

Literary  
Stylistics and  
Fictional  
Translation

翻译研究论丛

申丹 (SHEN Dan) 著

文学  
文体学与  
小说翻译



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Literary  
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Fictional  
Translation

本书通过与西方批评家的对话，系统而深入地论述了文学文体学的特点、性质和功能，探讨了将文学文体学应用于小说翻译的可行性和必要性，并认为两者有互为补充的作用。在此基础上，从新的角度研究了小说翻译中的词语和句法选择，凭借丰富的语料和鞭辟入里的分析，揭示了以往被忽略的种种翻译现象，包括词语表达的“不合逻辑”与反讽、逼真性和强烈程度的关联，不可靠性与人物塑造的关系，句法选择与事件的速度、伪共时性的关联等等，并首次系统探讨了小说翻译中再现人物话语的不同方式。本书在文体学理论上有新的突破，在翻译批评上独辟蹊径，是一部创新性很强的跨学科研究著作。



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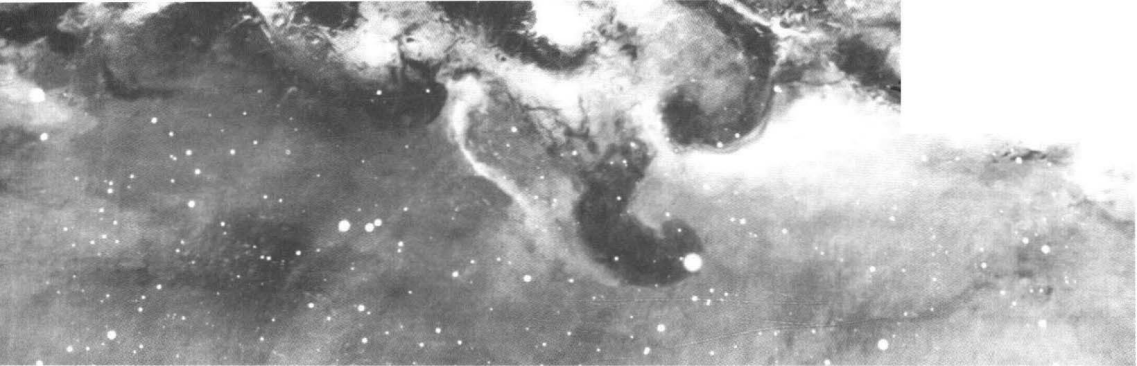
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## Preface

This book is based on my Ph. D. dissertation completed at the University of Edinburgh in 1987. By that time, few scholars had tried to relate literary stylistics to translation studies, especially in terms of fictional translation. Even at present, efforts are still not often made to apply stylistics to the translation of prose fiction. The second decade of the new century has seen some unprecedented publications in the field of stylistics, with 2014 witnessing the appearance of *The Routledge Handbook of Stylistics* (Burke; see Shen 2015a) and *The Cambridge Handbook of Stylistics* (Stockwell and Whiteley; see Shen 2015b), and 2016 the publication of *The Bloomsbury Companion to Stylistics* (Sotirova; see Shen 2017), which join forces in marking a new stage in the development of stylistics. All the three volumes contain a chapter on the relation between stylistics and translation, in contrast with previous collections of essays in the field which are not concerned with translation (Weber 1996; Lambrou and Stockwell 2007; McIntyre and Busse 2010). In the former case, however, the chapters in question invariably focus on the translation of poetry. The same is true for the chapter “Stylistics and Translation” (by Boase-Beier) in *The Oxford Handbook of Translation Studies* published in 2011. Only occasionally, there appear essays with the analytical focus set on prose fiction (see, for instance, Malmkjær 2004; Horton 2010).

Not surprisingly, book-length studies devoted to the relation between stylistics and fictional translation are rarely found. 2015 saw the publication of *Style in Translation: A Corpus-Based Perspective* (Huang), which examines the translator’s style in fictional translation with the statistics provided by corpus analysis. This approach has the advantage of scientifically and objectively revealing the habitual or

consistent stylistic choices of the translator, but is hard put to explore subtle relations between local stylistic choices and literary significance in the source and the target texts. As the present study indicates, the field of fictional translation presents various subtle issues calling for in-depth stylistic investigation, a kind of investigation that can feed back into stylistics itself and may also help enrich literary criticism. The meeting and clash between two different linguistic, literary and cultural systems in translation may shed fresh light on the thematic functions of the stylistic devices involved as well as on the relevant literary and cultural conventions which condition the writer's and the translator's choices and which tend to remain opaque within the boundary of a single language.

Since the cultural turn in the 1980s, the focus of critical attention has shifted to various contextual factors constraining the translator's choices, and to the reception and functioning of the translated texts in the target culture. This has redressed previous neglect of the cultural context but, at the same time, has led to the neglect of the stylistic features of the text to a certain extent, especially in terms of the source texts. The influence of deconstructionism, feminism and postcolonialism on translation studies has more or less lent to this kind of neglect. Fortunately, the new century witnesses an increasingly balanced concern between the context and the text in various fields, including translation studies. This book, which reveals various subtle stylistic features in the original and explores how to transfer them into the target language and culture, may help to achieve more balance between the text and the context.

Twenty years after its first publication, this book, which has been reprinted five times, is still much in demand. It has been out of stock for quite some time and Peking University Press has decided to republish the book in a new format. I believe that it will continue to be helpful to academics, researchers and students both in the field of translation studies and in the fields of stylistics and literary criticism.

Upon the reprinting of this book, I would like to express my

gratitude to those at Edinburgh who introduced me to linguistics or stylistics; Keith Mitchell, Jean Ure, Gillian Brown, Professor J. Hurford, and, in particular, Elizabeth Black. I am especially grateful to my doctoral supervisors the late Professor James P. Thorne and Mr. Norman Macleod for their insightful criticisms and suggestions. Special thanks are also due to Dr. A. W. E. Dolby, Professor Jonathan Culler and Professor Henry Widdowson, who read part or whole of different manuscript versions and offered helpful comments. In addition, I deeply appreciate the contribution to this book made in various ways by my family, especially my husband Xing Li, and my friends and colleagues.

A version of chapter 4, titled “Stylistics, Objectivity, and Convention,” was published in *Poetics* vol. 17, no. 3, 221 – 238 (Copyright 1988 by Elsevier Science B. V., Amsterdam, The Netherlands). A fragment of chapter 5 and a large part of chapter 7 appeared in the article “Syntax and Literary Significance in the Translation of Realistic Fiction” in *Babel* vol. 38, no. 3, 149 – 167 (Copyright 1992 by The International Federation of Translators). A major part of 6.1 appeared in the article “On the Aesthetic Function of Intentional ‘Illogicality’ in English-Chinese Translation of Fiction” in *Style* vol. 22, no. 4 (winter 1988). A version of 6.2, titled “Objectivity in the Translation of Narrative Fiction,” was published in *Babel* vol. 34, no. 3, 131–140 (1988). A version of 6.3, titled “Unreliability and Characterization,” was published in *Style* vol. 23, no. 2, 300 – 311 (Summer, 1989). Fragments of chapters 6–8 appeared in the article “The Distorting Medium; Discourse in the Realistic Novel” in *The Journal of Narrative Technique* vol. 21, no. 3, 231–249 (fall, 1991). A large part of chapter 8 appeared in the article “On the Transference of Modes of Speech (or Thought) from Chinese Narrative Fiction into English” in *Comparative Literature Studies* vol. 28, no. 4, 395 – 414 (Copyright 1991 by The Pennsylvania State University). I am grateful to the editors and publishers for permission to reprint.





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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BASIC AIMS

Literary stylistics and literary translation have rarely been considered in relation to each other. Despite the fact that the literary translator's choice of words, syntax etc. frequently raises stylistic issues and that literary translation therefore constitutes a congenial area of stylistic investigation, attempts at applying stylistics to literary translation have so far, in relation to English and Chinese at any rate, been scarcely made. Thus, in contrast with the more or less sophisticated stylistic analysis widely undertaken in Anglo-American intralingual literary studies for the past thirty years or so (stylistics, it must be noted, was not introduced into mainland China until around 1980), criticism of literary translation, particularly of the translation of prose fiction, has remained remarkably traditional, characterized by general and impressionistic comments on style or by an intuitive analysis with a notable lack of sensitivity to subtle stylistic devices. To bring studies of literary translation up to date and to improve, as a result, the quality and standard of literary translating, there is surely an urgent need to replace traditional impressionistic approaches by more precise and more penetrating stylistic models and methods. The first aim of the present book is therefore to argue, mainly by way of practical analysis, for the usefulness and necessity of a stylistic approach to the study of literary translation in general and of the translation of prose fiction in particular.



Stylistics, however, is not here taken for granted. And this brings us to another basic aim of the present book, which is to explicate the nature, function and validity of literary stylistics as a discipline (with reference to English only). The stimulus for this explication came from two contrastive sources: the vagueness of the claims made by some proponents on the one hand and the fallaciousness of the attacks made by some opponents on the other. While issues such as the objects of investigation and, more significantly, the characteristic mode of argumentation of stylistics will be discussed in considerable detail, no attempt is made to summarize its historical development, or to study and compare the linguistic models employed by stylisticians, for such a study lies beyond the scope of the present book.

In accordance with the two basic aims, this book is divided into two major parts, with the first part examining stylistics as a discipline and with the second arguing and demonstrating the application of stylistics to the translation of prose fiction. It need hardly be said, though, that the contribution to stylistics which this study seeks to make is not confined to the first part. The problems and solutions that emerge in interlingual fictional transfer, as will be extensively analysed in the second part, help to reveal certain of the essential aspects of novelistic technique, offering fresh insights into the functions or values of stylistic devices as well as into the relevant literary conventions which condition the writer/translator's choices and which tend to remain opaque within the boundary of a single language.

## 1.2 LITERARY STYLISTICS

Anglo-American literary stylistics originated and developed under the combined influence of developments in modern linguistics, Anglo-American practical criticism, French structuralism, the Russian Formalist School and the Prague Linguistic Circle. Marked by the use of linguistic models in

the interpretation of literary texts, this is a discipline mediating between literary criticism and linguistics of different levels and in various forms.

This intermediary discipline is referred to, apart from the unqualified title “stylistics,” either as “literary stylistics” or as “linguistic stylistics.”<sup>1</sup> The epithet “literary” stresses its difference from a descriptively-oriented approach to literary texts, an approach which treats literary texts as data or as formal linguistic objects; and an approach where the main thrust is directed towards the possibility or necessity of applying linguistic theory to the description of literary texts, and/or towards the exemplification of the linguistic system with the textual features concerned, and/or towards the explication of a linguistic model adopted in the analysis (see, for instance, Halliday 1966 & 1967:217—223; Sinclair 1966 & 1968; Thorne 1965 & 1969; Levin 1967; Carter 1982). With the aim of supporting or promoting literary interpretation and taking literary texts as communicative acts, literary stylisticians operate along the lines of traditional common-sense based interpretative strategies of literary significance, focusing on linguistic choices which are thematically or artistically motivated.

The epithet “linguistic” emphasizes on the other hand the difference between this intermediary discipline (which is based on or informed by modern linguistics) and the more traditional approaches to literary style. If the discipline in question can be treated, at least in part, as an extension of practical criticism, the extension mainly lies in linguistic observations and insights, in the analytic and systematic knowledge of communicative and linguistic norms (cf. Carter 1982:4—7). In this discipline, that is to say, the emphasis falls both on the explicitness or precision of the linguistic description and on the resultant literary effects. Analysts are often eclectic in approach, drawing on whatever different linguistic models are called for in the analysis.

By now, stylistic investigation has been extended to all levels of linguistic structure and to all the three major literary genres of poetry,

prose fiction, and drama. During the past twenty years or so, there has emerged an increasing interest in fictional prose but on the whole poetry, because of its higher frequency of foregrounding and the shorter length of the text as a thematic unity, has been given more attention. Thus, although the second part of this work will focus on the translation of prose fiction, in discussing stylistics as a discipline, I shall quite often touch on stylistic analysis of poetry. It is true that the two genres differ considerably in terms of stylistic properties (the phonological property, for instance, does not feature in the novel while modes of speech are hardly found in poetry). But the conventions which underlie the literary significance of linguistic form are essentially the same in both genres; and this in turn determines that stylistic analyses of both, as will be discussed in Chapters Three and Four, share fundamentally the same mode of argumentation.

The discussion of stylistics as a discipline will start, in the following chapter, from a scrutiny of its characteristic concern. A basic distinction between linguistic habits and aesthetically motivated choices will be drawn as a prelude to a consideration of two contrasting levels of stylistic investigation, viz., linguistic form and, with reference to traditional realistic fiction in particular, fictional 'facts'. Insofar as realistic fiction is concerned, the aesthetic function of linguistic form can usually be located at the level of narrative discourse in contradistinction to the level of fictional reality. This distinction, which comes from the French structuralists' distinction between *histoire* (the narrated story) and *discours* (narrative discourse), lends perspective to the traditional distinction between "what" and "how" or "content" and "expression" (see Fowler 1977; Chatman 1978). While narrative discourse (or narrative style) is the direct object of linguistic analysis, fictional 'facts' are essentially extralinguistic (with the exception of the verbal reality composed of a character's speech, thought or mind-style), an area where linguistic models, leaving aside the analogous or quasi-