Translator Behavior Criticism is a Chinese theory proposed by Professor Zhou Lingshun of Yangzhou University in 2014. There are two books published by Professor Zhou, Translator

Behavior Criticism: Path Exploration and Translator Behavior Criticism: Theoretical Framework. Those marked the formation of the theory. The theory takes the translator and translator's behaviors as the starting point, and takes the social perspective as the evaluation perspective, aiming to evaluate the translator's behaviors and the quality of the translation. It describes the translator's behaviors and explains motivation. It is an evaluative theoretical tool, which can explain the translation, regulate the translator's behaviors beforehand, and predict the quality of the translation. Its core structure is the "Truth-seeking-pragmatic" continuum evaluation model. "Truth-seeking" and "pragmatic" are two aspects, and the middle hyphen shows that the two are related. "Truth-seeking" is the Truth-seeking of the text, and "pragmatic" is the pragmatism of the social effect. "Continuum" is a mathematical concept. This theory focuses on the inside and outside of translation. The translator is not only a language worker, but also a social person in the context of the times. Due to other regulations outside the translation and the diversification of the translator's identity, the translation methods adopted are different, so the translation quality will be affected. That is to say, the identity of the translator is different, resulting in different behaviors of the translator, and the final translation quality will be affected. Starting from the translator's identity to evaluate translation quality, it is expected to achieve a comprehensive and objective in-translation and extra-translation. The rationality of a translator's behavior is closely related to the social acceptance of the translation. Therefore, it is necessary to find a golden balance between "seeking truth" and "pragmatism" to make the translation highly acceptable to the society. The theory is scientific, objective and comprehensive. It provides a complete theoretical basis for us to evaluate the translation.

3. Chinese-English Translation Strategies in Crescent Moon

Shapiro once said, "I fell in love with the phoenix, and I fell in love with the Chinese dragon." Born in the United States, Shapiro went to study Chinese history and culture while serving in the military. He came to China in 1947 and met his wife Fengzi. In 1963, he became the first batch of foreigners to have Chinese nationality, and later experienced major historical events such as the Cultural Revolution, reform and opening. After the founding of New China, Shapiro began to engage in literary translation work. He translated a large number of modern and contemporary works in China. In 2010, he won the "Lifetime Achievement Award for Translation Culture" in China, and in 2011, he won the "Lifetime Achievement Award for Influencing Chinese in the World".

This paper analyzes the translation of Crescent Moon from three aspects: "seeking truth", "pragmatism" and "seeking truth while being pragmatic", and explores the translation strategies. "Seeking truth" is aimed at the original text, and at the language level. "Pragmatic" is aimed at target language readers and society. The most ideal state of the translation is "seeking truth and being pragmatic", seeking a balance between the two sides, and the social acceptance and reader acceptance will be high. It is found that, for the overall structure and paragraphs of the novel, Shapiro has made appropriate adjustments. For the unique customs and habits of China, the translator kept all of them and added explanations, so that the target language readers can understand Chinese customs and culture. The translator also chose English idioms and fixed expressions for translation to make the translation more authentic. For the repeated parts in Chinese, the translator deleted them and performed integrated translation to make the translation more concise.

3.1. Truth-seeking Translation based on Language Level

The Truth-seeking at the language level is to be faithful to the original text. From the perspective of Translator Behavior Criticism, the English translation of Crescent Moon mostly adopts literal translation and is faithful to the original text, to achieve the Truth-seeking of the text. For example, when the original text is called "爸爸、妈妈", the translator adopted the

transliteration "Papa, Mama" instead of translating it into "Dad, Mom", which restores the original style and makes readers closer to the original text. The original language uses Beijing spoken language and local dialects, which makes the translation more difficult. The translator must fully understand Chinese culture in order to achieve accurate translation.

ST: 那些黄土路静寂得没有头儿。

TT: On that yellow dirt road there wasn't a breath of sound.

First of all, Shapiro adopted literal translation to translate "黄土路". It can retain the original style. "没有头儿": It has a erotic sound, which belongs to the Beijing dialect. It is an adverb of degree and describes very quiet. Shapiro is proficient in Chinese and uses phrase translation, which is very appropriate. It expresses the meaning of the original text, and restores the silent scene, allowing foreign readers to experience the silent atmosphere created by the original text. And they have the same feeling as the original language readers.

ST: 妈妈似乎顾不得我了, 把我放在一旁, 抱着坟头儿去哭。

TT: Mama seemed to have no time for me. She set me down on the side and embrace the head of the grave and wept.

There are three short sentences in the original text. Let's analyze the logical relationship firstly. The last two clauses are carried out in sequence, which can be translated together. There are many short sentences in Chinese and it focuses on meanings. But English has long sentences and it focuses on forms. Shapiro adopted literal translation to achieve the "Truth-seeking" of the original text. It can express the meaning of the original text accurately and help readers grasp the overall idea.

ST: 我知道要想主意了, 我知道。

TT: I knew she was trying to think of a way out. I knew.

This sentence writes "我知道" twice. Chinese likes repetition to strengthen the meaning, while English is more concise and does not like repeating words. However, in order to be faithful to the original text, the translators have translated them without any deletions or substitutions. The translator believes that it is necessary to retain the style of the original text, so he translates it to achieve the "Truth-seeking" of the text.

ST: 有的告诉我, 谁当了暗门子。

TT: A few, they said, were working "in dark doorways".

"暗门子" is the old name of the dark prostitute in Beijing dialect. It is translated literally, and double quotation marks are added, mainly because this term is mentioned for the first time in the text. According to heroine, she doesn't understand "暗门子", but knows it's a bad thing. So Shapiro translated literally, which belongs to the original text, and is loyal to the understanding of the heroine. Later, when this term is mentioned again, it is translated as "dark prostitute", and different strategies are adopted for the translation of the same word, which reflects the translator's contingency.

Through the analysis, it can be seen that in order to achieve the Truth-seeking at the language level, most of Shapiro adopted literal translation and retained the characteristics of Chinese. Even if it is a repeated part, in order to preserve the style, the translator also translated it and strove to be faithful to the original text. It can also be said that the method of alienation is used to accurately convey the meaning of the original text, so that the target language readers can understand Chinese culture.

3.2. Pragmatic Translation based on the Social Level

"Pragmatic" is for the society and target language readers. Considering their acceptance, the translator will take into account cultural differences, social factors, etc. The translator can

choose appropriate translation techniques, such as deletion, integration, connection and other means to be able to let the target language readers accept it, and let the society accept it. Then the translation can spread all over the world. Shapiro did not strictly follow the original text in the segmentation of the translation, but according to the English logic. The translator took into account the reading habits of the target language readers.

ST: 摆菜, 端菜, 算账, 报菜名, 我都不在行。我有点怕。

TT: I didn't know anything about waiting on tables and was rather scared.

Shapiro didn't translate “摆菜, 端菜, 算账, 报菜名” one by one, but integrated them. This term “waiting on tables” naturally includes a series of actions. The translator deleted redundant parts to avoid procrastination and complexity. It makes the translation concise and helps the target language readers grasp the main information.

ST: 她又给我找到一个爸。这是另一个爸, 我知道, 因为坟里已经埋好一个爸了。

TT: She had found me another father.

Shapiro only translated the first sentence. Because Chinese likes to repeat and strengthen the tone, while English is more concise, and likes to say the important content first. The meanings of the preceding and following sentences are the same, readers can understand the meaning of the article according to the first sentence. Therefore, in order to avoid redundancy, the translator chose not to translate. These biases towards the target language readers and makes it easier for the target language readers to accept. So, it belongs to the "pragmatic".

ST: 她找到了女儿, 女儿已是个暗娼!

TT: What a farce! Mother finds daughter, but daughter is a whore.

The translator not only translated the original sentence, but also added a logical relationship, and used an exclamation sentence to express the irony and turning relationship. English focuses on logic, belongs to the metaphorical language, and clearly expresses the relationship between transition and cause and effect. The addition of exclamatory sentences can make the cohesion better, the expression more authentic, and the irony is stronger. So, it biases towards the target language readers.

ST: 正式的妓女倒还照旧做生意, 因为她们纳捐; 纳捐的便是名正言顺的, 道德的。

TT: The licensed women can go on doing business, because they pay tax.

The translator has made deletions, because there is a repetition with the previous expression. If the translator translates all the text, it will be inauthentic and inconsistent with English expression habits, and the target language readers will not easily accept it. Because Shapiro is an American, he is proficient in bilingualism and translating from Chinese to English. It can make the translation more concise, and it biases towards the target language readers.

Through the analysis, it can be seen that the translator takes into account the target language readers and social acceptance. According to the English expression habits, it is more concise. The translator deletes some redundant content and adds logical cohesion, to make the translation without affecting the overall meaning expression. It is more readable and more acceptable to target language readers.

3.3. Based on Truth-seeking and Pragmatic Translation

It found that when translated Chinese characteristics and customs, the translator used augmentation, interpretation, etc. to make it easier for the target language readers to understand Chinese cultural customs. The translator has a profound bilingual foundation, and uses English idioms and fixed expressions in many places. On the one hand, he is faithful to the original text, and on the other hand, he takes into account the thinking differences of the target language readers, so as to achieve both truth and pragmatism.

ST: 妈妈穿上白衣。

TT: Mama put on white mourning clothes.

The term “白衣” belongs to the Chinese funeral custom, wearing white mourning clothes to mourn the deceased. In contrast, British and American countries wear black, which is a different custom. If it is translated literally, and the target language readers do not have background knowledge, it is difficult to understand the meaning of the article. The translator cleverly added the word “mourning” here, which easily solved the cultural differences and made the target language readers clear.

ST: 妈拿着很薄的一摞儿纸。

TT: She had bought some gold and silver “ingots” made of paper to burn and send to Papa in the next world.

The background here is that mom takes paper to visit dad's grave. It is a traditional Chinese custom. When Chinese people visit their deceased relatives, they usually bring paper gold ingots and silver ingots to burn to the deceased. However, foreigners do not understand Chinese customs, and the translators use interpretation and explanations, which is beneficial for foreign readers to understand the meaning.

ST: 在爸出殡的那天，我似乎没觉得这么远，或者是因为那天人多；

TT: It hadn't seemed nearly so far the day we buried Papa, perhaps because a lot of people had gone with us.

The term “出殡” is a Chinese characteristic vocabulary. It is necessary to know the real meaning before translating. The translator used “buried” which is simple and clear. It not only seeks the truth of the text, but also makes it easier for the target language readers to understand the meaning of the original text. It shows that the translator has a good understanding of Chinese culture.

ST: 同学们不准我有那样的妈妈，她们笑话暗门子；

TT: The students wouldn't permit me to have a Mama like mine; they sneered at women who sold themselves.

This is the second time that the “secret door” appears in the article. The translator adopted a free translation, instead of translating the literal meaning as in the first time, but translating the meaning. This belongs to the Beijing dialect, which is also a big difficulty for the translator. The translator must first understand the dialect. According to the context, the meaning is directly translated, so that the reader can understand it intuitively, and achieves both truth and pragmatism.

ST: 世界就是狼吞虎咽的世界，谁坏谁就有便宜。

TT: It's a dog-eat-dog world; the worse you are the better you make out.

In Chinese, wolf and tiger are symbols of ferocity and brutality. There are similar expressions in English, which are directly replaced with synonyms, meaning “the world of cannibalism”. This expression is more authentic, which not only achieves Truth-seeking, but also allows the target language easier for readers to read. That to be realistic and pragmatic.

ST: 可是当客人给少了钱的时候，她张嘴就骂。

TT: Yet if any man should pay less than the agreed price, she'd curse him and call him every name under the sun.

The term “她张嘴就骂” is a fixed expression translation in English. On the one hand, it is faithful to the original text, and on the other hand, it conforms to the expression habits of English. It is more authentic and is biased towards the target language readers, so that the target language readers will not feel strange when reading. It is easier to accept, and there is a desire to read on.

The analysis shows that when dealing with folk culture or dialects with Chinese characteristics, the translator fully understands the meaning, adopts the translation strategy of free translation, and translates the meaning faithfully, which makes it easier for the target language readers to understand Chinese folk culture and grasp the whole novel. If there is an equivalent expression in English, the translator will choose a fixed expression to translate, which not only reflects the translator's profound bilingual skills, but also conforms to the reading habits of the target language and is more authentic.

4. Conclusion

As Shapiro himself said: "If the translation does not express the content and style of writing, it will not be good". Indeed, as he said, while translating Lao She's novel *Crescent Moon*, Shapiro had a thorough understanding of Chinese culture and dialects. Chinese characteristics are retained during translation, and literal translation and alienation are adopted to be faithful to the original text as much as possible, to show the real China to the world; On the other hand, taking into account the acceptance of the target language readers and society, the translator chooses to delete to avoid redundancy, increase the logical connection, and maximize the pragmatism to the society. If there is a corresponding expression in English, we can replace it with synonyms, and use fixed expressions and common sayings for translation. It is not only faithful to the original text, but also takes into account the acceptance of the target language readers and the society, so as to be realistic and pragmatic. For the overall chapter structure and sentence structure, the translator makes appropriate adjustments as needed, so that the entire novel has a more rigorous structure, more rigorous logic, and is more in line with English expression habits. It truly follows the translator's code of conduct: seeking truth as the foundation, seeking truth with pragmatism; As a cultural intermediary, foreign translators are "the ideal translator for Chinese literature going global". Shapiro tells Chinese stories faithfully, is skilled in translation skills, and is proficient in handling various adaptations. His translations are of high quality and have reference value for Chinese literature to go global.

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