

## On Arthur Waley’s Creatively Treasonous Translation of *Xiyouji*: From the Perspective Utilitarian Discourse System

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### Abstract

Literature translation has long been considered as utilitarian. This article, from the perspective of utilitarian discourse system, more specifically, characteristics of forms of discourse of UDS, probes into Arthur Waley’s translation of *Monkey*. Taking the historical background of the translation and the translator’s thoughts as realistic foundation, this article aims to find out how Waley realized “consciously creative treason” successfully in his translation, which leads to the popularity of *Monkey* in the Western world.

**Key words:** Utilitarian discourse system; Creative treason; *Monkey*; Authur Waley

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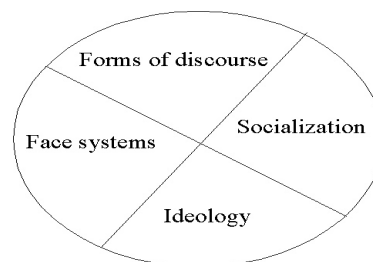
### INTRODUCTION

Utilitarian discourse system (UDS), first proposed by Ron Scollon and Suzanne Wong Scollon in 2008, is composed of four parts, namely, forms of discourse, socialization, ideology and face system (see Figure 1). Each of these four elements mutually influences the others; finally they come to form a rather tight system of communication

or discourse. Different from traditional discourse, here discourse is defined in its broadest sense, “the self-contained system of communication” (Scollon & Scollon, 2008, p. 95). It is because its broadness that the paper uses UDS as its theoretical framework.

Although utilitarian discourse system is a cultural theory, its key concept or its foundation, utilitarianism, is by no means a cultural concept; rather, a ideological and psychological one. Utilitarianism is first established by Jeremy Bentham and then expanded by John Miller. It is founded on two principles, namely, “the psychological principle of the association of ideas” and “the greatest happiness of the greatest number”. Utilitarianism emphasizes (Sheng 1995, p225) freedom of thinking and speaking and regarded them as the essential human spiritual welfare on which other human welfare depends”.

This article believes that it is the emphasizing of freedom that causes the creatively treasonously translation which will be finely elaborately in the next part.



**Figure 1**  
**Discourse System** (Scollon and Scollon, 2008, p. 97)

### 1. LITERATURE TRANSLATION

Tan (2003, p. 143) pointed out that there once happened a discussion about the ultimate goal of art in Russian in nineteenth century. While someone argues that “the ultimate goal of art is to serve the people”, some others insist the old belief that “art is for art’s sake.” Taking

art's close relationship with literature and translation, we can also easily find out that there are two voices concerning the nature of translation. This article finds out some evidences which can prove the utilitarian nature of translation.

1<sup>st</sup>. The translation history shows that happening of literature translation is not only motivated by the need to transmit culture and language, but also, operated by many "control factors".

2<sup>nd</sup>. Modern translation theories, especially the "Descriptive Approaches to Translation", states that "In the process of rewriting (translation), ideology and poetics serve as constraints within the literary system manipulation the activities of the writer; while patronage mostly operates outside of the system (the production and reception of literary text)"(Ma & Miao 2009, p. 166).

3<sup>rd</sup>. Lots of scholars, such as Liu Xiaoli (2006), Chen Xiaoyan (2007) and Lu Guofeng (2007) also demonstrated in their researches that "literature translation is a practice which features itself with utilitarianism".

Since literature translation has in itself obvious utilitarian nature, UDS can be a powerful tool to probe into the literature translation.

The translator of literary work has long bothered by the treason and fidelity. Xie Tianzhen in 1999 categories translators' treason into "consciously treason" and "unconsciously treason" and made it clear that it is the translator's consciously treason worth investigation. Xie, in his book, further divided the consciously treason into four classes, namely, individualized translation, abridged translation, back-translation and adaption translation. In this article, I mainly focused on the prior two kinds of reanslation.

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## 2. *Xiyouji* and *Monkey*

The source of article data are collected from Chinese classic literary work *Xiyouji* and its English translation *Monkey* by Arthur Waley. According to somn book review, I found out that Waley's translation of *Xiyouji* is considered to be "remarkable" and "witty". Before we discussed *Monkey*, I'd like to briefly introduce the translation of *Xiyouji*.

### 2.1 *Xiyouji* and Its Translation

Chinese nation has a long and rich history which boasts of enormous classical literature, among which "Four Great Classical Chinese Novels", namely, *A Dream of Red Mansion*, *Journey to the West (Xiyouji)*, *Outlaws of the Marsh* and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* are of great importance in Chinese literature due to their literary and cultural significance and it has long been the aspiration of generations of Chinese scholars to introduce theses works to the people all over the world so that China and its glorious culture can be better understood. *Journey to the West (Xiyouji)* is a classic Chinese mythological novel

widely favored and welcomed by all ranks of readers at home and abroad on account of its fresh and convoluted plots, distinctive and lifelike characters, profound and incisive ideological content and light-hearted style. It was first translated into English by Timothy Richard in 1913 and the latest full-length translation in English was done by W.J.F. Jenner in 1977-1986.

### 2.2 Arthur David Waley and *Monkey*

Arthur Waley is a great English orientalist and sinologist whose most researches are concerned with translating Chinese Classical poetry into English. He translated *Xiyouji*, the only Chinese Classic novel he ever translated, into English in 1942, titled *Monkey* which in turn, in the western world, is a widely recognized translation version of *Xiyouji*, which can be detected out from some comments and its republishing frequency.

#### 2.2.1 Comments on *Monkey*

In the preface of *Monkey*, there is a critique like this:

The present translation by Arthur Waley, the distinguished scholar, is the first accurate English version, making available to the Western reader a faithful reproduction of the spirit and meaning of the original." (*Monkey*, preface, 1)

Besides, Wikipedia, the famous online free encyclopedia, comments:

Journey to the West (*Xiyouji*) is one of the Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese literatures. It was written by Wu Cheng'en and published in the 1590s during the Ming Dynasty. In English-speaking countries, the tale is also often known simply as *Monkey*. This was one title used for a popular, abridged translation by Arthur Waley." (Wikipedia)

#### 2.2.2 Reprint Condition

The popularity of *Monkey* also can be seen from its reprint condition. It is recorded that *Monkey*, first published in July 1941, has been reprinted for five times during 1941-1945, which is unbelievable even during the peaceful time, not mentioned that with World War II breaking out in 1939 which makes the paper an valuable source. Despite of the war, *Monkey* -- supply falls short of demand.

To sum up, although Waley's translation of *Xiyouji* is only an abridged one, it is popular in the western world. The reason of this, to a large extent, is Waley's treasonous translation of *Xiyouji* which will be elaborately examined from the perspective of Utilitarian Discourse System in the following part.

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## 3. ANTI-RHETORICAL AND *MONKEY*

It is widely acknowledged that literary translation is a kind of creative treason (Xie, 1992). There are many kinds of creative treason, among which this article only deals with individualized translation and abridged translation.

Ron Scollon and Suzanne Wong Scollon (2008, p. 107) stated that there are six characteristics of the utilitarian discourse or there are six preferred discourse forms

within the Utilitarian Discourse, namely, “anti-rhetorical; positivist-empirical; deductive; individualistic; egalitarian and public (institutionally sanctioned)”. They also made it clear that “these are the ideal for discourse by which the system conveys its ideology”, and these six characteristics can be more or less found in the most of the Utilitarian Discourses. In this article, I mainly examine *Monkey* from the aspect of Anti-rhetorical.

The essence of anti-rhetorical characteristic is that Utilitarian Discourse forms should appear to give nothing but information (Scollon & Scollon 2008, 108). Anti-rhetorical, also known as CBS, emphasis that discourses of Utilitarian System should be of clarity, brevity and sincerity, which can be reflected from the Simplified translation of Waley's *Monkey*.

### 3.1 Anti-rhetorical and Book Title

As we can see, the original title of Wu Cheng'en's book is *Xiyouji* which means Journey to the west which, in turn, is the title of Yu Guofan's (1980) translation and W.J.F. Jenner's (1986) translation. Arthur Waley deliberately simplifies it into *Monkey* which, on one hand, shortens the distance between the source text and the oriented reader, on the other hand, makes it finely clear to us the main idea and the main character of the book.

### 3.2 Anti-rhetorical and Book Organization

The original text comprises 100 chapters, which can be divided into three very unequal parts according to Hu Shi (1923). The first, which includes chapters 1–7, is really a self-contained introduction to the main story. It deals entirely with the earlier exploits of Sūn Wūkōng, a monkey born from a stone nourished by the Five Elements. Only following this introductory story is the nominal main character, Xuánzàng, introduced. Chapters 8–12 provide his early biography and the background to his great journey. The third and longest section of the work is chapters 13–100, an episodic adventure story in which Xuánzàng sets out to bring back Buddhist scriptures from Vulture Peak in India, but encounters various evils along the way.

However, Waley's translation *Monkey* only remains the all chapters in the first and second parts and cuts off a lot the third part, 30 chapters in total. In the third part, Waley maintained chapter 13-15, 19, 22, 37-39, 44-49 and 98-100. In Medio-translatology, Xie (1999, pp. 154-155) stipulates that “The author's purposes to keep pace with the target language (TL) countries, to cater to the taste of TL readers, to facilitate communication, to consider moral and political factors, etc, can result in abridgement”. All these factors can be found out in Waley's translation.

1<sup>st</sup>. To keep pace with the TL countries. Waley (1842, 7) mentioned in his book that “The original book is indeed of immense length, and is usually read in abridged forms”. In order to keep pace of the translating habit of other translators, Waley also chose the abridgement translation.

2<sup>nd</sup>. To Cater to the taste of the TL readers. As I

mentioned before, the third parts of the source text has been greatly abridged. To be more precise, there are 81 evils along Xuánzàng's way to India, while Waley only retains three evils which, according to Zhang Hong (1992), have been well-chosen to cater for the interest of the TL readers. These chapters describing the evils are: chapter 37-39, chapter 44-46 and chapter 47-49. The main idea of the chapter 37-39 can be gleaned from the chapter titles: The royal ghosts visits the Tang priest at night, Wukong's magic transformation lures the boy; Questioning his mother, the boy sorts right from wrong, when Mental and Wood join in the mystery, truth and falsehood are clear. This evil encounter is Chinese version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which would be familiar to western readers. The main idea of chapter 44-46 is Sūn Wūkōng eliminates evils which is a vividly portrait of the book title – Monkey. Chapter 47-49 tell us the experience of these four masters in Tongtian River, or “the river that leads to the heaven”, which closely connects the chapter 98-100 where the four people finally reached Xitian (Heaven).

3<sup>rd</sup>. To consider moral and political factors. The appendix chapter describes Xuánzàng's life experience, in which Xuánzàng's mother, Wen Jiao, after rescues Xuánzàng's father, drawn herself in the end because she has lost lose her chastity. While in Waley's translation, he omitted this part because in the western world, a woman like Wen Jiao will actually be widely prized by her braveness.

From the above three points, we can see that by abridged translation, Waley both retains the main story plot and makes the immense original text brief and closely cohered.

### 3.3 Anti-rhetorical and Verse

*Xiyouji* is a typical serial novel (with a gist-telling couplet for each chapter) which features combination of verse and prose. Although Waley is famous for his translation of classical Chinese poetry, he omitted the most of verses. According to my statistics, there are 249 pieces of verses in the 30 chapters from which Waley translated into English, while Waley's translated text only retains 12 of them. Waley (1942) said that:

...I have for the most part adopted the opposite principle, omitting many episodes, but translating those that are retained almost in full, leaving out, however, most of the incidental passages in verse, which goes very badly into English. (*Monkey*, preface, 1)

Waley's abridged translation of verse makes the story plots more condense and increase the text's readability.

### 3.4 Anti-rhetorical and Culture-loaded Words

Culture-loaded words are a unique way to show nationality's psychology, nation's ideology and culture. However, in Waley's translation, he omitted most of these culture-loaded words. China is a nation who worships “temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous”. All of these characters have been fully

showed in Wu Cheng'en's original text. The followings are some examples.

• Example 1

**Source Text:** Long wang huang le dao: "shang xian, qie mo dong shou! qie mo dong shou! dai wo kan she di chu ke you, dang song yi fu." Wu kong dao: "ling di he zai?" (Wu Cheng'en 2006, 16)

**Literal Meaning:** Dragon king upset said: "respect immortal, do not move hand! Do not move hand! Wait me see my humble younger brothers have, should give a set." Wu Kong said: "your honorable younger brothers where are?"

**Translated Text:** 'Steady, steady, Great Immortal,' said the Dragon King, 'Don't strike! Just let me find out whether my brothers haven't got anything that you could have.' 'Where do they live?' asked Monkey. (Authur Waley, 1942: 36)

• Example 2

**Source Text:** hui fu duo duo zhi yi ling tang lao fu ren, ling jin fu ren, pin seng zai fu duo rao, rong hui shi chong xi. (Wu Cheng'en 2006: 85)

**Literal Meaning:** return your home very much said to your respectful mother, your respectful wife, I, a poor monk in your home bother, allow return time express my thank.

**Translated Text:** Please also apologize to your mother and wife for all the trouble I gave, and tell them I will thank them in person on my return. (Authur Waley, 1942: 128)

• Example 3

**Source Text:** ba jie shang qian che zhu lao gao dao: "ye, qing wo chuo jin chu lai bai jian gong gong, bo bo, ru he?"(Wu Chengen 2006: 119)

**Literal Meaning:** ba jie come forward garb senior Gao said: "father, invite my humble wife come out to meet her father in law and brother in law."

**Translated Text:** 'Where is my wife?' said Pigsy to Mr. Kao. 'I should like her to pay her respect to my Father and Brother in the Law.' (Authur Waley, 1942: 128)

As we can seen from the above examples, although Sun Wukong and Zhu Bajie are some sort of reckless person as Wu Cheng'en depicted in his book, they also have the remarkable property of "temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous" which is shared by the Chinese nation and is a flection of national psychology and ideology. However, in Authur Waley's translation, he has leave out most of these culture-loaded words, which is a result of the key principle of Utilitarian System – The free and equal individual is the basis of society (Scollon & Scollon 2008, 104).

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## CONCLUSION

To sum up, in his translation of *Xiyouji*, Waley heavily adopted the creatively treasonous translation which makes

his translation popular in the western country and also, makes *Xiyouji* a famous Chinese novel. The diversity of cultures, people's seated need to understand others and many other factors, in the past centuries, made translation especially necessary. It as has been widely admitted that translation is not only an activity concerning language; rather, it is an activity which features itself with culture. Utilitarian discourse system, a long-standing theory in culture aspect, can be a brand new way to take to examine the translation.

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