Domestication and Foreignization in the Chinese Translation of Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*

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**Culture and Translation**

In the process of globalization, intercultural communication is highlighted, translation as a way to "aid understanding of an increasingly fragmentary world" has its own crucial role, and a translator plays as a traveller who is "engaged in a journey from one source to another" (Bassnett, 2004: 1) and then they transfer one culture into another culture, or they become "a power agent for cultural change" (Bassnett, 2004: 9). Translators are both reader and writer who connect the author and the readers of the target language, and also, translators are intercultural communication mediums between the source culture and the target culture. Translation is not only a type of substitution between languages but communication and conversation between different cultures. Since communication within one single language and one culture is complex, the communication between languages...
and cultures will be more complex. Translation as “a type of intercultural communication” (Snell-Hornby, Pöchhacker and Kaindl, 1994: 27) is always combined with culture, which means that it is always embedded in culture, and it is a contextualized intercultural conversation. (Basso, 2002: 189) Translation as the production and intermedium of cultural communication always “reflects the features of both cultures when one language and culture is translated into another. And the aim of translation is to transfer the source culture into the target culture” (戴炜栋, 2004: 24).

Cultural translation defined by Nida & Taber is a type of “translation in which the content of the message is changed to conform to the receptor culture in some way, and/or in which information is introduced which is not linguistically implicit in the original”, in other words, translator can change the words or some contents of the message in the source text to cater to the target culture and the target reader, also, translator “might take the form of ideas culturally foreign to source text, or even elements which are simply included to provide necessary background information” (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2004: 36) However, cultural translation does not mean that translators can create a new version which is totally different from the original, or we can say that this definition accords with a notion that translation is a form of writing under constraint. (Briggs, 2006: 43) Constrained writing means that on the one hand, the translators rewrite the original text in his own words, on the condition that the translated text in the target language should be accorded with the original text. On the other hand, although translation is to rewrite the source text in the target language, it is always embedded in the source text, so “they are not absolutely new creations, their creativeness is relative”. (Snell-Hornby, Pöchhacker and Kaindl, 1994: 5) The different versions of the same source text are different not because that translator creates it but because the translator rewrites it under constraint with different translation strategies. To transfer the source language and source culture into the target language and target culture, domesticating translation and foreignizing translation are usually employed.

**Domestication and Foreignization as Translation Strategies**

As Lawrence Venuti said in his *The Translators’ Invisibility: A History of Translation*, there are two strategies for cultural translation, one is domestication, the other is foreignization, in the former strategy, “the translator leaves the author in peace as much as possible, and moves the reader toward him.” While the latter one
makes “the translator leaves the reader in peace as much as possible, and moves the author toward him.” (Schleiermacher, in Venuti, 2004: 19). Obviously, domestication is a reader-oriented translation strategy while foreignization is an author-oriented translation strategy. The reader-oriented translation requires that translators should pay more attention to the target language readers’ conventions and understandings while the author-oriented one wants the translators to take the source language author’s ideas and style into account. In other words, the domesticating translation focuses on the fluency and transparency, while the foreignizing translation pays more attention to the foreignness. However, in the history of western translation starting from the 17th century “domestication dominated the theory and practice of English-language translation in every genre, prose as well as poetry.” (Venuti, 2004: 65) While the foreignization is a new word which can be traced back to Schleiermacher’s theory, his theory aimed to “make the foreign author travel abroad to the target-language reader”, and his method should be seen as “anti-french because it opposes the translation method that dominated france since neoclassicism, viz. domestication”. (Venuti, 2004: 107) From this, we can see that the appearance of foreignization is more related to the ethnocentric, also we can say that the foreignizing strategy is a “resistancy” to the domestication from the perspective of combating cultural colonialism and ethnocentric.

According to the conception of Alexander Fraser Tytler, there are “Three Principles of Translation” for the translators to abide by, they are:

1. that the translation should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work
2. that the style and manner of writing should be of the same character with that of the original
3. that the translation should have all the ease of original composition

(Alexander Fraser Tytler, 申雨平编, 2002: 167)

To attain all the ease of original composition, the translator should turn to the domestication translation strategy to keep in accordance with the linguistic habit of target language and culture. The domestication based on that all translation cannot be translated completely, there is “no way in which one can successfully translate word for word and structure for structure.” so, “all translating involves differing degree of paraphrase”. (Nida, 1993:2) Domesticating translation needs to keep the version fluent, which leads to transparency, “the illusion of transparency is an effect of fluent discourse, of the translator’s effort to insure easy readability by adhering to
current usage, maintaining continuous syntax, fixing a precise meaning”. (Venuti, 2004: 1) To be fluent means to be readable, while readable means that the translated text should be read as fluent as those which are written in the target language. Or we can say that the translator rewrites the source text in his own language which is based on its own culture in order to please the readers. And because of this, the domestication leads to the ethnocentric. “Fluency can be seen as a discursive strategy ideally suited to domesticating translation, capable not only of executing the ethnocentric violence of domestication, but also of concealing this violence by producing the effect of transparency, the illusion that this is not a translation, but the foreign text” (Venuti, 2004: 61) Such domestication abuses Chinese four-character idioms, words of classic elegance, means of abstraction, substitution method, reportray the image with no basis, such methods erase national characteristics, distorts the original text and even leads translation to a wrong track (刘英凯, 1987). These distortion of domesticating translation is against the original idea of translation and the equality of every culture.

To translate “the ideas of the original work”, “the style and manner of writing”, the translator should do his or her endeavor to keep in accordance with the exotic atmosphere of the source text no matter in the sight of language or the culture, so the foreignization translation strategy is usually employed. “Foreignizing translation is based on the assumption that literacy is not universal, that communication is complicated by cultural differences between and within linguistic communities. But foreignizing is also an attempt to recognize and allow those differences to shape cultural discourses in the target language” (Venuti, 2004:146). Of course, different languages are rooted in different cultures, and translation is not only confined to the language, but also to the culture. The intercultural communication needs to keep the native factors in the target culture to attain readability, but also to assimilate the different factors of the source culture to attain foreignness.

In Venuti’s opinion, the domesticating method is “an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bring the author back home” while the foreignizing method is “an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad” (Venuti, 2004: 20). To be concretely, the domestication may cause ethnocentric of the target language while the foreignization usually leads to anti-ethnocentric, for the foreignization will present the foreignness or otherness to the target language and this will add exotic cultural factors to the target culture.
The dominance of domestication excludes the impact of source culture on the target culture, the emphasis on fluency has “led to forgetting of these conditions and exclusions, requiring their recovery to intervene against the contemporary phase of this dominance.” (Venuti, 2004:43) At that time, advocating foreignization is necessary, especially in that the foreignization aims to keep the unique characteristic of the original. This kind of theory and practice can “signify the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text.” (Venuti, 2004:23) Using this method, the foreignness of the translated text can “impact the target language and culture, and then it can control the cultural narcissism and imperialism.” (Venuti, 2004:20) Without narcissism and imperialism, the intercultural communication comes true and it helps rebuild the target culture, forge “a foreign-based cultural identity for a linguistic community about to achieve political autonomy, it can also undermine any concept of nation by challenging cultural canons, disciplinary boundaries, and national values in the target language”. (Venuti, 2004:100) However, if the foreignizing translation became the dominant translation strategy, the totally equivalence will be emphasized, and then the readers of the target culture will be neglected and the difficulty in reader’s acceptance will embarrass the intercultural communication.

The Two Chinese Translations of *Wide Sargasso Sea*

The two strategies have their own advantages and disadvantages, for different versions of the same source text, different translators may mainly use one strategy, but he or she must use the other one consciously or unconsciously. So in the process of translation, the source texts are changed more or less into the target language so that they could be read and understood by readers. But at the same time, the translator tries his best to keep the original content and style of the source text in order to keep its “exactitude” or “objectivity” (Bassnett and Lefevere, 1990:54) *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a novel written by Jean Rhys, who wrote this novel to overthrow the crazy woman created by Charlotte Brontë in her *Jane Eyre* and made it to be the “prequel” to *Jane Eyre*. It described the process in which Antoinette became a lunatic under the pressure of race, nation and gender. There are several different versions of Jean Rhys’ masterpiece, one of them is translated by Wang Jiaxiang, another is translated by Chen Liangting and Liu Wenlan. These two versions are typical from the angle of translation strategy. Here are some examples:

**Firstly**, the names of different versions.

Wang Jiaxiang translated *Wide Sargasso Sea* into 荒海茫茫, while Chen
Liangting and Liu Wenlan translated it into 藍海无边. From the above names, we can see that 苍海茫茫 is reader-oriented while 滄海无边 is author-oriented. In Chinese culture, 苍 is usually used to describe the sky, when it is related with the sea, is usually called 滄海, which means wide sea, and it can remind the readers of 滄海桑田, although the translator choose 苍 not 滄, the reader still can think of 滄海桑田 and consider the novel as a tragedy story, which has its coincidence with the author's intention. The author meant to give us a new notion that Antoinette was not a born lunatic, she was forced into lunatic because of the race, nation and gender. It is a long history and a huge change. While 滄海 is more related to western culture rather than Chinese culture because there indeed exists a sargasso sea in the north Atlantic which contains the west Indian, and the west Indian makes up the context of the tragedy story about Antoinette. However, we cannot say that the version by Wang Jiaxiang chose the domestication strategy and Chen Liangting and Liu Wenlan adopted the foreignization translation strategy, basing on the name of the translated novel.

Secondly, the differences of the translated first paragraph.

They say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks. The Jamaican ladies had never approved of my mother, "because she pretty like pretty self", Christophine said. (Wide Sargasso Sea)

人们说灾难来临时就要团结队伍，白人就是这样的。但我们不是他们的队伍中的成员。牙买加的贵妇们对我的母亲向来是不以为然的，按克里斯托芬的说法，“因为她漂亮得没法再漂亮了”。（王家湘，1986，第 1 页）

常言道同舟共济，白人就是如此。可我们跟他们不是同舟。牙买加的太太小姐对我母亲一向并不赞成。克里斯托芬说：“因为她美是美，但不值钱。”（陈良廷、刘文澜，2001，第 1 页）

Obviously, Chen Liangting and Liu Wenlan mainly used the domestication strategy but Wang Jiaxiang mainly used the foreignization strategy. The translation by Chen absorbed idioms and phrases which can be easily accepted by the target language such as 同舟共济 and 美人胚子. By doing this, “a transparent, fluent style is adopted in order to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for TT readers” (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2004: 44). However, this kind of translation has its limitations, for example the “aggressively monolingual, unreceptive to the foreign” and “provide the readers with the narcissistic experience of recognizing
their own culture in a cultural other” (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2004: 44), so going back to the original and staying as close to it as possible is the task of every translator (Paterson, 2006: 54). To be consistent with the source language, the translation should “deliberately breaks target conventions by retaining something of the foreignness of the original”, in order to “register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad” (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2004: 59). The translation by Wang is such translation, that he chose the foreignization strategy and tried to keep the textual and cultural system accordant with the original such as the sentence “because she pretty like pretty self” is translated into “因为她漂亮得没法再漂亮了”.

Thirdly, there are too many examples in the two versions of Wide Sargasso Sea. let’s compare several more of them.

No 1. *I dare say we would have died if she’d turned against us and that would have been a better fate. To die and be forgotten and at peace.*

我敢说，如果她跟我们作对，我们早就死掉了，死掉倒是好造化了。一死了之，被人遗忘，就此安息。（陈译）

我敢说，要是她也反对我们，我们早就死了，而这样一个命运对我们要更好些。（王译）

No 2. *“You young but already you hard, You fool the girl. You make her think you can’t see the sun for looking at her.”*

你虽然年轻，但是心肠已经很硬，你要了她，你让她以为你看了她一眼就活不了了。（陈译）

你年纪轻轻，但是心肠已经如铁石，你骗了她，你让她觉得，她的美貌令你如此著迷，连太阳都黯然失色了。（王译）

No 3. *Pity like a naked new-born babe striding the blast.*

怜悯正如一个乘着狂风而来的赤子。（陈译）

怜悯犹如一个乘着疾风的赤身裸体的新生儿。（王译）

We cannot estimate which version is better because they have different translating intentions and they are aiming to different readers, but we can say that they both use domesticating translation and foreignizing translation when they translate the novel from English into Chinese. And the most important is “different translation can in fact represent varying degrees of equivalence, this means that equivalence cannot be understood in its mathematical meaning of identity, but only
in terms of proximity, i.e., on the basis of degrees of closeness to functional identity.” Such functional identity is “functional equivalence” since “no translation is ever completely equivalent.” (Nida, 1993: 117) Although the foreignizing translation can reproduce the “foreign elements” in the original, “including 1) the foreign cultural features, 2) the foreign formal features, and 3) the author’s unusual writing techniques.” (孙致礼, 2002) However, “there is always some loss and distortion in verbal communication since no two interlocutors ever have exactly the same lexical, grammatical, and discourse features.” (Nida, 1993: 118), so domesticating translation is necessary under such condition. During the translation, the target language, culture and readers should be taken into consideration. If it is acceptable to the Chinese readers, the translators should use the foreignizing method; if the readers cannot accept the foreign element of the source text, the translator should resort to domestication as a supplementary method.

The Trend of Translation Strategy

After the May 4th Movement, there are two viewpoints on translation strategies in the history of Chinese translation studies, one is in favor of domestication, the other is in favor of foreignization. At this time, Lu Xun, Qu Qiubai, Guo Moruo and so on advocated the foreignizing strategy while Liang Shih-chiu, Qian Zhongshu, Fu Lei and so on advocated the domesticating strategy. However, the domestication held the domination. In the last two decades of the 20th century, China’s translators and theorists began to reconsider the relationship between foreignization and domestication. And then three viewpoints came forth. One supports domestication, another supports foreignization, the third is eclectic, they approve that the domestication and foreignization should be complementary rather than opposite, and this kind of view is in the highest flight.

There are few theorists who approve of only one strategy, most of them are in favor of the combination of the two strategies, however, Chen Zhengfa is in favour of domestication, especially as far as language expression is concerned (陈正发, 2006), while Sun Zhili is in favor of foreignization. Sun Zhili predicted that foreignization tends to be dominant and will be the preferred strategy in China’s literary translation in the 21st century. (孙致礼, 2002)

The most theories or translators pay more attention to the combination of the two translation strategies. For example, Feng Jianwen asserted that domestication and retaining exotic atmosphere do not conflict with each other in literary translation (冯
Guo Jianzhong believes that maybe in the future foreignization will prevail, but domestication and foreignization will coexist perpetually, no matter in what direction they will develop (郭建中，1999). After that, he (2003) restates his point that adaptation and alienation will coexist forever. Li Cheng insisted that from both textual and cultural views, domestication and foreignization all has its own strong points. And the two methods are unificated in dialectical translation from angle of cultural transformation. (李成，2007) Dai Youfeng and JinLing put forward their theory that domestication and foreignization should complement with each other rather than be in contradiction with one another, they have their own advantages considering the differences in the purposes of translation, the type of texts, the intention of the author and the readership. (戴友丰，金玲，2005) Yang Fang also said that the foreignizing translation is suitable for translating language content and the domesticating translation is suitable for translating culture element. (杨芳，2002)

No languages are far superior to other languages, accordingly no cultures are far superior to other cultures, so translation is an equal process of intercultural communication. As for the translation strategies, different strategies have their own advantages. Whether they will be used lies in the translation purposes, the needs of different text types and readerships. In different historical periods, maybe one was dominant while the other was complementary. However, in the 21st century, the combination between domestication and foreignization is inevitable, especially in the process of literary works’ translation. Using these two strategies, the translator can not only keep the exotic atmosphere of the source text by breaking the target conventions and assimilate the foreignness of the source culture but also made the versions readable and acceptable in the target language by using transparent, fluent styles which are familiar with the target culture.

Notes:

[1] Edited by Snell-Hornby, Mary, Pöchhacker, Franz and Kaindl, Klaus, Translation Studies: An Interdiscipline, John Benjamins Publishing Company Amsterdam/Philadelphia, 1994.

[2] Susan Bassnett, Translation Studies (third edition), Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2004.

[3] Susan Bassnett, and Andre Lefevere Translation, History and Culture, London and New York: Cassell, 1990.

[4] Ellen B., Basso, the Neologistic Imagination. A Review of Some Recent Books On
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