Intralingual translation from literary Chinese to literary Chinese in late Ming/early Qing vernacular stories

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Abstract

Textual comparisons between late Ming/early Qing *huaben* story *xiaoshuo* and their source texts show a wide range of rewriting technical means implemented by the authors/editors in order to produce vernacular versions of narratives primarily written in classical language. These rewriting techniques imply indexical and denotational properties. While denotational properties pertain to textual micro-strategies involving a variety of textual transformation possibilities (intralingual translation, amplification, verbatim/quasi-verbatim quotation, relocation, etc.), changes made at an indexical level include narrative point of view (1st, 3rd person narration, dialogue, etc.) and linguistic characteristics: *wenyanwen* (literary Chinese), *tongsu* (vernacular, either standard or dialectal), and mixed language. This paper will focus on the latter category: the linguistic characteristics of the vernacular stories in relation with their source texts. Within this framework it will address this particular question: how is it that we so often find, in stories referred to as "vernacular" by the very admission of their authors/publishers (as expressed, for example, in their prefaces), translations, amplifications, quotations, from literary Chinese to literary Chinese? In the repertoire of the vernacular short story, we can find countless examples of occurrences in which the classical source is translated into literary language-and this in a manner obviously distinct from simple quotation. Why this constant effort on the part of authors/editors to adopt this way of (re)writing-aside from classical to vernacular? What can we infer from this practice? Can we define recurrent situations in which it is implemented, particular objectives it would fulfil? If intralingual translation is widely recognized as involving, among its core characteristics, the updating of a temporally distant state of a given language into a more "modern" version of the same (Zethsen 2009), what would be the role of intralingual translation, which would not imply a shift between these different states? What additional meanings are being sought if the need to translate remains confined to the same linguistic register? (Lefevere 1992) And after all does this kind of translation really make us stay in the same linguistic register, to begin with? Furthermore, what would distinguish such an intralingual translation strategy from a mere commentary? Through a series of localized examples drawn from short story collections by different authors/editors, we shall examine in detail how exactly these particular cases of intralingual translation occur, and make hypotheses about the effects they were intended to achieve. We believe investigation in this field not only may change the way we apprehend rewriting processes adopted by premodern authors/editors when relying on prior sources, but may have an impact on the very definition of the vernacular in the context of the

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classical culture of the time. In this definition, vernacular may not necessarily be determined by the use of vernacular language *per se*, but by other modalities that aim at opening up the meaning of the text. Our demonstration will rely on a systematic methodology we have developed in order to analyze, both qualitatively and statistically, the shift between source text and target text in the writing of late Ming/early Qing *huaben* stories. Rainier Lanselle is Directeur d'études (Professeur) at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (EPHE-PSL) in Paris, France. Its main field of research focuses on Yuan to mid-Qing fiction, short story, theater, traditional literary criticism and commentaries, issues related to the usages of vernacular, and the status of subjectivity. He is also a translator of premodern fiction, theater, and poetry.