



## A Tentative Study of the Chinese Translation of *Tender is the Night Under the Guidance of Catford's Translation Shift Theory*

ZHANG Yue<sup>[a]</sup>; CHAI Su<sup>[b],\*</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>M. A. Student, School of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Lanzhou University, Gansu, China.

<sup>[b]</sup>Associate Professor, School of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Lanzhou University, Gansu, China.

\*Corresponding author.

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### Abstract

*Tender Is the Night*, as one of the most well-known works of F. Scott Fitzgerald, to some extent, is a manifestation of his own life and the whole society. J. C. Catford's Translation Shift Theory is very practical and under its guidance, this paper is produced for an assessment of Chinese edition of this novel by Xinmei Tang from two general aspects, namely level shifts and category shifts. This research finds that Tang's translation is faithful not only from the lexical and grammatical level but also from syntactic level. However, his translation is not perfect and still needs to be improved.

**Key words:** *Tender is the Night*; Translation Shift Theory; Level shifts; Category shifts

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### INTRODUCTION

Since the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement in 1919, Chinese translation history has witnessed its unprecedented prosperity with a vast number of foreign literary works introduced into China. With the development of China's education and

ever-growing stores of knowledge of public, the demand for foreign literature has always been increasing. During this period, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night* was translated and thanks to the great efforts of translators, it was well received by natives. Although another Chinese edition of this novel has been published, the first one is chosen as the study object on account of its pioneering contributions.

Concerning the significance of translation in cross-cultural communication, we need to analyze and assess the quality of translations. It is hopeful that this research is going to influence the public opinions on Xinmei Tang's translation and give them a hint of how to judge a translation is good or bad from different perspectives. In a word, the present author finds Tang's translation is acceptable overall from the respects of level shifts and category shifts, but some kinds of shifts are still required to ensure his translation a better one. Furthermore, mistranslations and redundancy also exist in this rendition.

### 1. TENDER IS THE NIGHT AND ITS WRITER

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald, known professionally as F. Scott Fitzgerald, was an American novelist writer and short story writer. Despite the limited success in his lifetime, he is now widely considered as one of the greatest American writers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a member of the "Lost Generation" of the 1920s, Fitzgerald illustrated the flamboyance and excess of the Jazz Age of America. Among his publications, *Tender is the Night*, as a semi-autobiography and like *the Great Gatsby*, described the prosperity and decline of the Age. Since the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement of China in 1919, a massive number of translations for foreign literature have been issued to broaden Chinese people's horizons and boost communications between China and other countries. As a response to this trend, two Chinese editions of this

book have been published. The first one is translated by a renowned Chinese translator Xinmei Tang in 2010 while the other one came out in the next year by Wan Zhu and Zun Ye. Both editions have gained fames in the Chinese readers' market for their great contributions. After studying the two translations, the present author deems Tang's translation may be plagiarized by Zhu and Ye because of a high degree of similarity between the two books. Besides, owing to its pioneering achievements and better performances in accordance with Catford's Translation Shift Theory, only the first one is chosen as the object of this research. In this case, the study of this novel and its Chinese translation is of remarkable significance.

## 2. J. C. CATFORD'S TRANSLATION SHIFT THEORY

John Cunnison Catford, born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1917, was a Scottish linguist and phonetician of worldwide renown. He was the founder of the School of Applied Linguistics at the University of Edinburgh. Catford was always active in the field of linguistics by publishing numerous articles, giving lectures and presentations around the globe. His most influential contributions to the translation theory is the establishment of Translation Shift Theory.

Catford stated his main ideas about translation in the book named *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (1965), in which the term "translation shifts" originates. In this book, two kinds of shift are defined—level shifts and category shifts. (Catford, 1965, p.73) Level shifts mean an expression in the source language (SL) at one linguistic level is transformed into its equivalence in the target language (TL) at a different level. It includes grammatical shifts and lexical shifts. As for category shifts, four types are classified: structural shifts, class shifts, unit shifts or rank shifts and intra-system shifts. (Catford, 1965, p.76) Structural shifts are said by Catford to be the most common one and frequently occur in grammatical structure. For example, "noun + attributive clause" structures in English can be transformed into "modifier + noun" structures in Chinese. Class shifts describe the shift of part of speech. An example can be an English adjective converted into a Chinese adverb. Unit shifts are changes of rank-- a unit at one rank in the SL is transformed into a unit at another rank in the TL. According to Catford's theory, language can be ranked as sentence, clause, group, word and morpheme. A clause in English may become a Chinese phrase in translation. Intra-system shifts are the shifts taking place when the SL and the TL possess almost corresponding systems but a selection of a non-corresponding term in the TL system is required. Since Chinese and English belong to different language systems, this kind of shifts won't appear in the translation of the two languages, so it will not be analyzed in this paper.

Translation is an operation performed on languages. In other words, it is a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another. (Catford, 1965, p.1) Any theory of translation must draw upon a general linguistic theory. J. C. Catford's Translation Shift Theory is quite practical in guiding translation process. Under the instruction of this theory, the translations of this novel can be dissected in a detailed way concerning different language levels. For English major students, it is necessary to study this important theory by combining it with specific translated books because in this way some mistakes occurring to their own translations may be avoided. And for those who are fond of foreign literature, they need to keep their eyes open and learn to distinguish good translations from bad ones.

## 3. TRANSLATION SHIFT THEORY AS A GUIDANCE IN THE TRANSLATION OF *TENDER IS THE NIGHT*

The Translation Shift Theory puts its emphasis on information transmission, translation correspondence and semantic equivalence. Based on Catford's theory, both linguistically and culturally, a full equivalence of the SL to the TL is of little possibility due to the remarkable differences between two languages, though these differences do not normally preclude the existence of translation equivalents. *Tender is the Night*, as a novel, is featured by sentences of uneven lengths and rhetorical devices, which cannot be translated literally because absurdness may be produced. In order to make sure that TL readers have the same feelings and responses with those of the SL readers, translation shifts are comprehensively required in different levels. In this paper, Catford's Translation Shift Theory is utilized as a guidance to describe whether a translation is acceptable from the perspective of level shifts and category shifts respectively.

### 3.1 An Analysis of Translation from the Perspective of Level Shifts

Level shifts mean an expression in the SL written in the grammatical way is transformed into its equivalence at the linguistic level. Languages can be parsed from different levels, such as phonology, graphology, grammar and lexis. As it is difficult to realize shifts between two languages at phonological and graphological level, these two aspects will not be mentioned in this paper.

#### 3.1.1 At Grammatical Level

Shifts from grammar to lexis are quite frequent in English-Chinese translation. English verbs have various tenses which are totally absent in Chinese. The subjunctive mood is not uncommon to make assumptions. Main clause structures of the subjunctive mood can be "should/would/could + do something" or "should/would/could + have

done something”, and structures of subordinate clauses can be “the past tense of a verb + other element”, “should + do something” or “had + done something”. Interestingly, Chinese depends on different words or phrases to realize the same effect, like “假如”, “要不是”, “要是……就好了”. Here is an example.

Example 1:

But this afternoon he would have been glad had she rattled on in staccato for a while and given him glimpses of her thoughts. (Chapter 15 of Book 2, p.238)

可是这天下午要是她喋喋不休讲上一阵子，能让他稍微知道一下她在想些什么，他反而会高兴。(Tang, 2010, p.237)

The subjunctive mood structure “He would have been ... had she ...” is applied to reveal Dick’s thoughts that if his wife could tell him what she was thinking about, he would be released. “Had she...” is an omission and inversion, which shows Dick hoped Nicole could rattle on “in staccato for a while” but it didn’t really happen. His depression and uneasiness were fairly obvious. Tang’s translations of “had”-- “要是” and “would have been”--“反而” are vivid enough to display the figure’s mental activity.

### 3.1.2 At Lexical Level

Lexically, English nouns feature singular and plural forms in demonstrating the number of things. Chinese is characterized by a host of measure words, such as “一匹” “一口” “一群” “一张” or some specific words, like “们” referring to more than one person. Consequently, English nouns or phrases in plural form cannot find its equivalence in the same form in Chinese. Directed by the Translation Shift Theory, the translator is supposed to perform shifts in line with semantics.

Example 2:

... Rosemary suddenly discovered herself to be an insincere little person, living all in the upper registers of her throat and wishing the director would come. (Chapter 17 of Book 1, p.92)

露丝玛利忽然发现自己是个不真诚的小人物，只是靠着一张甜甜的嘴，希望导演能够来。(Tang, 2010: 89)

The word “register” literally means the timbre characteristic of a certain manner of voice production. Common sense has it that one person’s voices are fluctuating within the range from lower to higher voices when he or she is speaking. “The upper registers of her throat” tells readers the higher parts of voice in Rosemary’s speaking. To convert this phrase word-for-word, we can get: “她嗓音中较高的那些音域”. It is odd in Chinese and difficult to understand. Instead, Tang made a shift by translating it into a noun in single form “一张甜甜的嘴” to concretize the actual meaning of the SL. After transformation, the sentence turns to be more concise and clearer, and more in line with the characteristics of Chinese.

## 3.2 An Analysis of Translation from the Perspective of Category Shifts

In this part, three types of shifts will be analyzed in the following order: structural shifts, class shifts and unit shifts.

### 3.2.1 Structure-Shifts

Owing to the distinct grammatical structures of English and Chinese, it is inevitable to reposition the sentence elements to bring a more readable text. The most common shifts incorporate conversions between the prepositive attributive and the postpositive attributive, the active voice and the passive voice, the animate subject and the inanimate subject, the positive and negative structures, and topic prominence and subject prominence.

#### 3.2.1.1 Shifts Between the Prepositive Attributive and the Postpositive Attributive

Example 3:

Dick was straightening up; he had examined the gloves worn that day and thrown them into a pile of soiled gloves in a corner of a trunk. (Chapter 25 of Book 1, p.140)

迪克正在整理；他看了看当天戴过的手套，便把它们朝衣箱角落里的一堆脏手套那边一扔。(Tang, 2010, p.136)

Example 4:

Soon after dinner Hosain left Mary and the Divers to themselves, but the old unity was split—between them lay the restless social fields that Mary was about to conquer. (Chapter 4 of Book 3, p.328)

餐后不久胡珊便离开，让玛利和戴弗夫妇谈天，可是往日的那种团结已经破裂了——在他们之间，有一处玛利迫不及待地将去征服新的社交天地。(Tang, 2010, p.331)

In English, the phrases and clauses playing the role of modifiers are usually located at the back of nouns, while most of the modifiers in the Chinese marked by the character “的” are in front of nouns. In example 3, “worn that day” modifying “the gloves” aims to denote that the gloves had been worn before. It is so short after being translated into Chinese that it’d better to transform it into a postpositive attributive because, on the one hand, the key information can be captured by the readership; on the other hand, the fluence and appropriateness are assured in this way. In example 4, The attributive clause “Mary was about to conquer” is also a short one which can be appropriately put in front of the antecedent when translated. Nevertheless, “玛利迫不及待地即将去征服” is not concise. Guided by Catford’s shift theory, the author made some modification. The ameliorated rendered version is: “饭后不久胡珊便离开了，只留下玛利和戴弗夫妇，可是往日的团结已经出现裂隙——他们之间横亘着一些玛利即将征服的无法预测的事情”。

#### 3.2.1.2 Shifts Between the Active Voice and the Passive Voice

Example 5:

The sparkle of the mica was dulled by the baked ground..... (Chapter 11 of Book 2, p.208)

地上被阳光晒得又热又耀眼，夺去了云母石桌面的光彩..... (Tang, 2010, p.205)

Example 6:

“The wisdom she got from you is all molded up into her

persona, into the mask she faces the world with.” (Chapter 11 of Book 2, p.210)

“她从我那里得来的聪明才智通通混合到她伪装的外表里，也就是她面对世界的面具里。” (Tang, 2010, p.208)

The active voice and passive voice exist in both Chinese and English, but the frequency of use differs. The active voice is a priority in Chinese for the passive voice denotes something unpleasant whereas in English, the latter enjoys a preference to show a certain kind of objectivity. In the former example, the baked ground in a summer day was hot enough that the mica was overshadowed. If the original sentence is translated literally, the result is “云母石桌面的光彩被炽热的地面夺去了”, odd, wordy and unnatural. Therefore, Tang chose “the baked ground” to be the subject of his sentence. According to the latter example, Rosemary molded up all the wisdom she got from Diver into her persona. The subject “the wisdom”, “智慧” in Chinese, must be shifted into the object, otherwise the translation will end up with a passive voice featured by the Chinese character “被”.

### 3.2.1.3 Shifts between the Animate Subject and the Inanimate Subject

The subject of a sentence can be animate or inanimate. An English sentence often takes an inanimate one for its subject, such as an abstract noun, a gerund phrase or a clause. However, the conventional sentence pattern of Chinese is usually formatted as an animated expression acting as the subject to describe a person's actions. The different preferences of two languages in this aspect make it bound that translation shifts will occur.

Example 7:

Certain points had become apparent to him in the moment following his examination of the body. (Chapter 25 of Book 1, p.141)

他检查尸首之后便看出有几点很明显。(Tang, 2010, p.137)

Example 8:

A burst of hilarity surged up in Dick, the Warrens were going to buy Nicole a doctor—You got a nice doctor you can let us use? (Chapter 9 of Book 2, p.195)

狄克听得直乐，华伦家居然要替妮珂买个医生——你有好医生能给我们用吗？(Tang, 2010, p.192)

In example 7, the subject of the source text (ST), “certain points”, is not a living thing. If it is converted directly into Chinese as the subject, awkwardness is inevitable. As the hero of this case is Dick, Tang made a decision of choosing “他” referring to “him” for the subject, tallying with Chinese writing habits. It's the same story in the latter example. “A burst of hilarity surged up in Dick” shows that Dick felt a sudden excitement when he heard the Warrens planned to buy a doctor for Nicole. In line with the basic feature

s of Chinese, using Dick's name as the subject would make sure a fluent and natural flow of the sentence.

### 3.2.1.4 Shifts Between the Positive Structure and the Negative Structure

Example 9:

“I want to go away,” he told Franz. “For a month or so, for as long as I can.”

“Why not, Dick? That was our original arrangement—it was you who insisted on staying. If you and Nicole—” (Chapter 16 of Book 2, p.246)

“我想离开，”他告诉弗朗兹，“离开一个月光景，能去多久就多久。”

“为什么不——狄克？咱们原来的安排就是如此——是你坚持一直要待下去。如果你跟妮珂——” (Tang, 2010, p.244)

In some circumstances, as a positive or negative structure in the ST cannot find its equivalence in the TL by translating it from the same angle, the best result is hardly reached. Or through literal translation, the rendition appears strange in Chinese and full of translationese. Since Chinese and English have distinct ways of expressing the two opposite concepts, sometimes translators need to adopt a strategy of shifting a positive expression into a negative one or vice versa so that equivalent effect can be maximized. In the conversation above, the complete form of the sentence “Why not?” can be “Why not go away for as long time as you can?” This is an agreement and an advice, too. English-speakers often give suggestions with a negative expression like “Why not?” or “Why do you……?” By contrast, Chinese people would rather say something positive, such as “去吧”，“可以”。Xinmei Tang's translation for “Why not, Dick?” is “为什么不——狄克？” which does not conform to Chinese speaking habits, and it shows the translator is handcuffed by the original text. Whereupon the present author gives a modified version: “去吧，狄克”，catching the imprint of Chinese without violating the fidelity rule.

### 3.2.1.5 Shifts Between the Topic Prominence and the Subject Prominence

Example 10:

In the beer-halls and shop-windows were bright posters presenting the Swiss defending their frontiers in 1914. (Chapter 1 of Book 2, p.147)

啤酒厅和橱窗里都有五颜六色的海报，显示出瑞士人在一九一四捍卫边疆的决心。(Tang, 2010, p.143)

Chinese and English are classified into the topic prominent language and subject prominent language respectively. For the topic prominent language, the subject, predicate and object are the basic units for a sentence and the subject is required in almost all occasions. In terms of the topic prominent language, topics and discussions around them constitute the fundamental sentence structure, and it is common that several short sentences form a whole one. “Bright posters” acts as the subject and the center of this sentence as well. The predicative “in the

beer-halls and shop-windows” tells readers where those posters were put up and “presenting the Swiss defending their frontiers in 1914” points out the content of posters. As for the translation, the topic is “啤酒厅和橱窗” around which other information is unveiled. The former part of the sentence describes what was there in the beer-halls and shop-windows and the latter part tells what those posters were about. All the information starts from “啤酒厅和橱窗”, which, however, is not the subject.

### 3.2.2 Class-Shifts

#### 3.2.2.1 Shifts Between Nouns and Verbs

Example 11:

Rosemary's glance moved at intervals around the table, eager for the others' enjoyment, as if they were her future stepchildren. (Chapter 7 of Book 1, p.42)

露丝玛丽对着环桌而坐的人一个个地看, 热切希望看到大家高兴的样子, 仿佛那些都是她未来的继子。(Tang, 2010, p. 40)

Example 12:

Dick's discovery that he was not in love with her, nor she with him, had added to rather than diminished his passion for her. (Chapter 21 of Book 2, p.275)

狄克发觉他并不爱她, 她也不爱他, 不过这非但不减低反而加深了他对她的情感。(Tang, 2010, p.273)

Chinese is a dynamic language of which verbs and verb phrases are most frequently used whereas English is static and prefers nouns. According to Catford's shift theory, to transform the nouns in English to Chinese verbs may lead to a more authentic translation. In the former example, the application of the noun “glance” allows readers an opportunity to understand that Rosemary was looking at everybody around the table one by one. In order to fully convey its semantic meaning and draw a vivid picture of the situation, it is natural to take a verb as the predicate, such as “看” and “瞅”. If the literal translation strategy is adopted, then the result may be “露丝玛丽的目光不时地环桌移动” which seems to be palatable, but Tang's translation is more of Chinese. In example 12, the subject “discovery” actually forms a complete semantic unit with “that he was not in love with her, nor she with him”. Therefore, in the translating process, Tang put them together into “狄克发觉他并不爱她, 她也不爱他”, assisting the receivers of TL grasp the point quickly.

#### 3.2.2.2 Shifts Between Adjectives and Adverbs

Example 13:

Mary gave an apologetic, belittling giggle; her voice, as she introduced her husband by his Asiatic title, flew proud and high. (Chapter 4 of Book 3, p.325)

玛丽带着歉意及自谦地扑哧一笑, 可是她在介绍她丈夫的亚洲头衔时, 声音却显得神气响亮。(Tang, 2010, p.327)

Usually, the structure of an adjective plus a noun is used in an English sentence. In accordance with the translation shift theory, shifts between adjectives and

adverbs can happen sometimes in English-Chinese translation. The adjective “belittling” is applied as a modifier for the noun “giggle”. In the discussion in 3.2.2.1, English nouns can be shifted to Chinese verbs in some occasions. When “giggle” is translated into the verb “笑”, its modifier turns to be adverbs accordingly. But in the meanwhile, semantics of the ST must be maintained. The word “belittling” indicates the act of representing or speaking of as unimportant or contemptible and in this context, it implies being modest. Furthermore, as her husband was the owner of manganese deposits in Southwestern Asia and had a papal title, Mary was proud when she was introducing his title. But it seemed to be impolite to present an air of complacency before guests, so she giggled apologetically and belittlingly. From this point of view, via translating this adjective into an adverb “自谦地”, the loyalty to the original text is maximized.

#### 3.2.2.3 Shifts Between Prepositions and Verbs

Example 14:

First was a lone cyclist in a red jersey... Then three together in a harlequinade of faded color, legs caked yellow with dust and sweat, faces expressionless, eyes heavy and endless tired. (Chapter 11 of Book 3, p.385)

最前面是一个穿红色运动衫的自行车手……接着是三个车手一起出现, 穿着滑稽丑角式的褪色运动衫, 脚上汗粘着灰变成黄色污垢, 脸上毫无表情, 眼皮低垂, 显得疲累无比。(Tang, 2010, p.392)

As is known to all, the fact that English is a static language is proved not only by the frequent use of nouns, but also by so many prepositions. It is quite common in English that preposition phrases are used as adverbial modifier and occasionally these phrases need to be shifted into verbs in Chinese, according to the Translation Shift Theory. A case in point is the usage of “in”. When it refers to be dressed in a piece of clothing, it is often translated into “穿着”, “戴着”. In the sentence above, “in a red jersey” obviously means wearing a red jersey. Similarly “in a harlequinade of faded color” following closely another “three” cyclists demonstrates three players dressed in clownish clothes. As thus in virtue of translating “in” into “穿” or “穿着”, the target text is more in line with the features of Chinese.

#### 3.2.3 Unit-Shifts/ Rank-Shifts

The class shifts are highly useful at the lexical level. But there are some occasions when shifts at different levels are demanded, such as shifts between words and phrases, phrases and clauses, sentences and sentence groups. Therefore, an analysis of unit-shifts is necessary.

#### 3.2.3.1 Shifts Between Words and Phrases

Example 15:

His large grey eyes were sun-veined from rowing on Lake Geneva, and he had that special air about him of having known the best of this world. (Chapter 3 of Book 2, p.161)

因为在日内瓦湖上捉浆划船，他那灰灰的大眼睛周围被太阳晒出了道道纹路，他有一种特别的气概，令人觉得凡是世界上最好的东西他都深有认识。(Tang, 2010, p.158)

In this example, the word “sun-veined” shows the appearance of wrinkles due to the exposure in the sun. After a detailed analysis of this word, it is easy for us to realize that it is hard to find an equivalence at lexical level in Chinese. Under such circumstance, the only way to convey the word's meaning is to turn it into a phrase with the same meaning. “被太阳晒出了道道纹路”, this verb phrase points out the existence of wrinkles and the cause for their formation. Through such a shift, the meaning of this word is fully expressed.

### 3.2.3.2 Shifts Between Phrases and Sentences

Example 16:

He nodded. With some concentration he had been able to follow her. (Chapter 9 of Book 2, p.195)

他点点头。他听得相当仔细，因而明白了她的意思。(Tang, 2010, p.192)

“With + noun” structure is fairly common. In some cases, a strategy of word-for-word translation is enough to form a faithful and fluent Chinese sentence. For example, “with the growing number of visitors” can be transformed into “随着游客数量的增长”. But under many situations, such structure should be shifted into a complete sentence. In example 16, “with some concentration” shows Dick paid some attention on Baby's words so that he could be able to understand what she meant indeed. When dealing with a phrase like this, it's less likely to keep the translation with the same rank because a phrase like this may be caused: “带着一些专注” which is not idiomatic and readable. Therefore, if the strategy of free translation is adopted and it is shifted from a phrase to a sentence, it will make sense. Tang's translation “他听得相当仔细” is a shift but it's not faithful enough for the reason that it implies that Dick was fully focusing on Baby's words. The ST tells its readers that Dick only paid part of his attention on the speaker. The ameliorated rendition should be: “他点了点头，仔细地听着，因而明白了她的意思”.

### 3.2.3.3 Shifts between Sentences and Sentence Groups

Example 17:

It was a damp April day, with long diagonal clouds over the Albishorn and water inert in the low places. (Chapter 2 of Book 2, p.151)

那是四月里一个潮湿的日子，几抹斜云低垂在阿比甸的水面上空，静止不动。(Tang, 2010, p.147)

In the ST, “it was a damp April day” works as the focus of the sentence and a “with + nouns” structure as a modifier. The former part is easily translated into Chinese. But in the latter part, the phrase depicts the scene of that damp April day. Chinese people prefer sentences for scenery description, so Tang chose to divide this long

phrase into two short sentences, “几抹斜云低垂在阿比甸的水面上空” and “(斜云)静止不动”. In short, the source text as a whole sentence was shifted into a sentence group including three short ones by Xinmei Tang. Though the translator used a right strategy, his understanding of latter part of the ST is wrong. As a matter of fact, “long diagonal clouds over the Albishorn” and “water inert in the low places” are of equal place. The proper translation may be: “四月的一天，天气潮湿，阿比甸上空飘着几抹斜云，低洼处的积水静止不动”whereby a visual sense is given to readers.

## CONCLUSION

The present research has been founded on the theoretical framework of J. C. Catford's Translation Shift Theory in which the ST written by Fitzgerald as well as TT in Chinese translated by Xinmei Tang have undergone a detailed analysis. Through careful proof reading and study of the Chinese rendition, the author of this paper has found both merits and demerits in Tang's version. From the angle of Catford's theory, Tang has realized both level shifts and category shifts in his translation. In terms of level shifts, he made transformations flexibly in both lexical and grammatical levels. But there are some places where Tang did not make shifts while it is necessary. Example 9 is a case in point. The absence of a shift from negative structure to a positive structure allows translationese. And there are also some inadequacies in the TT due to the translator's misunderstandings which are probably caused by his carelessness, such as example 18 and 19. In conclusion, the application of some translation shifts in Tang's translation makes it idiomatic in a certain degree, but his rendition still needs to be improved.

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