

Ludovico Nicola di Giura's Translation of “Non-equivalent Words and Expressions” and “Functional Equivalence” in *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi*: From the Perspective of Cultural Translation Theory

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Abstract The Italian doctor Ludovico Nicola di Giura (1868–1947) translated *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi* (聊齋誌異, literally meaning “Strange Tales Recorded in the Studio Liao”) in Italian. The book *I Racconti Fantastici di Liao* (*Fantastic Tales of Liao*), printed by the publishing company “Arnoldo Mondadori” in 1955, is the first complete Italian version of *Liao Zhai* in the western world, and until now is the only complete version in Italy. The essay applies different theories and typical research methods of translation studies. In particular, it uses the methodological approaches proposed by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, known as “Cultural Translation Theory.” Through the application of these theoretical methods, the essay summarizes the work of *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi* translated by L. N. di Giura and, finally, analyzes the rewriting process of the translator in order to find out the ways in which he uses different methods and translation strategies in dealing with “non-equivalent words and expressions” to achieve an effect of “functional equivalence.” The author hopes that this work could attract more attention of both Italian and Chinese scholars concerning the translation of *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi* made by L. N. di Giura, providing a starting point for further studies and deeper researches.¹

Keywords Ludovico Nicola di Giura; *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi*; functional equivalence; domestication and foreignization

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Introduction

Liao Zhai Zhi Yi (聊齋誌異) is a collection of classical Chinese stories comprising more than four hundred “marvel tales” which serve to implicitly criticise societal issues.

It was written by author Pu Songling (蒲松齡, 1640–1715) in the seventeenth century. The main characters of this book apparently are ghosts, foxes, immortals and demons, but the author focused on the everyday life of commoners. He used the supernatural and the unexplainable to illustrate his ideas of society and government. He criticized the corruption and injustice in society and sympathized with the poor. Besides its far-reaching social significance and vivid images, the simple and straightforward languages are also very impressive. These features combined make such work of high artistic value, no wonder it is considered as “the culmination of the classical tale” (Zeitlin 4).

From the nineteenth century and throughout the whole twentieth century, *Liao Zhai*'s fame spread worldwide, especially since the work was translated into more than twenty different languages such as English, French, Russian, Japanese, Korean, etc., becoming the most translated Chinese classic novel.

In Italy, thanks to the contribution of sinologists over time, “the *Liao Zhai* has been translated into various editions” (D’Arelli 212), and today “it has become a particularly well-known Chinese work.” (Miranda 11) Among these publications, The book *I Racconti Fantastici di Liao* (*Fantastic Tales of Liao*) stands out. It was printed by the publishing company “Arnoldo Mondadori” in 1955. “It is the first complete version of *Liao Zhai* in the western world, and even today is the only complete version in Italy” (Lanciotti 138). The Italian translator is doctor Ludovico Nicola di Giura (1868–1947), and the book has achieved a very great success.

In this paper, I will employ different theoretical and methodological approaches in “transaltion studies,” especially the “Cultural Translation Theory” proposed by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere. Such theory indicates that translation is a

rewriting process, the purpose of which is to achieve a “functional equivalence” between the target and source languages. “The translators should bear in mind that the culture is a critical element, whether translators correctly and completely delivers the cultural factors of source language to the target language is the standard to measure the quality of his translation” (Tan Zaixi 222). Simply speaking, “translators should make great efforts to convey the cultural meanings effectively and achieve the purpose of intercultural communication” (Liao Qiyi 363).

Based on these theoretical theories, the paper intends to carry out an analysis of the Italian version *I Racconti fantastici di Liao* (*Fantastic Tales of Liao*) translated by L. N. di Giura. The analysis focuses on the translation of “non-equivalent words and expressions” in *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi*, for the purpose of assessing how the translator deals with the cultural factors in the source text to achieve the cultural “functional equivalence” through the flexible use of different translating strategies and methods.

L. N. di Giura as a Doctor and Mayor

Ludovico Nicola di Giura was born on February 18, 1868 in an aristocratic family from Chiaromonte, currently in the province of Potenza, in the Basilicata region of southern Italy.

In May 1891, Di Giura graduated in Medicine and Surgery from the University Federico II of Naples; afterwards, he joined the Italian Navy as a doctor.

In the summer of 1900, the Boxer Rebellion broke out in China. The foreign powers in Chinese territory supported the imperial troops of Empress Widow Ci Xi (慈禧, 1835–1908) to suppress the rebellion. The Italian government decided to intervene, sending a military and diplomatic mission. Di Giura took part in the mission as the “on board doctor” of the Italian naval ship Ettore Fieramosca, and reached Tianjin in August 15, 1900. Immediately, he started working as a doctor in Tianjin and Beijing.

His medical skills were so great that his fame spread fast all over China. People from all the country, no matter rich or poor, came to visit him to receive medical assistance. They called him affectionately “Yiguo Daifu” (意国大夫, Italian doctor). Once, after curing the disease of a prince in the imperial family, the Empress Widow Ci Xi named Di Giura as her “court doctor” (Gu Qianxi 15). Thanks to his outstanding medical ability, he was even conferred by the Empress the first class of mandarin honor.

In 1931, at 63 years old, L. N. di Giura decided to return to Italy. He came back to Chiaromonte, where his family owned some lands, and there he served as a mayor until his death in May 9, 1947 (Antonelli 69).

L. N. di Giura's works and his translation of *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi*

During his thirty years in China, Di Giura deepened his knowledge of Chinese language and literature. Under the guidance of an old Chinese tutor, Di Giura studied the Confucian classics and other important Chinese literary works.

He then began to translate some classical works from Chinese to Italian. In 1926, Di Giura published a book titled *Scelte di Massime Confuciane* (*Selection of Sayings of Confucius*), which contained 55 articles picked out from *Lun Yu* (论语 , *Analects of Confucius*), in 1929 he published a book with the title *I Fiori Orientali* (*The Oriental Flowers*); which was a collection of 7 poems selected from the novel *Hong Lou Meng* (红楼梦 , *Dream of the Red Chamber*), etc. In 1931, Di Giura published a partially autobiographic novel, which was titled *Fiore d'Amore* (*Flower of Love*). It narrates the impossible love story between Guido Genta, an Italian naval officer and a young Chinese girl named Fior d'amore, in the background of a China ravaged by wars and political interference by western powers.

However, Di Giura's most significant literary work is the translation of *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi*. His translation was published for the first time in 1926 by publishing company Arnoldo Mondadori with the title *Fiabe Cinesi* (*Chinese Tales*). It was the first Italian version translated directly from the original text in classical Chinese. This book collects the first 99 stories of *Liao Zhai* (the *Qing Ke Ting* edition)¹, from the novel *Kao Cheng Huang* (考城隍 , *The Choice of the Protector of the City*) to *Quan Deng* (犬灯 , *The Dog Light*).

In the Preface of the book *Fiabe Cinesi*, Di Giura wrote:

La mia traduzione dal cinese è rigorosamente letterale, e se il lettore troverà spesso la dizione disadorna, pensi che ho cercato di attenermi il più possibile al testo, nonostante le grandi difficoltà a volte incontrate, e che frasi molto brillanti in lingua cinese perdono nella traduzione. Ho aggiunto qualche nota perché sia più agevole comprendere le allusioni che spesso s'incontrano.

(My translation from Chinese is strictly literal, and if the reader finds always some dictions unadorned, please think that I have tried to stick to the original text as much as possible, despite the great difficulties sometimes encountered,

1 *Qing Ke Ting* edition: Pu Songling finished writing *Liao Zhai* around 1679 and later the novel spread slowly in the form of manuscript in the area near Zichuan (淄川), the author's hometown. In 1766, for the first time this collection was engraved in bronze by Zhao Qigao (趙起杲). The *Qing Ke Ting* edition played a very important role in the spread of *Liao Zhai* and had numerous reprints.

and the fact that these brilliant sentences in the Chinese language still lose their color in translation. I added some notes to make the allusions that are often encountered in the text easier to understand.) (8)

From these statement, we understand that L. N. di Giura tries to respect as much as possible the stylistic and semantic structure of the original text, choosing to elaborate a very faithful translation rather than a fluent one.

After his death, his nephew Giovanni di Giura (1893–1989) reorganized his writings, and entrusted the new publication once again, to the Arnoldo Mondadori publishing company. This new edition dated back to August 1955 and contained 435 stories titled *I Racconti Fantastici di Liao* (*Fantastic Tales of Liao*). According to the most recent research, this book is “the first complete version of *Liao Zhai* in the western world, and until now is the only complete version in Italy” (Bertuccioli 233).

Giovanni di Giura was an excellent diplomat, but he could not speak Chinese. During the revision process, he modified the translation of some phrases to make them sound more fluent in Italian, and corrected some printing errors, while preserving his uncle's translation methods and choices. As it is written on the cover of the book *I Racconti Fantastici di Liao*: “Unica traduzione autorizzata dal cinese di Ludovico Nicola di Giura” (The only authorized translation from Chinese by Ludovico Nicola di Giura). (*I Racconti Fantastici di Liao* 6).

Theoretical Basis: “Cultural Translation Theory” and Application

In the 1970s, the study of translation had no position at all in the newly developing cultural studies, and it was just a small part of applied linguistics, an even smaller part of literary studies.

The term “Translation Studies” was coined in 1972 by the Amsterdam-based American scholar James S. Holmes in his paper *The Name and Nature of Translation Studies* (Holmes 1), which is considered a foundational statement for the discipline.

During the 1980s and 1990s, attention towards the cultural significance of the translation process began to increase, thanks to the work of some scholars who gradually shifted their research approach from a traditional literary perspective to one that was closer to the models of cultural studies. Susan Bassnett (1945–) and André Lefevere (1945–1996) are the representative for this *Cultural Turn* (Agorni 27).

In 1980, Susan Bassnett published a book titled *Translation Studies*. In this

work, she clarifies some specific problems in literary translation such as “poetry and translation,” “translating prose,” etc., and discusses some fundamental themes of translation, for example, “decoding and recoding,” “problems of equivalence,” “untranslatability,” etc. Particularly noteworthy is that Bassnett emphasizes the relationship between language and culture at the beginning of the book:

Language, then, is the heart within the body of culture, and it is the interaction between the two that results in the continuation of life-energy. In the same way that the surgeon, operating on the heart, cannot neglect the body that surrounds it, so the translator treats the text in isolation from the culture at his peril. (14)

Susan Bassnett points out that culture and language are very closely connected, and a translator, while translating, should bear the culture in mind as a critical element.

The association between translation studies and cultural studies is even more evident, in another book written by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere — *Translation, History and Culture*, published in 1990 in London. In the Introduction part: *the Cultural Turn in Translation Studies*, the scholars argue:

“Faithfulness,” then, does not enter into translation in the guise of “equivalence” between words or texts but, if at all, in the guise of an attempt to make the target text function in the target culture the way the source text functioned in the source culture. Translations are therefore not “faithful” on the levels they have traditionally been required to be – to achieve “functional equivalence” a translator may have to substantially adapt the source text. Translators, on the other hand, can be faithful, and they are said to be when they deliver what those who commission their translations want. [...] (8)

According to the translation theories of Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, the aim of translation does not consist in the pursuit of a “textual equivalence” but rather in the achievement of a “functional equivalence” between the target language and the source language. It is a very complex process of rewriting the original text, translators should take into account the source language and target language, their implicit cultural connotations, as well as the balance between cultural transmission and acceptance of the text by the reader.

This essay has been considered as the manifesto of the “Cultural turn” in translation studies. Bassnett and Lefevere tried to show how the study of translation had moved on from a formalist approach and turned instead to the larger issues of

context, history and convention, etc.

In 1992 André Lefevere published a book titled *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*. There, for the first time he proposed the concept of “rewriting”:

Translation is, of course, a rewriting of an original text. All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way.

Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society. Rewritings can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices and the history of translation is the history also of literary innovation, of the shaping power of one culture upon another. But rewriting can also repress innovation, distort and contain, and in an age of ever increasing manipulation of all kinds, the study of the manipulation processes of literature as exemplified by translation can help us towards a greater awareness of the world in which we live. [...] (Lefevere VII)

According to Lefevere, the reasons that push a translator to carry out such “rewriting” belong to two categories: “ideological” (conforming to or rebelling against the dominant ideology) or “poetological” (conforming to or rebelling against the dominant poetics):

If some rewritings are inspired by ideological motivations, or produced under ideological constraints, depending on whether rewriters find themselves in agreement with the dominant ideology of their time or not, other rewritings are inspired by poetological motivations, or produced under poetological constraints. (7)

Lefevere points out that a literary work can be delivered and received by the receiving society only if it is translated or rewritten in accordance with the dominant values of that society. “Since all forms of rewriting are affected by the particular ideological and poetic conceptions of the target society, it is natural that they alter the literary message of the original work” (Munday 200).

The interactions between “poetics,” “ideology” and “translation” lead Lefevere to point out an essential statement:

On every level of the translation process, it can be shown that, if linguistic considerations enter into conflict with considerations of an ideological and/or poetological nature, the latter tend to win out. (Lefevere 39)

Lefevere's approach is original in understanding the multifaceted nature of translation and extending the frontiers of the discipline to contiguous fields of research. "*Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* represents a milestone in the field of contemporary translation studies" (Ulrych IX).

In 1996 Lefevere died of acute leukemia. Despite the sorrow, with great courage Bassnett continued their studies on translation. In 1998 Bassnett published an essay collection titled *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation* in memory of her friend Lefevere. This collection brings together her and Lefevere's studies in the discipline of translation. These essays cover a wide range of fields, and combine theory with practical case studies involving the translation of literary texts. In the chapter *The Translation Turn in Cultural Studies*, Bassnett states:

Both cultural studies and translation studies have tended to move in the direction of the collaborative approach, with the establishment of research teams and groups, and with more international networks and increased communications. What we can see from both cultural studies and translation studies today is that the moment of the isolated academic sitting in an ivory tower is over, and indeed in these multifaceted interdisciplines, isolation is counterproductive. Translation is, after all, dialogic in its very nature, involving as it does more than one voice. The study of translation, like the study of culture, needs a plurality of voices. And, similarly, the study of culture always involves an examination of the processes of encoding and decoding that comprise translation. (138-139)

In this essay Bassnett examines not only the cultural turn that has taken place in Translation Studies over the past decade, but also shows how parallel trends can be discerned in Cultural Studies. Thanks to the work of Bassnett and Lefevere, the relationship between translation and culture has become a pull factor to promote the development of interdisciplinary research between translation studies and cultural studies, and other disciplines involved.

In nearly thirty years, Bassnett and Lefevere have made a great contribution to the translation studies, and have built a bridge between translation and culture. As representatives of the cultural approach in translation studies, they attached great

importance to the role of culture in translation, the social background, the influence that cultural tradition imposed on translation, the subjectivity of translators and the research, shift from linguistic to culture, thus improving the literariness of translated texts. Such method of study expanded the scope of translation studies enormously, opened a new field of study, thus it enhanced a further and more comprehensive development of translation studies.

“Non-equivalent Words and Expressions”

Mona Baker (1953–) is a professor of translation studies in England. In 1992, she published a book titled *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*. In the Chapter “Equivalence at Word Level” she interprets the concept of “non-equivalence at word level”:

Non-equivalence at word level means that the target language has no direct equivalent for a word which occurs in the source text. The type and level of difficulty posed can vary tremendously, depending on the nature of non-equivalence. Different kinds of non-equivalence require different strategies, some very straightforward, others more involved and difficult to handle. [...] I will keep the discussion of types of non-equivalence separate from the discussion of strategies used by professional translators. It is neither possible nor helpful to attempt to relate specific types of non-equivalence to specific strategies. [...] (Baker 19)

Then, professor Baker lists 11 types of “non-equivalence at word level” that can often be encountered in the translation process:

(1) Culture-specific concepts, (2) The source-language concept is not lexicalized in the target language, (3) The source-language word is semantically complex, (4) The source and target languages make different distinctions in meaning, (5) The target language lacks a superordinate, (6) The target language lacks a specific term (hyponym), (7) Differences in physical or interpersonal perspective, (8) Differences in expressive meaning, (9) Differences in form, (10) Differences in frequency and purpose of using specific forms, (11) The use of loan words in the source text. (Baker 21-26)

According to professor Baker, it is unnecessary and impossible to reproduce all aspects of meanings of each non-equivalence word, and translators should strive to

transmit to readers the meaning of those terms whose semantic value is decisive for the understanding of texts.

In dealing with any kind of non-equivalence, it is important first of all to assess its significance and implications in a given context. Not every instance of non-equivalence you encounter is going to be significant. It is neither possible nor desirable to reproduce every aspect of meaning for every word in a source text. We have to try, as much as possible, to convey the meaning of key words which are focal to the understanding and development of a text, but we cannot and should not distract the reader by looking at every word in isolation and attempting to present him or her with a full linguistic account of its meaning. (Baker 26)

In the Chapter “Equivalence above Word Level,” professor Mona Baker also explains the main problems and difficulties that a translator may encounter in the translation process of “idioms and fixed expressions”:

The main problems that idiomatic and fixed expressions pose in translation relate to two main areas: the ability to recognize and interpret an idiom correctly and the difficulties involved in rendering the various aspects of meaning that an idiom or a fixed expression conveys into the target language. (71)

Regarding how to translate “idioms and fixed expressions,” professor Baker states that it is a very complicated question:

The way in which an idiom or a fixed expression can be translated into another language depends on many factors. It is not only a question of whether an idiom with a similar meaning is available in the target language. Other factors include, for example, the significance of the specific lexical items which constitute the idiom, i. e. whether they are manipulated elsewhere in the source text, as well as the appropriateness or inappropriateness of using idiomatic language in a given register in the target language. The acceptability or non-acceptability of using any of the strategies described below will therefore depend on the context in which a given idiom is translated. [...] (71-72)

Since *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi* is a work of classical Chinese literature, in the translation

process it is quite common to come across “non equivalent words and expressions” with strong allegorical meanings. Sometimes even for the Chinese readers these “words and expressions” are difficult to understand, and they are even more difficult for the Italian readers, whose culture background is very far away and very different from that of the Chinese.

Strategies and Methods Applied by Di Giura in Translating “Non-equivalent Words and Expressions” in *Liao Zhai*

Eugene A. Nida (1914–2011) was an American linguist and one of the founders of the modern discipline of translation studies. In 1945, he published an article titled “Linguistics and Ethnology in Translation-Problems” in the Journal *Word* (Journal of the International Linguistic Association). In this article, Nida divides the “problems of equivalence” into five categories:

Words are fundamentally symbols for features of the culture. Accordingly, the cultural situation in both languages must be known in translating, and the words which designate the closest equivalence must be employed. An examination of selected problems in various aspects of culture will make it possible for one to see more clearly the precise relationship of cultural information to the semantic problems encountered in descriptive linguists. Translation-problems, which are essentially problems of equivalence, may be conveniently treated under (1) ecology, (2) material culture, (3) social culture, (4) religious culture, and (5) linguistic culture. (Nida 196)

At this point, I will analyze the translation process of L. N. di Giura in order to assess the ways in which the translator uses different methods and translation strategies in dealing with “non-equivalent words and expressions,” so to achieve an effect of “functional equivalence.”

These “non-equivalent words and expressions” are to be analyzed according to the categories proposed by Eugene Nida. However, in the analysis of the texts there are some words and expressions appearing, that cannot be taken into consideration with regard to any of these five categories, so we decide to add a sixth category: “other types non-equivalent words and expressions.” Here is the final classification this essay proposes:

- (1) ecological “non-equivalent words and expressions”;
- (2) material “non-equivalent words and expressions”;

- (3) social “non-equivalent words and expressions”;
- (4) religious “non-equivalent words and expressions”;
- (5) linguistic “non-equivalent words and expressions”;
- (6) other types “non-equivalent words and expressions.”

The following will analyse these categories accordingly this order.

(1) Ecological “non-equivalent words and expressions”

Ecological situation varies from territory to territory. Words and expressions of this type are usually related to plants, animals, climate, etc.

Example 1:

《促織》：既入宮中，舉天下所貢蝴蝶、螳螂、油利撻、青絲額一切異狀徧試之，無出其右者。(Pu Songling 214)

Una volta entrato a palazzo, fu provato con tutte le specie rare che da ogni parte erano state inviate all'imperatore: non ve n'era alcuna che gli fosse superiore! (*I Racconti Fantastici di Liao* 694)

(Once it entered in the palace, it was tried with all sorts of rare species that had been sent to the emperor from all places: there was none that was superior to it!)

Facing the names of different crickets that are cherished by the emperor, like *hu die* (蝴蝶, butterflies), *tang lang* (螳螂, mantises), etc., the translator Di Giura chooses to omit them, mainly because these names are not crucial for the development of the story.

Besides, some names like *you li ta* (油利撻) e *qing si e* (青絲額) don't have “equivalent words” in Italian language, and they are very difficult to translate.

As far as *you li ta* is concerned, the character *you* 油 indicates “oil,” *li* (利) alludes to “sharp,” while *ta* (撻) means “beat or whip.” Therefore, *you li ta* would indicate a very ferocious species of cricket.

With regard to *qing si e*, the character *e* means “forehead,” *si* refers to “thread,” *qing* is the color Cyan, which is a color between green and blu. Therefore, *qing si e* indicates a kind of cricket that has Cyan threads on its forehead.

These names, even if translated in Italian, would not conform to the language habits of Italian readers. Furthermore, they will feel uncomfortable and transmit a sense of confusion to the translation. Therefore, in order to conform to the dominant poetics in the receiving culture, in this case Di Giura applies the “omission” method and the “domestication” strategy.

(2) Material “non-equivalent words and expressions”

Words and expressions of this type indicate material aspects of daily life, including things such as tools, furniture, musical instruments, etc. Due to different cultures and social customs, every country and nation has its own unique things.

Example 2:

《小翠》： [...], 或髻插雉尾，撥琵琶，丁丁縷縷然，喧笑一室，日以為常。(Pu Songling 288)

[...], poi si mise tra i capelli una coda di fagiano e suonò la mandola le cui corde vibrarono soavemente, e così i due sposi riempirono di chiasso e di risate la camera. Ogni giorno fu la stessa cosa. (*I Racconti Fantastici di Liao* 956-957)

([...], then she put a pheasant tail in her hair and played the mandola whose strings vibrated softly, and so the couple filled the room with noise and laughter. It was the same every day.)

Pipa (琵琶) is a traditional Chinese musical instrument, belonging to the category of plucked instruments. Sometimes called the “Chinese lute,” the instrument has a pear-shaped wooden body with a varying number of frets ranging from twelve to thirty-one. The pipa is one of the most popular Chinese instruments and has been played for almost two thousand years in China.

The mandola is a fretted, stringed musical instrument. The mandola, though now rarer, is an ancestor of the mandolin. It is commonly used in folk music, particularly Italian folk music.

Since the Italian readers are non familiar with the Chinese musical instrument pipa, in order to achieve an effect of “functional equivalence,” Di Giura, when translating, replaces “pipa” with “mandola,” using the “substitution” method and the “domestication” strategy.

(3) Social “non-equivalent words and expressions”

Both China and Italy are two countries with a long history and a splendid civilization. Their cultures are, however, very different from each other: from mythology to the historical events and figures, from the wedding ceremonies to the funeral ones, from the education system to that of officials, etc. In the translation, numerous Chinese words and expressions of this type, don't have correspondents in Italian.

Example 3:

《瑞雲》：餘杭賀生，才名夙著，而家僅中資。素仰瑞雲，固未敢擬同鴛夢， [...]。 (Pu Songling 114)

C'era un certo signor Ho, di Yü-Hang, che aveva fama d'uomo d'ingegno, ma apparteneva a una famiglia della classe media. Da tempo egli pensava a Jué-Yün, ma non aveva mai osato passare la notte con lei. (*I Racconti Fantastici di Liao* 351)

(There was a certain Mr. Ho, from Yü-Hang, who had a reputation as a man of genius, but he belonged to a middle-class family. He had been thinking of Jué-Yün for some time, but he had never dared to spend the night with her.)

The character *yuan* (鴛) refers to *yuanyang* (鴛鴦, Aix galericulata), known as “mandarin duck” in western world. It is a perching duck species native to the East Palearctic. The character *meng* (夢) means “dream,” the expression *yuan meng* (鴛夢) can be literally translated as “dream of mandarin duck.”

In traditional Chinese culture, mandarin ducks are believed to be lifelong couples, unlike other species of ducks. Hence they are regarded as a symbol of conjugal affection and fidelity, and are frequently featured in Chinese art. In this case, *yuan meng* (鴛夢) represents a metaphor which signifies “sexual intercourse between man and woman” (Yu Tianchi & Sun Tonghai 2649).

Di Giura translates this expression as “passare la notte” (spend the night), adopting the “free translation” method and the “domestication” strategy.

In dealing with the “words and expressions” regarding sexuality eroticism, Di Giura chooses to translate them in a very vague way. We don't know the exact year when Di Giura finished the translation of *Liao Zhai*, but it was most likely between 1926 (the year of publication of *Fiabe Cinesi*) and 1947 (the year of his death). During this period, in Italy the general spirit of society was very conservative, and people didn't talk openly about sexuality, as there was also strict censorship in this field. Therefore, we can assume that Di Giura deliberately chose this translation method so to conform to the ideology of Italian society at that time.

(4) Religious “non-equivalent words and expressions”

Words and expressions of this type concern religious objects, sutras, deities, etc. of a certain language community. Religion in Italy is characterized by the predominance of Christianity, and most Christians in Italy adhere to the Catholic Church, whose headquarters are in Vatican City, Rome. In China, however, the most widespread religions are Buddhism and Taoism. Naturally, there are many “non-equivalent words and expressions” in this field.

Example 4:

《成仙》：休止樹下，見羽客往來甚眾。(Pu Songling 29)

Allora sedette sotto un albero per riposarsi e vide andare e venire moltissimi preti taoisti; [...]. (*I Racconti Fantastici di Liao* 69)

(Then he sat down under a tree to rest and saw many Taoist priests coming and going; [...].)

The character *yu* (羽) indicates “feather.” The character *ke* (客) has many different meanings, but in this case it means “people who practice one profession” (another example, *jian ke* (劍客) means “swordsman”). (Zhang Shuangdi & Yin Guoguang, 821)

In general, the Taoists carry on spiritual practice is to ascend to Heaven and become immortal. This process is known as *yu hua* (羽化), which literally means “fly to the sky as if you were endowed with feathers.” For this reason, Taoist priests are called *yu ren* (羽人), *yu shi* (羽士) or *yu ke* (羽客), which can be literally translated to “people with feathers.”

Di Giura understands very well the cultural connotation of this word, and translates it as “Taoist priests,” adopting the “paraphrase” method and “domestication” strategy. If he translated it in a literal way, it would not conform to the poetic of the receiving society, and the Italian readers would hardly understand its meaning.

In general, as regards the translation of idiomatic expressions and rhetorical devices (such as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, etc.), Di Giura frequently deals with them with the “paraphrase” method.

(5) Linguistic “non-equivalent words and expressions”

Since *Liao Zhai* is a classical Chinese work, there are many words and expressions originating from *Four Books and Five Classics*, *Shiji* (*Records of the Grand Historian*), etc., as well as numerous proverbs and idioms, which make the language more complex to translate.

Example 5:

《宮夢弼》：日望宮至，一為紀理，而宮滅跡匿影，去如黃鶴矣。(Pu Songling 188)

[...], e si augurava continuamente che Kung arrivasse, per accomodare le sue cose, ma di lui non si vedeva neanche l'ombra, era veramente scomparso come la gru gialla (1)!

Allusione a una poesia di Ts'ui Hao, nella quale si parla di una gru gialla che,

partita, non fece più ritorno. (*I Racconti Fantastici di Liao* 606)

([...], and he continually hoped that Kung would arrive, to accommodate his things, but you could not even see the shadow of him, he was really disappeared like the yellow crane (1)!

Allusion to a poem written by Ts'ui Hao, in which he mentions a yellow crane which left and never returned.)

The character *huang* (黄) means “yellow,” while *he* (鶴) “crane.” The literal significance of *huang he* (黃鶴) is “yellow crane,” however, in illustrations it is often depicted as a red-crowned crane; snow white in color; black on the wings, cheeks, throat and neck.

In Taoism, such crane is a symbol of longevity and immortality. In art and literature, immortals are often depicted riding on cranes. A mortal who attains immortality is similarly carried off by a crane.

The expression *qu ru huang he* (去如黃鶴) “leave like a yellow crane” refers to the famous poem *Huang He Lou* (黃鶴樓 , Yellow Crane Tower) composed by Cui Hao (崔顥 , 704–754) , a poet of the Tang Dynasty. The first lines of the poem are:

“*Xiren yicheng huanghequ, cidi kongyu huanghelou.*

(昔人已乘黃鶴去，此地空余黃鶴樓)。

Huanghe yiqu bufufan, baiyun qianzai kongyouyou.

(黃鶴一去不復返，白雲千載空悠悠)。 ”

(“Long ago one’s gone riding the yellow crane, all that remained is the Yellow Crane Tower. Once the yellow crane left it will never return, for one thousand years the clouds wandered carelessly.”) (Benedikter 55)

The expression *qu ru huang he* indicates, consequently, “go away and not come back.”

Di Giura translates this expression as “era veramente scomparso come la gru gialla”(he was really disappeared like the yellow crane), adding an explanatory note. In this case, he uses the methods of “literal translation” and “annotation,” while the strategy adopted is “foreignization.”

This translation is very faithful to the literal meaning of the expression, but when reading it the Italian readers will falsely think that the crane is yellow. Without any explanation, the associations put forward by the translation of “yellow crane” are totally different from the original figures. Despite the efforts made by translator,

it is regrettable that some parts of the traditional Chinese culture are still difficult to convey to a foreign audience.

(6) Other types “non-equivalent words and expressions”

In addition to the five categories of words and expressions that Nida mentions in the article “Linguistics and Ethnology in Translation-Problems,” in *Liao Zhai* there are also other types of words and expressions whose equivalent in other languages are very difficult to find. For example, words and expressions relating to units of measurement, time, colors, onomatopoeias, etc.

Example 6:

《阿纖》：北去四五里，村中第一門，有談二泉者，是吾售主。(Pu Songling 112)

A nord di qui, a quattro o cinque “li” (1), alla prima porta del villaggio, c'è un certo T'an Ehr-Ci'üan, nostro acquirente abituale.

Un “li” equivale a 1.894,12 piedi inglesi. (*I Racconti Fantastici di Liao* 345)

(North of here, four or five “li” (1), at the first door of the village, there is a certain T'an Ehr-Ci'üan, our usual buyer.

One “li” equals 1.894,12 English feet.)

In this case, to achieve the effect of “functional equivalence,” Di Giura translates the unit of length li (里) with “li” and adds an explanatory note, adopting the methods of “transliteration” and “annotation” and a strategy of “foreignization.”

Conclusion

As we noticed, in dealing with the “non-equivalent words and expressions” in the process of translation, Di Giura adopts two fundamental strategies—domestication and foreignization.

Domestication means bringing the foreign culture closer to the reader in the target culture, by making the text recognizable and familiar. Foreignization, on the other hand, means taking the readers into the foreign culture, making them see the differences. “These two strategies are not opposite but overlapping to some extent, and they can be applied in translation by reproducing a functional equivalence” (Venuti 19). In such process, different methods can be chosen with regard to different contexts, which include: transliteration, literal translation, annotation, omission, free translation, paraphrase, substitution, contextual amplification, conversion, etc.

The role of the translator L. N. di Giura is fundamental. He acts as a cultural mediator, who knows well the Italian and Chinese cultures and is able to adapt the

original text to the cultural needs of the readers. Facing the literary text, Di Giura identifies the differences between the Chinese (source) and Italian (target) culture, evaluates how to proceed in his work in order to: decide which elements to keep, which to adapt and how to present to the Italian public the peculiar elements of the Chinese culture. Therefore, the translator acts as a bridge between the Chinese and Italian culture.

At the same time, the translator Di Giura cannot remain neutral since he does not operate the translation in a cultural vacuum: consciously or not, the translator manipulates the text. Sometimes it is an involuntary “manipulation,” as it fails to get rid of the historical-cultural heritage and ideologies acquired from the Italian cultural context. Other times, however, it is a voluntary “manipulation.” In addition to linguistic and textual constraints, Di Giura’s activity is also conditioned by a series of historical, social, cultural and ideological constraints.

As an eminent scholar of Chinese literature and culture, L. N. di Giura spent years of work and study in transmitting the centuries-long Chinese culture to the Italian readers of his time. From the comparison between the original Chinese texts and Di Giura’s translations, it is not difficult to grasp the translator’s deep understanding and knowledge of *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi*. Thanks to his efforts and an adequate preparation in the Chinese language and culture, the famous Chinese collection is translated into Italian in a very accurate way.

Although inevitably there are some small errors in the translation, and sometimes semantic connotations related to the original texts are lost during the translation process, Di Giura’s edition still played a decisive role in the diffusion of *Liao Zhai* in Italy. Thanks to outstanding skills, Di Giura succeeds in making the contents of the stories in *Liao Zhai* accessible to the cultural sensitivity of the Italian public. All in all, the translator Di Giura certainly managed to achieve the effect of “functional equivalence” and make the fantastic stories of *Liao Zhai* and many other aspects of Chinese culture known to the Italian readers.

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