

The Dangers of Translation: Interpretations and Re-presentations of a Chinese Internet Celebrity

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ABSTRACT

This paper highlights the power of translation to silence the weak and subvert the strong. Different translations of the same source may result in contradicting interpretations. To better understand this phenomenon, the paper explores the hermeneutic nature of translation, arguing that it can diminish the authority of the author and thus give voice to those previously muted. The metaphor of the death of the author is presented to remind us that translation can sometimes be violent. The dangers of translation make it a powerful double-edged sword. On the one hand, it is a weapon to deconstruct the hegemonic meaning-making of dominant actors, yet on the other, it provides more powerful translators with a tool to silence dissenting voices. The paper closely examines a case study showing the various interpretations, or semiotic translations, of the image of Ding Zhen, a Chinese internet celebrity. The paper probes some of the many translations of his picture and highlights a set of contradicting interpretations to illustrate the dangers of translation.

KEYWORDS: hermeneutics, interpretation, semiotic translation, translation theory, violence

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摘要

翻译的力量既能让弱者沉默，亦能颠覆强者。同一文本经过翻译会产生截然不同的理解。翻译的本质是阐释，而“作者之死”的隐喻提醒我们，阐释有时可能是暴力而危险的。具体而言，翻译是一把强大的双刃剑：它可以是解构权威者意义构建的武器，也能成为强权者压制不同声音的工具。为了进一步说明翻译蕴含的危险，本文通过案例分析，呈现中国网红丁真形象的多种翻译。网络中对丁真形象的阐释互相矛盾，这体现了翻译的力量与危险。

关键词：暴力，阐释，符号翻译，理解，翻译理论