



Lost in translation: the motif of cannibalism as reconstructed in the English translations of a Chinese classical novel

Yunhong Wang¹

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Abstract

Many studies have been conducted in the investigation of narration in the field of translation, but most of these mainly focus on the agent and the way of narrating. In a different vein, the present paper explores the other side, i.e., the narrated aspect, or what is to be narrated. It centres on the issue of motif reconstruction in the three full English translations of a Chinese classical novel *Shuihu Zhuan—All Men Are Brothers* (1933) by Pearl S. Buck, *Outlaws of the Marsh* (1980) by Sidney Shapiro and *The Marshes of Mount Liang* (1994–2002) by John and Alex Dent-Young. A description of how the motif of cannibalism is presented in each translation will be given based on a parallel corpus of 189 clauses. The discussion of motif belongs to the range of the “narrated,” which is believed to be not only more transposable, but also more translatable than discourse. Despite this translatability, however, the findings reported in the present study reflect that certain motifs of *Shuihu Zhuan* may be changed or even lost in the translating process. The study of motif reconstruction in translation may very well help to call translation scholars’ attention to the macrostructural level of the text by focusing on “unusualness factors” that are activated and deactivated through mediation of translators.

Keywords Motif reconstruction · *Shuihu Zhuan* · Translation strategy · Cannibalism

Previous studies

Over the past decade, narratological categories such as voice, point of view, and commentary have been frequently discussed from the angle of translation studies (cf. Hermans 1996; O’Sullivan 2003; Bosseaux 2007; Alvstad and Alexandra 2015). In terms of the interdisciplinary combination of narratology and translation, voice

✉ Yunhong Wang
cerulean.wang@connect.polyu.hk

¹ College of Foreign Studies, Jinan University, Guangzhou, People’s Republic of China

is probably “the most studied category from the angle of translation and its troubles,” perhaps because of “its importance in literature, criticism, and narratology.” (Prince 2014, 24; see also Alvstad and Alexandra 2015, 3) The narrator’s discursive presence in narration is very similar to what a translator does with translation. Hermans notices that in the translated narrative, there is always a second voice behind the narrator, the “translator’s voice” and this second voice manifests itself in three cases: during the text’s orientation towards an Implied Reader; in cases of linguistic self-reflexivity; and of contextual overdetermination (Hermans 1996, 27). Bosseaux (2007) compares the linguistic manifestations of another significant narratological category, point of view, between source and target texts, particularly through comparison of changes that happen in translation of free indirect discourse and their stylistic effects. Other narrative facets such as commentary, narrative space, and time have also been well explored in translation studies to release how translation affects narrative and stylistic effects (cf. Boase-Beier 2006; Assis Rosa 2013).

The narratological categories examined above are more concerned with “the narrating, or the ‘way’” than “the narrated or the ‘what.’” (Prince 2014, 28) This confirms what has long been known, namely that the narrated is “not only more transposable, but also more translatable” than the narrating or the way of narration (ibid.). However, as Prince (2014, 24) argues, “certain aspects of the narrated are not (readily) transposable either.” There is still much to explore in the domain where narratology and translation studies intersect, particularly when we take into consideration the fact that narratology and translation studies are both now grounded in empirical study and “what we want to account for is the case,” (ibid.: 29) or in terms of descriptive translation studies, real translations. The translation troubles that real translations may involve are more complicated than the simple issue of translatability of the text. Instead, due attention should be paid to the reality of translation and the periphery of the text. In what follows, this paper will investigate three real translations of a Chinese classical novel *Shuihu Zhuan* based on a parallel corpus of 189 clauses to find out whether and how the narrated reality of a story is altered or even totally lost in the process of translation.

Cannibalism as a motif

Cannibalism as a motif constantly recurs in literature, particularly in the folklore and legends of many cultures (Daemmrich and Daemmrich 1987). From the viewpoint of narratology, motif is regarded as “a minimal thematic unit” as well as “a minimal narrative unit at the syntactic level” in quest of a formal system of description of any narrative content (Prince 2003, 55). A motif must be distinguished from the more abstract and general terms like theme and topos, because a motif is “the smallest fundamental structural and semantic unit” of a folktale or of a story, the same as “a morph to the whole morphological building,” which cannot be further taken apart (Prince 2003, 55). A motif must have “symbolic significance or the reason associated with a particular person, place, or idea” in a story (Wolpers 1995, 39). It is the significance for or the relationship with a certain fictional element, or even the

whole fictional plot, that determines whether a unit can become a motif, and this synergy may happen either at the narrative level or at the thematic level.

Recursivity is another key factor in the formation of a motif (Bremond et al. 1995; Prince 2003). Originating from musicology, recurrence decides not only the appearance of a motif within a single literary text, but also the life of a motif in a tradition or in a culture. In a literary text, a motif comes to mind when a single thematic kernel is repeated several times. Through its repetition, a motif can help create other narrative or literary aspects, such as a theme. A narrative motif can be created through the recurrent use of “imagery, structural components, language, and other narrative elements.” (Bremond et al. 1995, 67).

In the West, cannibalism as a motif has a long tradition and has frequently been associated with “the primeval urge to prevent the rise of an offspring to power, the excessive arrogance of man testing the gods and hideous revenge” since the time of Greek mythology (Daemmrich and Daemmrich 1987, 56). In Chinese literature and culture, there also exist various facets of cannibalism. Yu (2000) discovers that iatric, or medicinal cannibalism, is fairly prominent in Chinese stories about Guan Yin and the Buddha. In the stories of the previous life of Guan Yin, its human incarnation offers her eyes and hands as medicine to save her dying father. This type of iatric cannibalism is characteristic of Chinese culture. Implied by this practice are certain values promoted by the Confucian and Buddhist traditions, such as filial piety, self-sacrifice, and loyalty.

However, in Ming-Qing fiction, portrayals of anthropophagy are constantly related to famine, revenge, ritual, or disordered appetite, and thus anthropophagy becomes a powerful symbol in the authors’ discourse on morality (Yu 2001). The case under study is a novel of the late Ming period. Written in vernacular Chinese, the story tells of how a group of 108 outlaws gathered at Liangshan Mountains to form a sizable army in rebellion against officialism and assert justice in the Song Dynasty. As an old motif in Chinese literature, cannibalism is highly energized in *Shuihu Zhuan*, the best-known outlaw story in Chinese literary history, where it is primarily attached to such themes as rebellion and heroism (Li 2001; Qi 2011; Sun 2012).

The motif of cannibalism in the source text

Shuihu Zhuan, as a grand work of 108 heroes, does not only encompass such universal motifs as travel, captivity, persecution, death and revenge, but more importantly, accumulates many traditional motifs of Chinese culture-specific as well as period-specific motifs that belong to its special historical stage. Themes and motifs have been a focal point in the study of *Shuihu Zhuan*. For example, Li (2009) identifies a wide range of actions and events taking place at night in *Shuihu Zhuan* and therefore explores the motif of night and its symbolic significance in the story. Wang and Liu (2010) discuss the significance of the motif *jianghu*¹ in Chinese vernacular fiction

¹ In *Shuihu Zhuan*, *jianghu* repeatedly occurs as a virtual space where the underworld heroes travel and live freely without the chains of officialism. In the source culture, *jianghu* is more than a motif of place;

by focusing on two characters and their evolution in different art forms, from *Shuihu Zhuan* to some other literary genres, such as the Ming Legends and the Yangzhou Storytelling.

As a prominent and symbolic motif of *Shuihu Zhuan*, cannibalism was noticed by the first commentator of the novel, a literary critic named Jin Shengtian, as early as in the 17th century (between the late-Ming and early-Qing periods). He regarded cannibalism as “a marvellous heroic deed” (Shi and Jin 2011, 367) in the story, with it reflecting the heroes’ rebellious spirit against injustice. Li (2001) observes that the heroes’ principle of cannibalism conveys an instinctive quest for equality because they claim that they will not cannibalize people from the bottom of society such as wandering Buddhist monks, Taoist priests or prostitutes. Qi (2011) and Sun (2012) both think that cannibalism is the manifestation of fictional writing as a creative art and materialization of “poetic justice” in the fictional world (Sun 2012, 279). In fact, *Shuihu Zhuan* is so renowned for its cannibalistic motif that some scholars even quote passages from it as hard facts that reflect the social reality towards the turbulent close of the Song Dynasty.² Cannibalism is no doubt an impressive motif which captures in a striking manner a key element of human perception and valuation during certain periods of history (McCarthy 1995, 135).

The motif of cannibalism in *Shuihu Zhuan* is prominently attached to some important characters, such as Li Kui and Zhang Qing. Descriptions of cannibalism mainly appear in Chapter 27, 31, 32, 36, 41 and 43. The title of Chapter 27, 母夜叉孟州道賣人肉 [Mu Yecha on the road to Mengzhou sells human flesh] states openly that human flesh is being sold in the fictional world. In Chapter 27, there are many narrated events and actions depicting cannibalism by different characters. The chapter tells how Wu Song and his guards go into a wine shop to have some wine and meat on the road to Mengzhou Prison. Through Wu Song’s words and eyes, it is gradually revealed that the wine shop involves the selling of human flesh. Although Wu Song does not get killed and eaten, cannibalism as a usual practice among many other people is shown through a series of narrative details. Even more importantly, through the shopkeeper Zhang Qing’s self-introduction, cannibalism, as a means of asserting justice against corrupted officialism, comes to the fore in this chapter. The human flesh shops run by Zhang Qing and his wife Sun Erniang have become symbolic of cannibalism in Chinese literature and culture over history (Li 2001; Sun 2012). Another human flesh shop of theirs is subsequently depicted in Chapter 31.

Chapters 32 and 36 are also associated with the motif of cannibalism, narrating how Song Jiang nearly gets killed and becomes some bandits’ meat, first on Qingfeng Mountain, then on Jieyang Ridge. In these two chapters, cannibalism is depicted in a relatively indirect manner because it turns out that the cannibals and the victims belong to or are associated with the same lower social group or the

Footnote 1 (continued)

it is a motif of idea or consciousness particular to a certain group of people as well as a symbolic image motif in the traditional Chinese culture over history (Wang 2016).

² In the recently published collection of studies *Chugoku Igaishi*, historian Okada Hidehiro quotes passages from *Shuihu Zhuan* as evidence of cannibalism in the Song Dynasty.

“underworld.” They are all the so-called “good fellows” from across the river and lake of *Shuihu Zhuan*, so cannibalism is not practiced between them. In this case, cannibalism functions more like a touchstone of the friendship between the bandits (Hsia 1984, 87).

However, when the motif recurs again in Chapter 41 and 43, graphic description is given to disclose the details of actual cannibalism to the readers. The executor in both scenes is the bandit Li Kui, one of the several most fully-developed characters in *Shuihu Zhuan*. In these two occurrences, especially in the first case, cannibalism accents the theme of revenge against injustice in an impressive way. In Chapter 41, the heroes from Liangshan Mountains capture Huang Wenbing, an official who has been constantly persecuting Song Jiang, the leader of Liangshan heroes. As a way of taking revenge, Li Kui slices the flesh of Huang Wenbing for the heroes to eat and takes out his liver and heart to make a soup. The detailed, graphic descriptions in this chapter expose bloody cannibalism outright before the eyes of the readers.

Besides the above-mentioned chapters, the motif of cannibalism also recurs in many other chapters, albeit in a brief way and usually entwined with more important narrative details. In general, the cannibalism motif is interwoven throughout the story to implicate significant thematic importance for the whole narrative of *Shuihu Zhuan*. Although the substance of a motif resides in the “qualitative meaning” it conveys, it also features “quantitative recurrences” in the text (Daemmerich and Daemmerich 1987, 241). A comprehensive survey finds there are 189 clauses concerning cannibalism in the source text. In order to conduct a comparative study between the target text and source text, the next section will establish a clause-based descriptive model.

A clause-based descriptive model

This study looks into three full English translations of *Shuihu Zhuan*—*All Men Are Brothers* by Pearl S. Buck (hereafter abbreviated as TT1), *Outlaws of the Marsh* (TT2) by Sidney Shapiro and *The Marshes of Mount Liang* (TT3) by John and Alex Dent-Young. Since the quantitative survey is based on 189 clauses concerning the motif of cannibalism, Leuven-Zwart’s (1989) clause-based comparative model and her concept of shift bring about some new insights here.

In the entirety of *Shuihu Zhuan*, cannibalism appears once in a chapter’s title, i.e., Chapter 27. An initial comparison of how the three translators render the title finds diametrical differences between them. For TT1, Pearl S. Buck literally translates “賣人肉” as “to sell human flesh,” with no semantic shift taking place between the ST and TT1 according to Leuven-Zwart’s (1989) transeme model because the transeme “sell human flesh” is basically synonymic with the architranseme “sell the flesh taken from the human body.” Obviously, Pearl S. Buck retains the image of cannibalism in her translation, which will be defined as the strategy of “retention” in this study. On the contrary, in Shapiro’s TT2, the transeme “drugged wine” has nothing to do with the semantic meaning of the flesh taken from human body. No architranseme relationship can be perceived between the two. There is an obvious shift happening, the type of shift that Leuven-Zwart (1989) defines as mutation. As a result of the mutation, the image of cannibalism completely vanishes from the

Table 1 The translations of the title of Chapter 27

Source text	母夜叉孟州道賣人肉 武都頭十字坡遇張青 [Mu Yecha on the road to Mengzhou sells human flesh. Constable Wu at Shizi Ridge meets Zhang Qing.]
TT1	The she-monster of the sea <i>sells human flesh</i> on the road to Meng Chou. Wu Sung meets Chang Ching at The Cross Roads Ridge
TT2	The Witch of Mengzhou Road <i>Sells Drugged Wine</i> . Constable Wu Meets Zhang Qing at Crossroads Rise
TT3	On the Mengzhou Road the Ogress <i>Sells Meat Pies</i> ; Wu Song meets the Gardener at Crossways Rise!

title of TT2 (Table 1). Because such a mutation causes the motif of cannibalism to disappear from the vision of the target readers, it will be defined as “deletion” here. In TT3, the transeme “meat pies” forms a hyponymic relationship with “the flesh taken from the human body” in that there is both conjunction and disjunction between “meat pies” and “the flesh taken from human body.” The shift thus caused is defined as “stylistic modulation or overgeneralization.” (Leuven-Zwart 1989, 157) On account of this stylistic shift, the motif of cannibalism is attenuated, and is therefore defined as the strategy of “attenuation.”

Other than the examples shown above, it is also found that in some cases, the translated text demonstrates a “mutation towards specification” (Leuven-Zwart 1989, 159) where the motif of cannibalism is intensified as shown below.

ST: (我看他肥胖了),倒好烧! [(I see he is fat.) It is good to cook].³

TT1: (I see he is fat and plump and) he looks good enough to fry and *eat!*

In the above instance, the architranseme “It is good to cook” is amplified with a specific cannibalistic action in the transeme by the verb “eat.” The word “eat” is added by the translator to foreshadow why Li Kui engages in calculated cannibalization, and thus obviously accents the motif of cannibalism. In respect of the narrative effects that it brings about to the narrated motif, such mutation towards addition and specification is defined as the strategy of “intensification.”

In general, the above four strategies are identified in the three translators’ dealing with the motif of cannibalism: deletion, retention, attenuation and intensification. In what follows, both a qualitative and quantitative comparison between the target texts will be made based on the descriptive model established above.

A comparative survey

The present strand conducts a comparative study of the 189 clauses in the corresponding chapters of its three full English translations from the target pole. As is shown in Table 2, a quantitative survey of the 189 clauses finds that the three

³ The translations of the cited Chinese examples done by the author are subsequently provided in square brackets.

Table 2 A quantitative survey of clauses describing cannibalism in TTs

Translation strategies	TT1 (Pearl S. Buck)	TT2 (Sidney Shapiro)	TT3 (The Dent-Youngs)
Deletion	0	173	0
Retention	91	7	67
Attenuation	24	9	98
Intensification	74	0	24

translators demonstrate different patterns of consistency in applying the four strategies identified above when dealing with the motif of cannibalism.

Pearl S. Buck's translation clearly presents to the target readership the motif of cannibalism by retaining or even reinforcing the narrative details in her translation. She has not only truthfully rendered all of the 189 clauses concerning cannibalism dispersing in the six scenes but has gone even further to show a close graphic description of cannibalism in certain cases through using the strategy of intensification for a large proportion of clauses. She seems to have magnified the motif of cannibalism by adding an explanation, as can be seen in Example (1):

(1) 張青便引武松到人肉作坊裏；看時，見壁上繃著幾張人皮，梁上吊著五七條人腿。見那兩個公人，一顛一倒，挺著在剝人凳上。 [Zhang Qing led Wu Song into the human flesh work shop. Looking around, they saw that on the walls stretched several human skins and from the beams of the roof hung five or seven human legs. The two guards were already flung down on the human-skinning bench.]—Chapter 27

TT1: Then Chang Ch'ing led Wu Sung into *the room where men were cut to pieces* and on the walls there were men's skins stretched tight and nailed there, and upon the beams of the roof there hung several legs of men. Then they saw the two guards lying rigid and unconscious crosswise to each other upon *the table where men were cut to pieces...*

Example (1) is from Chapter 27, which portrays the setting of Zhang Qing's human-flesh workroom. Compared with the ST, the detailed interpretations of “人肉作坊” [the human flesh workshop] as “the room where men were cut to pieces” and “剝人凳” [the human-skinning bench] as “the table where men were cut to pieces” in TT1 transform two static names of places into areas of dynamic actions of cannibalization, and as such, reveal a graphic picture about how humans are cut and cannibalized. According to Boase-Beier (2006), such changes would surely affect the way the motif of cannibalism is reconstructed by the target readers. In 74 out of 189 clauses, Pearl S. Buck adopts the strategy of intensification. Such a large percentage of expanded descriptions about cannibalism in TT1 may help to aggrandize the motif of cannibalism to a certain extent. Cannibalism is both a touchstone of friendship between Liangshan heroes and a means of asserting justice (Hsia 1984). In this sense, Pearl S. Buck's version speaks highly of the rebellious spirit of Liangshan heroes, which is exactly what she had appreciated most (Buck 1933).

Similar to TT1, the Dent-Youngs' translation also keeps all of the descriptions concerning cannibalism. However, although the Dent-Youngs retain and present the motif of cannibalism to the target readers like Pearl S. Buck does, in some cases, they display a slightly yet significantly different tendency from Pearl S. Buck. Unlike Pearl S. Buck's expansive inclination of exposing the cannibalism of the original story to Western readers in a graphic and vivid way, the Dent-Youngs are disposed to understate cannibalism by adopting the strategy of attenuation in more than half of the clauses (in 98 out of 189 clauses), similar to the way they deal with the title of Chapter 27. For example, in contrast with Pearl S. Buck, the Dent-Youngs understate the images of “人肉作坊” [the human flesh workshop] and “剥人凳” [the human-skinning bench] by drawing on hyponyms or words from more general semantic categories such as “the work room,” “the workshop” and “the bench.” Because such expressions are more general and have no reference to cannibalism in a semantic and stylistic sense, the graphic conveyance of cannibalism that is produced in the heavily value-loaded terms of the source text has become unobtrusive in TT3. On the whole, the Dent-Youngs' translation adopts a reduction strategy in 49.5% of the clauses, and therefore, their translation attenuates the motif of cannibalism to some degree.

Completely different from Pearl S. Buck, Shapiro applies the strategy of deletion in 91.5% of the clauses. He practically removes the motif of cannibalism from the story by deleting most of the important narrative details. Instead, he only keeps some indirect or euphemistic allusions to cannibalism in his translation. In the original story, it is through the speech of Wu Song, a fully-developed character in *Shuihu Zhuan*, that the phenomenon of cannibalization in the fictional world is first introduced to the readers. In Chapter 27, when Wu Song eats and drinks in Sun Erniang's wine shop, he suspects that what it provides is human flesh, so he quotes a message that has been spreading over “river and lake” as shown in Example (2).

(2)武松道：“我從來走江湖上，多聽得人說道：大樹十字坡，客人誰敢那裏過？肥的切做饅頭餡，瘦的卻把去填河！”[Wu Song said, “Ever since I traveled on river and lake, I have often heard people say, ‘what guest dares to pass by the big tree at Shizi Ridge? The fat ones are minced to be fillings of buns and the thin ones are thrown into rivers.’”]—Chapter 27

TT2: Wu Song said, “In my wanderings among the gallant fraternity, I've often heard men say: ‘What traveler dares stop by the big tree at Crossroads Rise? The fat ones become filling for dumplings, the thin ones fill up the stream!’”

In the source text, Wu Song's speech, in particular his mention of the cannibalizing action in Sun Erniang's wine shop over river and lake, foreshadows and suspends the factual reality of cannibalism that would happen later in the story. With the development of the plot, it is gradually uncovered that cannibalism is indeed usually practiced in the wine shop that Wu Song goes into. However, Shapiro only retains Wu Song's mention of cannibalization in his translation, whereas all of the other narrative details which reveal the hard facts of cannibalism are entirely deleted. With all of the concrete narrative details concerning anthropophagy completely deleted by the translator, the only retained narrative detail fails in functioning as foreshadowing and suspending the factual cannibalizing actions that happen

in the fictional world. No further depiction of cannibalistic reality in TT2 invalidates the message that spreads over river and lake about cannibalism and turns it into pure rumor. Thus the motif of cannibalism becomes groundless in Chapter 27. The same is true of Chapter 31 where another wine shop of Sun Erniang and Zhang Qing's is depicted. Through the translator's deletion, Sun Erniang and Zhang Qing's wine shop as a symbolic motif of cannibalism in the source system cease to exist in the translation. In a sense, the translator redirects the translation towards a fictional world that is different from the one presented in the original story.

In his translation, Shapiro also obliterates the outright barbarian cannibal actions of Liangshan heroes, most representatively Li Kui, as can be seen in Example (3):

(3): 只見黑旋風李逵跳起身來，說道：“我與哥哥動手割這廝！我看他肥胖了，倒好燒！”晁蓋道：“說得是。”教：“取把尖刀來，就討盆炭火來，細細地割這廝，燒來下酒與我賢弟消這怨氣！”李逵拿起尖刀，看著黃文炳...便把尖刀先從腿上割起。揀好的，就當面炭火上炙來下酒。割一塊，炙一塊。無片時，割了黃文炳，李逵方把刀割開胸膛，取出心肝，把來與眾好漢做醒酒湯。 [The Black Whirlwind Li Kui leaped up, saying, “I will chop this thing up by hand for my elder brother! I see he is fat. It is good to cook.” Chao Gai said, “It is right.” Then he commanded, “Bring a dagger and prepare a brazier of coals and slice this thing up. Roast his flesh on the coals to eat with wine and thus release my younger brother's anger.” Li Kui took up the dagger. He looked at Huang Wenbing... Then he began to cut the flesh from Huang's leg with his dagger. He chose some good flesh, roasted it on the coals before him and ate it with wine. He cut piece after piece and then roasted it on the coals one by one. When there was no more flesh, Li Kui cut Huang Wenbing. He opened Huang's breast and took out the heart and liver to make soup for the chieftains to drink as refresher after their drunkenness.]—Chapter 41

TT2: Li Kui the Black Whirlwind leaped forward. “I'll slice the villain for you, brother.” He took a sharp knife, looked at Huang... ***He started by carving the prisoner's legs. It wasn't long before he had sliced him to ribbons. Only then did Li Kui cut open Huang's chest, pull out his heart and hold it up for the assembled gallants to see.***

Example (3) tells how the heroes from Liangshan Mountains practice cannibalism on the official Huang Wenbing as a means of taking revenge, which provides the most graphic description of cannibalism in the original story. However, in TT2, the narrative details about the practice of cannibalization by Liangshan heroes manifested through the two main characters, Li Kui's calculated actions and Chao Gai's speech, are entirely deleted as illustrated in Table 3:

It can be seen that the sentences which describe the acts of cannibalization among the Liangshan heroes are all deleted straight away in TT2. The only one sentence that is retained, i.e., “Only then did Li Kui cut open Huang's chest, pull out his heart and hold it up for the assembled gallants to see,” changes the original message concerning cannibalism, i.e., “把來與眾好漢做醒酒湯” [make soup for the chieftains to drink as refresher after their drunkenness] to “hold it up for the assembled gallants to see.” With such deletions and adaptations, the translator prevents the target readers from knowing

Table 3 The deletions of cannibalism in TT2

Characters	ST	TT2
<i>Li Kui</i>		
Speech	我看他肥胖了, [I see he is fat.]	0
	倒好燒! [It is good to cook.]	0
Action	(李逵)揀好的, [He chose some good flesh,]	0
	(李逵)就當面炭火上炙 [(Li Kui)roasted it on the coals before him]	0
	來下酒。 [(and) ate it with wine.]	0
	割一塊, [He cut piece after piece]	0
	炙一塊。 [(and then) roasted it on the coals one by one.]	0
	無片時, [When there was no more flesh,]	0
	割了黃文炳。 [Li Kui cut Huang Wenbing.]	0
	李逵方把刀割開胸膛, [Li Kui opened Huang's breast,]	Li Kui cut open Huang's chest,
	取出心肝, [took out the heart and liver.]	pull out his heart,
	把來與眾好漢做醒酒湯。 [to make soup for the chiefs to drink as refresher after their drunkenness]	(and) hold it up for the assembled gallants to see
<i>Chao Gai</i>		
Speech	取把尖刀來, [Bring a dagger,]	0
	就討盆炭火來, [(and) prepare a brazier of coals,]	0
	細細地割這廝, [(and) slice this thing up.]	0
	燒來下酒... [Roast his flesh on the coals to eat with wine...]	0

the practice of cannibalism executed by the Liangshan heroes. A circumspect comparison between TT2 and the source text as above most tellingly demonstrates how the motif of cannibalism is mediated by the translator and ultimately lost in TT2. Due to the removal of the cannibalistic motif, Li Kui's characteristic as the most rebellious spirit of Liangshan heroes is totally lost, whereas the original story invites the reader to "endorse and admire Li K'uei's calculated cannibalism." (Hsia 1984, 103) Other related motifs in the story, like revenge against enemies and the brotherhood between Liangshan heroes, are also weakened to some degree. More importantly, with respect to the "motif rejuvenation," (Wolpers 1995, 37) the motif of cannibalism, which is featured in the source text and its represented culture, is entirely lost in the process of translating, and its existence fails to continue in another culture, not to mention its rejuvenation across time and space.

Discussion

Since the cultural turn of the late 1980s, translation studies have begun to focus on textual elements beyond the sentence level, or in other words, on the macrostructural level. The introduction of narratological models also results from such considerations, with these models focusing primarily on various factors concerning textual level and macro-structure. As mentioned earlier in this paper,

narratological properties concerning the narrating level, such as voice, point of view, and spatial and temporal features, have been thoroughly investigated in translation studies. However, as Prince contends, it does not seem very wise to draw a dichotomy between “a view of narrative as primarily a verbal mode” and “a view of it as a verbal or nonverbal representational arrangement of events.” (Prince 2014, 28) There is a need to call for an integrated narratological model that is “mindful of both views” and that pays attention to “any number of representation elements” that vary from language to language, including “themes and thematic links.” (ibid.: 27)

As the minimal thematic units in a narrative, motifs, particularly literary motifs, are believed to bear “a dual nature that joins content and structure.” (Wolpers 1995, 46) A comparison of the three translations of *Shuihu Zhuan* demonstrates that translation does affect motif reconstruction, and the alterations that the act of translation has brought about to motifs in turn affect the narrative composition of the target texts. It first exerts an influence on the process of characterization for the concerned characters, particularly in respects of their thematic and symbolic values. Li Kui, the executor of cannibalism discussed above, has always been regarded as the most revolutionary figure in *Shuihu Zhuan* (Hsia 1984; Sun 2012). However, Shapiro’s translation removes an array of facets about his cannibalizing action from the formation of Li Kui’s character, as a result of which his image as the most rebellious and revolutionary hero in the original seems to have become implausible. Second, translation also causes the loss of thematic links and therefore changes the plot development. Effects of foreshadowing and suspense that the author creates in the original text about the cannibalizing practice in Zhangqing and Sun Erniang’s human flesh shop are totally lost in Shapiro’s translation, while in the other two translations, the narrative effects are also varied due to the different translation strategies applied. Because a motif is believed to be endowed with “symbolic significance” associated with a particular person, place, or idea in a story (Wolpers 1995, 39), when it is reconstructed through translation in different ways, its significance for or relationship with a certain fictional element and even the whole fictional plot will definitely vary.

More importantly, the formation of a motif is decided by its recurrence. Recurrence decides not only the appearance of a motif within a single literary text, but also the life of a motif in a tradition or in a culture (Bremond et al. 1995). A process of modification and innovation never ends in literary history of different languages and periods, enriching the range of motifs as well as creating new culture-specific or period-specific motifs (Daemmrich and Daemmrich 1987). In other words, if a motif continues to exist in another language through translation, it opens up possibilities for the rejuvenation of the motif in the literature of a different culture, whereas if the motif is lost in translation, its existence fails to continue in the concerned text as well as in another culture. In the present study, Pearl S. Buck’s translation is good evidence of the former case, while Shapiro is a good example of the latter case. Pearl S. Buck has not only presented the target readership with the motif of cannibalism by retaining or even reinforcing the narrated motif in her translation, but she has gone even further, drawing upon such motifs as cannibalism in *Shuihu Zhuan* to be applied in one of her own literary

writings, *Sons*, which is believed to be “a twentieth-century tribute to early Chinese fiction” with a “proximate background” of *Shuihu Zhuan* (Conn 1996, 139).

A contextualization of the three translations

As Toury points out, “any attempt to offer exhaustive descriptions and viable explanations would necessitate a proper contextualization.” (Toury 2012, 29) In what follows, this paper will attempt to seek some explanations for the above phenomena by situating each translation and its translator in the socio-historical context where the translating activity took place.

Pearl S. Buck translated the work into English in the early twentieth century. The western world of that time witnessed great advancements in many domains of social life after World War I, particularly during the 1920s. Dubbed as The Roaring Twenties, it was a dynamic decade, characterized by economic prosperity, technological enhancement, artistic and cultural dynamism in the whole western world, especially in America (Foer 2014). Translation or adaptation (Ezra Pound being an outstanding example) from Chinese literature at that time was regarded as an instrument to introduce “innovation to the American national culture and to the Western tradition in general.” (Woodsworth 2000, 86) Pearl S. Buck’s importation of the Chinese narrative style and such culture-specific motifs as cannibalism to the target system also fulfilled such a function (Wang 2016). As mentioned earlier, she went even further, drawing upon such motifs as cannibalism from *Shuihu Zhuan* to be applied in her own literary writings. The fact that she entitled her Nobel lecture as *The Chinese Novel* and attributed her success as a novelist to a good understanding of the Chinese novel can well be seen as evidence of her exploration of the Chinese literature as a means to rejuvenate her own writings.

Lefevere (1992, 7) distinguishes between translations that are “inspired by poetological motivation” and those that are “inspired by ideological motivation.” If Pearl S. Buck’s translation falls into the former category, Shapiro’s translation can be deemed as an example of the latter type. Shapiro’s translation activities were nearly all sponsored by the patronages of the source system. During the late 1950s and the 1960s, because there was long-standing prejudice against the newly-founded People’s Republic of China by the Western world, the Chinese Communist government sought to win support and recognition from countries like the United States through various channels (Shapiro 2000). A majority of Chinese governmental and non-governmental organizations started to have contacts with those of the United States (Ni 2012). The translation of *Outlaws of the Marsh* and many other Chinese classics into English were all carried out by officially appointed scholars and translators between the 1960s and the 1970s, a time when China was determined to establish diplomatic relationships with two of the super English-speaking countries: the United States and the United Kingdom. Translation events over that special historic period were more like a kind of cultural production under manipulation of intermediate patronages of both the target system and of the source system. As Wolf argues, when translation becomes a type of cultural production, it always operates “within the political relationships between the countries involved” and “within the domain

of cultural exchange.” (Wolf 2007, 17) Such cultural production schemes of the Chinese government were essentially expected to reshape general Westerners’ perception of the Chinese culture, and more importantly, to dissipate any misunderstanding of the communist PRC (Ni 2012). Ideology always manipulates, and it is effective and “more obvious in totalitarian societies than in open societies.” (Lefevre 1992, 9) As Kinkley observes, Chinese official translations are, in effect, “‘rounded down’ to a least common denominator calculated so as not to offend Communist higher-ups or foreign readers.” (Kinkley 2004, 248) Differing from Pearl S. Buck’s truthful reproduction of the motif of cannibalism, Shapiro’s translation, as an official one, obviously slants towards smoothing over sharp differences across cultures in order to achieve homogeneity and acceptability. To some extent, Shapiro’s translation achieves the purpose of reconstructing a new national image of Chinese culture in the minds of his implied readers. In this way, the cultural image that Shapiro’s translation has created is in accord with both the ideological agenda of its patronage and the expectations of its possible target readers.

John and Alex Dent-Yong undertook the translation of *Shuihu Zhuan* at the turn of the twenty-first century on the tide of an era of globalization. Their translation of *The Marshes of Mount Liang* took place in Hong Kong, a crossroad of cultures between the West and the East. It is a place where all kinds of cultures mix with each other. The early stage of the Dent-Youngs’ translation process (between 1994 and 1997) witnessed the colonial history of Hong Kong, while during the late period (between 1998 and 2002), the sovereignty of Hong Kong was handed over to the PRC. Throughout the whole translation process of the novel, Hong Kong experienced considerable political instability, economic crises, cultural re-orientation and identity reconstruction (Shi et al. 2005). The Dent-Youngs aimed to address a new audience of general readers, so they had to “find meaningful equivalents for many local terms and proverbial expressions” while retaining “some flavor of other times and customs.” (Dent-Youngs 2010, IX) This resulted in a translation that does not adhere to a fixed pattern of strategy-making but always aims to strike a compromise between the adequacy of the source text and the acceptability of the target text.

Conclusion

In the recent decade, translation studies and narratology have both begun to “found their discipline empirically and experimentally.” (Prince 2014, 29) Similar to what descriptive translation studies has always emphasized, narratology also switches to an orientation towards “pragmatics in investigations.” (ibid.) Such a common empirical orientation emphasizes that translation studies should take real cases as the main object of study and specify the “contextual factors” that any translation grapples with or evokes (ibid.: 23). Translation problems arising in real practices of translated narrative, be it at the narrating level or at the narrated level, should all be given equal and due attention in translation studies.

As Prince contends, the combination of translation studies and narratology can help to call translation scholars’ attention to the macrostructural level of the text by focusing on “unusualness factors” that are “activated and deactivated depending on

circumstance.” (Prince 2014, 30) It is such unusualness in translation that “could be attached to every constituent of the narrative model.” (ibid.) As evidence of the translator’s hidden discursive presence, any shifts or alterations on motif reconstruction should, of course, be accounted for and integrated into a “comprehensive narrative inquiry.” (ibid.: 31) In other words, it is also of great necessity to carry out studies on narratological categories at the narrated level or the story level in the line of research into translation and narration. In this respect, translation and motif reconstruction can be a good starting point for further exploration into the “narrated” aspect.

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