



翻译与跨学科学术研究丛书

中华翻译文摘

(2002-2003卷)

罗选民 主编

***Abstracts of
Chinese Translation
Studies***

清华大学出版社



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内 容 简 介

《中华翻译文摘》(2002—2003 年卷)一书以文摘的形式辑录了 2002—2003 年中国大陆、台湾、香港等地区有关英汉翻译的论文与专著。分为八大版块: 翻译理论、翻译教学、翻译与语言学、翻译与文学、翻译与文化、机器翻译与认知科学、翻译批评、翻译研究著作。

本书经国际顾问和编委会从上千篇文章中经精心遴选而成。中英对照。

本书不仅是广大从事翻译理论研究工作者的得力助手,也对进行翻译实践的人士大有帮助。

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(2002—2003)

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中华翻译文摘(2002—2003年卷)

《中华翻译文摘》2002—2003 年合订本终于付梓，2004—2005 年合订本也将在不久交稿。我希望这次调整，能使《文摘》的编辑工作更加从容、出版时间更加有序。我要向所有的读者和入选《文摘》的作者表示我的衷心感谢，感谢他们的理解和大力支持。本次所选文章，全以电子邮件寄送给各位编委，根据他们的反馈意见，在考虑文章质量和代表性的基础上进行取舍、修改和补充。疏漏之处在所难免，敬请读者原谅。

《文摘》汇集了大陆、香港、台湾、澳门所发表的翻译研究论文，为两岸三地的译学研究起到桥梁作用。两年合订本，在外观上更加美观，内容更加丰富，选材更加宽泛，特色更加突出。我们希望《文摘》今后发挥更大的作用，为中华翻译研究贡献绵薄之力。

我要感谢本刊国际顾问、瑞典皇家科学院院士、诺贝尔文学奖评委马悦然教授同意刊发他 2005 年在北京大学“斯特林堡国际学术研讨会”上的主题发言——“翻译的技艺”。原文为英文，由清华大学外语系博士生萧文乾译成中文。清华大学张健同志作为主编助理，做了

大量的工作；清华大学翻译与跨学科研究中心访问学者、美国夏威夷大学王炯博士对英文做了部分校对工作，在此一并表示感谢。

为了加强《文摘》与译界的互动，我们今后将邀请大学和研究所的教授、学者参与编辑，希望在多方的努力下，将《文摘》越办越好！

主编

2006 年 8 月于清华园

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特邀文章

On the Craft of Translation

Goran Malmqvist

Abstract: In his talk Professor Malmqvist addresses the topic of the difficulty of translation, resulting from the different linguistic patterning of the two languages involved in the process. He insists that the translator ideally should be a highly skilled craftsman with a double responsibility: toward the writer of the original text and his own readers. The translator should try his or her very best to *imitate* the original text, and the translation should ideally be a *likeness* of the original. He also suggests that literary translation is an important part of cultural communication.

When works by Strindberg in the 1920s were introduced to Chinese readers, the translators used translations of his works into English. The seemingly very simple sentence *When we were enjoying ourselves, the uncle of the baron joined our company* presented unsolvable difficulties to the translator. The Chinese language forces the translator to decide whether “the uncle of the baron” was the brother of the baron’s father or of his mother. Had the translator had access to the Swedish text the problem had been solved: English “uncle” corresponds to either “farbror” (father’s brother) or “morbror” (mother’s brother). Having ascertained that the baron’s uncle was his father’s brother, the Chinese translator will also have to specify whether the baron’s uncle was older or younger than the



baron's father. The highly hierarchic and family-centered Chinese society demands that the language clearly specifies family relations and the seniority within the clan.

It is indeed highly gratifying that a great many important works by Strindberg and other Swedish author thanks to the skills, enthusiasm and stamina of my friend Li Zhiyi now have been translated straight from the Swedish originals. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Li Zhiyi on his having been awarded Nordstjarneorden (The Order of the Northern Pole Star), presented a few weeks ago by Her Royal Highness, Crown Princess Victoria.

I find it proper that I avail myself of this occasion to discuss the art of translation, without which much valuable literature would be locked in behind language borders.

In his magnificent work *After Babel. Aspects of Language and Translation* (1975) George Steiner points out that translation, among other things, is a work of self-denial, demanding that the translator serve the original rather than impose himself on it. But he also points out that all translation, like all reading and even all listening, is a work of editing, a work of interpretation, determined by subjective and contextual factor. If the poet or writer is a Maker and Creator, which indeed is the basic meaning of the word, then the translator is ideally a highly skilled craftsman. And we know that in Ancient times, in both Eastern and Western civilization, craftsmen were slaves. Self-denial is one of the cardinal virtues of slaves. But as the task of translation also involved editing and interpreting, the translator must also serve as an actor. The translator must *imitate* the author of the original work, and his translation must be a *likeness* of the original work. A skilled translator who masters the language into which he

translates (normally his mother tongue) is bound to use to his best advantage such prosodic, euphonic and musical qualities, the farther his translation may deviate from the original text. A famous Swedish poet and man of letters of the 19th century once said: “Beautiful translation are like beautiful women, that is to say, they are not always the most faithful ones.”

What a translator has to work is texts. These texts may be structured in a variety of ways. They may be cut up into segments of varying lengths, which are linked together by no prosodic rules other than those which are inherent in the language itself. Other text segments may have been linked together by more or less strict rules which govern the length of the segments, the placing of stressed and unstressed syllables, the position of caesuras and euphonic elements such as rhyme and alliteration. The task of the translator is to transfer, as well as he or she possibly can, the message of the original, even that part of the message which is carried by its form and structure.

The difference between two languages is sometimes so great that any attempt to transpose poetic forms from one language into the other is doomed to fail. Some forty years ago I experimented with a kind of a-syntactic translation of Classical Chinese poetry into Swedish. I simply transposed the words of the original into Swedish, with an utter disregard for the syntactical and morphological demands of the Swedish language. Here is an example with translation into a-syntactic English of a short lyrical poem entitled *Jiangxue* (River Snow), by the Tang poet Liu Zongyuan (773—819)

Qian shan, niao fei jue,
Wan jing, ren zong mie.
Gu zhou, suo li weng,

Du diao, han jiang xue.

Thousand mountain, bird fly sever,
Ten-thousand path, man footprint extinguish.
Solitary boat, rain-cape, bamboo-hat old man,
Alone fish, cold river snow.

When you translate Classical Chinese poetry into a Western language such as Swedish or English, the target language forces you to specify what is not specified in the original. You have to decide for yourself whether the nouns should have definite or indefinite reference, and whether they should be given singular or plural form. Tense is not formally expressed in Classical Chinese. But the translator's Western language forces him to decide whether the action or the state referred to pertains to the past, the present or the future. The universality and the timelessness which characterize the original Chinese poem are lost in the translation.

There are several kinds of translator. There are professional translators who make a living from their craft. Normally, professional translators are not themselves free to choose the works they want to translate. There are also non-professional translators who happen to possess the necessary linguistic competence and who take a genuine interest in the works which they themselves have chosen to translate. Thirdly, we have the writer cum translator, the poet cum translator. We sometimes find that these translators not seldom tend to take liberties with the original text, which other translators would not dare to do.

Each translator approaches work in his or her own way. To me, translation is a work of love. But this love must be tempered by recognition of a twofold responsibility: the translator must serve both

the author of the work which he translates, and his readers, as well as he possibly can.

Before starting to translate, be it a long novel or a poem, I read the work several times in succession to gain a feeling for the structure and the flow of the text. When reading and re-reading the text I make mental notes of certain passages which I know will present a challenge, and ponder over how they might be best translated. I always articulate the text silently when I read, which gives me a sore throat at the end of a long day's work. The repeated readings make me feel the presence of the author, and of the author's voice. When I eventually arrive at the point when my own voice, and breathing, are in harmony with the voice and breathing of the author, then the work is almost done. I am well aware that my notions of the author's voice and breathing may sound like hocus-pocus to you. I am at a loss to explain how it works, but I do know that it does. Once I feel that I have reached this stage, I am ready to devise a language and a style to match those of the original.

I once discussed this method of translation with a Swedish colleague, who happens to be an excellent translator. He objected that this method would deprive him of the pleasure of surprise and unexpected encounters: to him, turning pages in the book he translates is like following a meandering mountain path, not knowing what view might unfold itself beyond the next bend.

A translator should have an excellent command of the two languages involved in the translation. As a rule, his or her command of the mother tongue is superior to his command of the other language. Possessing this double command, the translator is normally fairly well read in the literature of the two languages, but sometimes a

deep knowledge of the literature of the other, the non-native language, may be a hindrance, rather than a help. I will illustrate this statement, which may seem strange to you, with a tale based on my own experience as a translator. The poetry of the Swedish poet Tomas Tranströmer has been translated into some forty languages. The best translations into English are those by the American poet Robert Bly and by the Scotsman Robin Fulton. Some twenty years ago Tomas Tranströmer went to the United States on a tour of recitals. He brought with him three unpublished translations of a collection of prose poems, done by Robert Bly, Robin Fulton and myself. When an American publisher wanted to publish the collection, Tranströmer handed him the three translations and suggested that he choose one of them. After his return to Sweden, Thomas Tranströmer said to me: "Can you imagine! He picked your translation!" I had no difficulty whatever in imagining why. Both Bly and Fulton have an exceedingly good knowledge of English and American poetry, which I don't have. In their translations they carefully considered the semantic weight and all the connotations of each word, while I, who lack their literary competence, simply picked the words which appeared to me to be the closest equivalences to Tranströmer's words.

I have already stated my opinion that a translator should literally work as a slave, neither deliberately adding anything or subtracting anything from the original work. Thomas Tranströmer's American translator Robert Bly is a well-known poet. It sometimes happens that he takes liberties with the text which no honest translator would dare to do, something which I personally find utterly indefensible. One of Tranströmer's poems, "Balakirevs drom" ("The Dream of Balakirev") contains the following stanza:

“Det var ett falt dar plojen lag,
och plojen var en fagel som stortat.”

(“There was a field where the plough lay,
and the plough was a bird that had crashed.”)

Robert Bly translates as follows:

“A field appeared in which a plough stood,
and the plough was a bird just leaving the ground.”

I remember being quite upset when I read that translation. It seemed to me that the translator had perverted the exquisite imagery of the original: the deserted plough resting on one of its handles, with the other handle raised at an angle of 45 degrees, exactly like a bird with a broken wing.

In one of his many fascinating travel notes the Japanese late 17th century poet Basho wrote: “If language is the house of meaning, do we not live in different houses?” the translation of a text is often an important part of the translation of a culture. Whenever a text contains references to elements of culture which are foreign to the reader it is the duty of the translator to explain them. I personally do not use footnotes in my translations, as they tend to interrupt the flow of the narrative. Instead I prefer to provide the translation with an introductory essay. It goes without saying that the introductory essays to translations of works such as the long picaresque novel *Shuihuzhuan* (All Men are Brothers) and the even longer novel *Xiyouji* (The Journey to the West) need be rather lengthy and elaborate. Such essays serve not only to explain whatever needs be explained to a non-Chinese reader, but also to give the reader a general introduction to the cultural background of the text. In the case of the *Xiyouji* the reader of the translation should be provided with

extensive excursions into Buddhist and Daoist lore, Tang History, the techniques of Chinese alchemy, traditional Chinese poetry, and a number of other topics.

Most problems of a purely linguistic nature can normally be solved by a translator who has a perfect command of his mother tongue and an excellent command of the language into which or from which he translates. But there are cases when even the most competent translator has to give in. The medieval ontological proof *Deus bonus est, ergo Des est* (God is good, therefore God is) rests entirely on the linguistic fact that the Latin verb *esse*, like English *to be*, may function both as a copula and as an intransitive verb meaning “to exist”. Any attempt to translate this ontological proof into a language such as Russian or Chinese which do not possess a verb with this double function, is bound to fail. What was once seen as an eternal theological truth turns out to be nothing but a demonstration of a linguistic feature common to most Indo-European languages.

One factor which to a high degree hampers the dialogue across language barriers and ideological borders is that representatives of our Western civilizations often are ready to assume that our own labels for notions such as *individualism*, *democracy*, *justice*, and *freedom* are universally valid. But both the Confucian and the Marxist ideology require of the individual that he or she accepts the authority of the collective group (the family, the work team, the Party and the State). It is therefore not surprising that the Chinese counterpart of a word like *individualism* often carries a negative connotation.

Semantic shifts in words can create grave misunderstands and result in mistranslations. Especially grave misunderstands may arise when words are transferred from one cultural milieu to another. When Indian missionaries and Chinese converts in the third century of our