

Impact of Patronage on the Translation of Living History

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Abstract: Bassnett and Lefevere declare translation is a rewriting of an original text and patronage is “the powers (persons, institutions) which can further or hinder the reading, writing and rewriting of literature”. This paper discusses the impact of patronage on the translation of Living History.

Keywords: translation, rewriting, patronage, living history

1. Introduction

In the words of Bassnett and Lefevere (2004a, p. vii), translation is considered as rewriting. Behind all rewritings, there is ideology and a poetics which manipulates literature to a certain extent. Translation is closely linked with social factors, such as economics, politics and history and some issues like power, history and culture, etc worths our attention.

In his *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (Lefevere, 2004a, pp. 14-15), Lefevere declares that there is a control factor both in and outside the literary system. The first factor is “professional” and the second is “patronage”. Patronage is “the powers (persons, institutions) which can further or hinder the reading, writing and rewriting of literature” (Lefevere, 2004a, p. 15).

The patrons who commission a translation, publish it, or see to it that it is distributed. The patron is the link between the translator’s text and the audience the translator wants to reach. If translators do not stay within the perimeters of the acceptable as defined by the patron (an absolute monarch, for instance, but also a publisher’s editor), the chances are that their translation will either no reach that audience in a circuitous manner”. (Lefevere, 2004b, p. 7)

As stated in Chapter One, patronage can be exerted by different strata. Patrons try to regulate the relationship between the literary system and the other systems, which, together, make up a society, a culture (Lefevere, 2004a, p. 15). There are three components. The ideological one is about the link between literature and other social systems. The economic one the patron mainly concerns the writer’s livelihood. The status one means prestige and recognition. What’s more, patronage is usually highlights the ideology of literature than in its poetics.

Sun Yifeng (2003, p. 110) claims that, concerning translation, behind the issues such as what to be translated, what not to be translated and how to translate, there is power. Take the translation of Buddhist scriptures as an example. the ruling class planned and hold the translation of Buddhist scriptures. Here the ruling class can be considered as the patron; it attached great importance to the translation to serve its own purpose, that is, strengthening its control over citizens by way of spreading Buddhist scriptures.

Wei Qingguang (2006, p. 38) writes in his *The Role of Patronage in the Manipulation of Translation*, patrons are so powerful that most translators choose to abide by the laws set up by them. Xuanzang is a case in point. Xuanzang, a famous Buddhist translator during Tang Dynasty, carried out translation under the support of the ruling class and he followed the rules of the ruling class. Later his translation enjoyed a great popularity among people. Therefore it can be said that Xuanzang’s success in translation can not be separated from the power of patronage. On the contrary, if translators do not observe rules of the authority, they would be severely punished. Etienne Dolet, a French translator, was hanged and burned at the stake for his infringement upon the interests of the authority.

Therefore it is self-evident that if translation of certain foreign texts gains the support of patronage, these texts would be done with great quantity. Mao Dun once stated that literature translation should be conducted under the leadership of the Party and government with meticulous arrangement and organization (XZ Luo,1984, p. 508). In the 1950s, the translation of Russian classics is overwhelming

which can not be departed from the support and encouragement of government. Translation of *Kak закалялась сталь* (How the Steel Was Tempered) was considered “a task given by the Party” (qtd. From Y G Chen, 1989, p. 302).

In the case of *Living History*, the translation is not triggered by translators themselves but by Yilin Press, the government-owned publisher. Therefore Yilin, understood as the patron, plays an important role in selecting texts, organizing translators and dictating translation strategies and so on, which will be discussed in detail later.

2. Selection of the Original

As is known, translation is usually undertaken “by assignment”. A client needs a text to achieve its own goals and calls upon the translator for a translation, thus acting as the initiator of the translation process. In *Living History*, the initiator is Yilin Press, the government-owned publisher, who introduced this book to China mainly for commercial purpose.

Living History was written shortly after Mrs Clinton left White House, then, became federal senate of New York State, and made the announcement that she was going to run for the 2008 Presidency Campaign. In her book, she covered some shining events such as health care reform efforts, the endless Whitewater investigations, her advocacy for women and children’s rights, the Arafat-Sharon handshake, the Monica Lewinsky scandal, the fight to protect the president from impeachment, etc. In the words of Zhang Zude, Chairman of Yilin Press, these events must be quite attractive and appealing to readers. According to Zhang, *Living History* would gain a great market in China as long as it is properly promoted. After computing the input and output, Zhang confirmed that Yilin was bound to gain large profit (http://news.xinhuanet.com/newmedia/2003-09/17/content_1085822_1.htm). The successful sale of this book and its popularity among Chinese have already proved that. Yilin says *Living History* has become the most popular foreign political memoir in Chinese history, with 200,000 copies sold in just over a month. Despite competition from pirate publishers, *Living History* has gained large profit for Yilin, which paid \$20,000 for the publishing rights and has so far sold at a cover price of \$ 3.60.

Moreover, Yilin has chosen *Living History* with taking readers’ acceptance into account. The readers of Mrs. Clinton’s book in America are mainly supporters of her party, voters of Democratic Party, citizens and media who are interested in Ex-President-Bill Clinton’s impeachment and scandal as well as Mrs Clinton’s adventure in love and politics. Whereas in China, the readers might be Chinese citizens who are keen on the international news and the ones who are interested in the Clinton family, especially Mrs. Clinton’s colorful life in politics. When asked about the acceptance of *Living History* in China, Zhang Zude explains that Yilin has already taken intended readers into consideration. According to Zhang Zude, differences in culture, plot, narration and ways of thinking are likely to obstruct the acceptance and deep understanding of the text. However, biography seems to be an exception. In Zhang’s opinion, when one is reading a biography, he/she intends to know the person’s life, unique experience and political opinions and so on. Mr and Mrs Clinton are familiar to Chinese people and their political views, family and experience in dealing with international events are likely to draw the attention of Chinese readers. Therefore Zhang concludes Yilin is confident that the book will be accepted by Chinese readers (http://news.xinhuanet.com/newmedia/2003-09/17/content_1085822_1.htm).

Last but not least, the publication of books like *Living History* is part of an effort to show that China is becoming a more open society. After the implementation of the policy of reform and opening to the outside world in 1979, China has been publishing more foreign titles and screening more imported films. The translation and publication of Mrs Clinton’s *Living History* is a way to show China’s open-mindedness.

All in all, the translation of *Living History* is not initiated by an individual at random but Yilin Press; it is not guided by personal preference but certain purpose. The reasons why Yilin selects this book lie in the fact that it can help make large profits as well as it can prove that China has become a more open society. From the above discussion, it can be seen that translation is not a neutral but purposeful act and it is the patron that has the final say towards text selection. III. C

3. Censorship of Materials

As discussed earlier, translation always has its position and it is closely related to elements such as

history, politics and culture etc. According to Lefevere (2004a, pp. 15-18), patronage governs both the selection of original text and translation strategies.

In the present thesis, Yilin, as initiator of the translation of *Living History*, is likely to be confronted by complicated problems which are beyond linguistic level just as Yang Xianyi states in the preface of *On Translation: an Editor's Viewpoint*:

I have been well aware of the relationship between translation and publication after I had been engaged in both translation and publication. In market economy, translation is not purely a linguistic matter. From the perspective of publication, factors such as protection of copyright, the interests of the author, the translator and the publisher as well as market competition must be taken into account. (J D Li, 2009, p. 1)

Li Jingdian, an editor, after years of being responsible for proofreading and correcting elaborates translation from the perspective of publisher this way:

From the publishing angle, translation is not only a cultural and academic act but shoulders certain social responsibility, namely promoting the diffusion and communication of advanced culture. As an editor, his/her job is quite different from that of the translator. The former should lay stress not only on principles within translation but on the influence of media studies and sociology on translation including proper guidance towards translation, maintaining translation copyright and regulating administration and competition in this field. (ibid., p. 3)

In the case of *Living History*, Yilin, as the initiator or patronage of the translation, offers the most direct economic supports in the form of pension or working post. It might give translators instructions including what is to be translated, what is not to be translated, how it is to be translated and what effects to be achieved, etc. The three elements of patronage, namely ideological component, economic component and status component may grant the translator salary and social status by publishing his book, given that he follows the rules set by them. However, firstly the patron, Yilin itself should abide by certain laws and rules when censoring *Living History* in order to accord with the ideology of China and make this translation accepted by Chinese readers. The following principles and rules which can represent the ideology of China might be the ones for Yilin to obey:

A vital principle publishers must follow is to keep to the orientation of serving the people and socialism, uphold Maxism-Leninism, Mao Zengdong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory as guideline, spread and accumulate science, technology and knowledge that can help improve the quality of the population and promote economical and social progress, enhance the traditional Chinese culture and international communication and enrich people's spiritual life. (2006, pp. 37)

The following are forbidden in any publication:

- 1) violating the basic principles in constitution;
- 2) jeopardizing state sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity;
- 3) revealing state secret, endangering state security and impairing honor and interests of the country;
- 4) inciting hostility and discrimination against any ethnic group and sabotaging equality and unity among peoples, or undermining national customs and habits;
- 5) advocating cult and superstition;
- 6) distablizing social order and undermining social development;
- 7) advertising sex, gambling and violence, or serving to abet committing crimes;
- 8) insulting or libeling others or encroaching on other's lawful rights;
- 9) disobeying common courtesy and Chinese traditional culture;
- 10) other principles and rules that are illegal in laws, administrative rules. (ibid., p. 39)

Under the guidance of these rules, Yilin commenced the censorship of *Living History*. The deletion mainly appears in Chapter 22 *Women's Rights Are Human Rights* and Chapter 33 *Imagine the Future*. The types of deletion include human rights, women's rights and offensive remarks and criticisms deemed unfriendly by Chinese, etc. For example, In her autobiography, "*Living History*", Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton writes how China's imprisonment of a human rights activist (in her words), Harry Wu, caused a sensation in the United States and nearly derailed her plans to attend a

United Nations women's conference held in Beijing in 1995. In the Chinese edition of the book, Mr. Wu is described as a person who was "prosecuted for espionage and detained awaiting trial" (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/3135868.stm>).

Still there are examples about Communism. Mrs. Clinton describes her visit of Central and Eastern Europe in the summer of 1996. When depicting the changes that had taken place in these areas, the author criticizes Communism time and again which has been shortened and excerpted in the Chinese version. For instance, as Mrs. Clinton set foot in Central and Eastern Europe, she wrote like this:

Infant democracies had replaced communism in the former Soviet-bloc countries. Hundreds of millions of people had been liberated from lives of tyranny behind the Iron Curtain, but as I was to see for myself, embracing democratic values is just the first step. Building functioning democratic governments, creating free markets and establishing civil societies after decades of dictatorship requires time, effort and patience as well as financial aid and investment, technical training and moral support from countries like ours. (Clinton, 2003, p. 524)

However, almost the whole paragraph is deleted in the Chinese version.

Another example is about a conference on women. Mrs. Clinton's English text discusses China's treatment of the women's groups that she attended the 1995 United Nations conference on women, the Chinese version leaves that part out. It also deletes a paragraph in which she criticizes the Chinese for not allowing a speech she made to be broadcast, which is deemed offensive and unacceptable to Chinese.

The Chinese edition includes much of Mrs. Clinton's account of her visit to China in 1998 with President Clinton; however, it selectively strikes out sensitive passages. Passages such as "They (refers to Chinese officials) made it clear that while they welcomed my physical presence at the conference, they didn't want to be embarrassed by my words and hoped that I 'appreciated China's hospitality'" (ibid., p. 451) are omitted in the Chinese version.

When first asked about the alterations, Liu Feng said that any changes were minor and that allegations of a breach of contract were at the very least inappropriate. He also explained that Yilin made such "minor, technical" alternations to gain more Chinese readers which were in the interests of both Simon & Schuster and Yilin. Later Liu Feng explained that Yilin had no time to discuss alterations with Simon & Schuster because Yilin as the official publisher had to compete against China's vigorous black market. Finally Yilin's copyright of *Living History* was withdrawn by Simon & Schuster due to the former's refusal to completely recover the deleted passages.

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