

Fourteenth St. Jerome Translation Contest

Sponsored by the Conference Management Service of the United Nations Office at Vienna

English translation provided below

Remarks by the judges – Mr. Xiaoxin Han and Mr. Changshuan Li

作为本届圣杰罗姆翻译竞赛的中文评委，我们在进行评阅过程中认清了如下两件重要的事情：其中一件使我们作为专业翻译的信心得到了大幅增强；另一件则给了我们有益的提醒，帮助我们在专业上变得更加睿智和有力。

当我们一份接一份地通读评阅所有 42 篇参赛译作时，我们逐步意识到，与今年选定的英语原文的作者相比，我们作为翻译是多么幸运。一旦我们拿到要翻译的选定文章，它就完全处于我们的掌控之下——我们可以它为镜，以它为鉴，在我们的译文里予以深入探讨、多方理解和仔细欣赏，而它只能安静地躺在我们的书桌上，任凭处置，无法再被召回或作出任何更改。如果我们对某一翻译版本不满意，我们就换另一个版本；如果我们对某一翻译方法或翻译风格不满意，我们就改变方法和风格。魔鬼不但藏在在细节中，而且也体现在对译文字斟句酌的精雕细琢。我们有足够的精力和时间去改进和完善我们的译文，直到最终得到一个令我们完全满意、自豪不已的成品。

我们自认为处于有利地位的第二个原因是，我们的专业超越了不同的文化、传统和价值观界限，使我们得以从不同来源汲取所需养分。更重要的是，由于这一切最终都会归结到目标语言，即我们自己的语言，这就要求我们尽量找到空间和余地，根据我们自己的文化标识和认知对原文进行再造、重塑和调整适应。例如，作者一进入哈罗德百货，就被他所看到和感受到的一幕幕场景和人物画面吓了一跳，因此决定立即转往餐饮区，而不是按计划进入陈列各种精品的售货大厅——显然他知道自己买不起那里的一干豪华奢侈品。但从另一方面看，在我们评委眼里，作者实际上非常幸运，因为要是他看到的和感受到的是我们中国翻译笔下的场景和画面，好家伙，保证他当场就会晕倒在地，立马带着全家撤离哈罗德！要问这里的原因是什么？这么跟您说吧，就这类场面和人物画面而言，中文的夸张描述和火热表述方式，其强度至少可以是英文原文的好几倍！就拿那位名媛卡戴珊来说吧，您给出的是一个词，我们可以回馈给您一大段，保您欢天喜地、热热闹闹的，还一点磕巴儿都不打！

说到上面提及的有益提醒，我们意识到我们在翻译时不应当只注意那些明显而容易的目标，而忽略真正重要的东西。如果需要举出一个合适的例子作说明，那就让我们回放一下作者在哈罗德百货的探险吧。让我们再次跟随他去儿童服装区——他会请我们走在铺着地毯的地板上，然后重复评论说这些地毯“比皇亲国戚的家装更富丽、更厚实”。就在此时，我们大多数翻译都会一下子扑到那些惯常嫌疑人身上——那些倒霉的“皇亲国戚”，把他们摁倒在地，确信我们已经捕获了真正的“猎物”，甚至开始争论到底谁才是“皇亲国戚”——是女王陛下家的未成年子女还是她的七大姑八大姨。殊不知，皇亲国戚在这里只是是代人受过。一直站在旁边暗自发笑的作者，用他典型的爱尔兰幽默和他那非典型的英文双关语——“富丽奢华其表，头脑拙笨其里”——拐弯抹角地告诉我们：他眼中和心中真正要嘲弄的目标实际上正是那些生活里不差钱、但脑子迟钝的所谓上流阶层！

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我们在这里得到的经验教训是，无论是在我们的翻译工作中，还是在我们日常生活中，真相和真理并非如我们所愿总能与我们近在咫尺，但只要我们时常擦拭和历练我们的双眼、一直不懈地保持和强化我们的责任心和专业能力，我们就能最终把两者之间的距离大大缩短，甚至真正做到触手可及。

Remarks by the judges at the awards ceremony: Chinese segment

16 May 2019

(English version)

As the Chinese judges for this year's competition, Professor Li and I realized two important things in the process of performing our assessment: one has greatly boosted our confidence as translators, and the other has served as a useful reminder and helped us become wiser and stronger in our professional work.

While reading through and evaluating each of the 42 entries, we came to realize how lucky we translators are – at least, in comparison with the author of the original English text selected for this year's contest. Once we receive a text for translation, it is all ours from that point on. We can proceed however we wish, using it as both a mirror and a source of guidance while it is lying there on our desk, static, unchangeable and irrevocable – waiting to be explored, understood and appreciated. If we are not happy with one version of our translation, we change to another; if we are not happy with one approach or style in our translation, we simply adopt a different one. The devil lies not just in the details but also in the obsessive refining and relentless polishing of the text, phrase by phrase and word by word. We have all the energy and patience we need to improve it and perfect it, until eventually we achieve a totally satisfactory end product that we are happy with and proud of.

A second reason we think we are in a fortunate position as translators is that our profession transcends different cultures, traditions and values, allowing us to draw on a broad range of sources that stretch across borders and boundaries. What is more, since it all boils down to the target language, we need to find the room to recreate, reshape and adapt the source text when rendering it into our own language in line with our own cultural signposts and mindset. The playing field in this respect is vast indeed and depends heavily on the imagination and skills of the translator.

Here, for instance, the author was quite shocked upon entering Harrods – at what he was seeing and feeling. He therefore decided to head immediately for the food court, instead of walking

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through the halls where all the luxurious goodies were on display, instinctively aware he could afford none of them.

In the eyes of the Chinese judges, however, the author is very lucky. Had he seen and felt what the Chinese translators described for him, all the scenes and the atmosphere, etc. – and, of course, how smart and beautiful the men and women looked and carried themselves – he would have simply fainted right there or, instead, turned around and gone straight back home. Why is that? you may ask. Well, it's because the descriptions given in Chinese of some of the scenes and of the author were often significantly more exaggerated or detailed than in the original English story – but fully in line with what a typical Chinese reader would expect. A single word – “Kardashians”, for instance – was sometimes rendered, without any hesitation, by an entire paragraph full of colourful, imaginative descriptions and the desired atmosphere!

As to the useful reminder referred to above, we were again made aware that a translator's attention should not focus exclusively on obvious, easy targets to the point of missing other, crucial aspects of the text. To cite an example here, let's go back to the author's adventure at Harrods and follow him again to the children's clothing section. He would again take us along floors covered with carpets that were, in his words, “richer and thicker than the minor royals”. At this critical juncture, most of the translators leapt upon the easy, usual suspects – the “minor royals” – and wrestled them to the ground, thinking for sure they had bagged their trophy ... and they even started to “argue” about who the minor royals actually were. Was the author talking about underage children? Was the reference to the Queen's distant relatives? Who, though, would have imagined that the extended royal family would be the scapegoat here?

In reality, what the author, who was chuckling to himself out on the sidewalk all this time, wanted to tell us in a very subtle way – with his typical Irish humour and a pair of atypical English puns: “richer and thicker” – was that the real targets of his disdain were actually the so-called “upper class” ... those who are “wealthy in life but poor in mind”.

The lesson we have learned here is that the truth and the correct answers in our professional work – and in life generally – are never as close at hand as one might wish. But the distance in between can be covered by eyes kept sharp through regular “cleaning” as well as by an enhanced sense of responsibility and strengthened professional skills.