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The Translator's Subjectivity in Ken Liu's Translation of Chinese Science Fiction: A Case Study of *Invisible Planets*

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Abstract:

Science fiction is a genre that combines literary elements, imagination, and scientific logic. English works in this genre continue to occupy a dominant position, while Chinese science fiction remains relatively peripheral. This paper examines the translator's subjectivity in Ken Liu's English translation of Chinese science fiction, with a focus on his anthology *Invisible Planets*. The study begins with a brief overview of the development of science fiction both globally and within China, emphasizing Liu's role in introducing Chinese science fiction to Anglo-American readers. It then discusses the concept of translator subjectivity, highlighting how Liu's bilingual background influences his translation choices. Through detailed analysis, this paper aims to explore Liu's subjective role in his selection of source stories, his collaborative relationships with the original authors, his understanding of cultural nuances in both Chinese and English, and his strategic application of various translation techniques, including omission, addition, coinage, borrowing, and footnoting. The findings reveal that the translator's subjectivity in Liu's translated texts not only preserves essential cultural elements of Chinese science fiction but also enhances its accessibility and reception in the Anglophone world, thereby fostering intercultural literary exchange.

Keywords: science fiction, translator's subjectivity, Ken Liu, *Invisible Planets*, translation techniques

1. Introduction:

In the genre of science fiction ("SF" or "sci-fi" for short), imagination is the cornerstone, but it is not boundless; instead, it follows certain scientific logic or facts to explain the universe where it takes place or may be realized in the future. Heinlein (1959) considers SF as "a realistic speculation about possible future events, based solidly on adequate knowledge of the real world, past and present, and a thorough understanding of the nature and significance of the scientific method" (22). Modern science fiction was initially centered in Europe, where the first work globally acknowledged is *Frankenstein* (1818) written by

British writer Mary Shelley (Kong, 2003). In Chinese literature, SF was introduced from Europe since the beginning of the 20th century with the translation of European works, especially the twenty novels of Jules Verne were translated into Chinese between 1902 and 1911 (Song, 2023). As for Chinese sci-fi[1], the first original work is believed to be *Colony of the Moon* (1904), written by an anonymous author (Wang and Liu, 2015). After the First World War, the center of science fiction shifted to the United States with the popularization and marketization. A major figure is Hugo Gernsback, who founded the world's first magazine, *Amazing Stories*, devoted solely to SF, and the premier genre award Hugo Award[2] is named after him since 1953. Just like the Hugo Award, most sci-fi awards with international influence are founded or administered by institutions in the United States. The winning works are mainly in English, and some awards even stipulate that nominations must be published in English or translated into English.

The prevailing dominance of Anglo-American works within the SF field remains unchallenged, while Chinese contributions have historically occupied a marginal position. The year 2015 marked a significant development in the realm of Chinese sci-fi, as *San Ti* [三体] (2008), subsequently translated into English as *The Three-Body Problem* (2014) by Ken Liu. This novel was the first Asian work and the first translated work to win the Hugo Award for Best Novel. In the following year, a short story entitled *Beijing Zhedie* [北京折叠] (2014), translated into English as "Folding Beijing" by Ken Liu, was awarded the 2016 Hugo Award for Best Novelette. As the translator of the two prize-winning works, an American writer of SF and fantasy, Liu is worthy of attention for his role in introducing Chinese sci-fi to a wider Anglo-American audience.

Liu was born in China in 1976 and immigrated to the United States at the age of eleven. He once studied English Literature and Computer Science at Harvard College, and then worked as a software engineer after graduation. Later, he studied at Harvard Law School and became a corporate lawyer and high-tech litigation consultant. In 2002, he began publishing speculative fiction[3] in English. Liu's diversified professional and cultural backgrounds have enabled his works to enjoy a great reputation in the field of science fiction and to win multiple genre awards[4]. In 2011, Ken Liu started translation work to make Chinese sci-fi more accessible to Anglophone readers. With a bilingual background, Liu has contributed to translating sci-fi works from Chinese to English, including published six novels, two anthologies, and dozens of short stories as of 2024.

[1] The expression "Chinese sci-fic" in this paper does not try to summarize certain style or subject matter unique in Chinese but is only intended to refer to sci-fi works written in Chinese language.

[2] For the Hugo Award, the nominees and winners are all chosen by supporting members of the annual World Science Fiction Convention, administered by the World Science Fiction Society. Fictions of 40,000 words or more, between 17,500 and 40,000 words, between 7,500 and 17,500 words, and less than 7,500 words are categorized into Best Novel, Best Novella, Best Novelette and Best Short Story respectively. See Clute and Nicholls, *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, 1993: 595; and *Science Fiction Awards Database*, "Hugo Awards."

[3] Speculative fiction, used by some writers and critics in place of science fiction, is a broad literary genre encompassing any fiction with supernatural, fantastical, or futuristic elements. The genres under this category include, but are not limited to, science fiction, fantasy, horror, superhero fiction, alternate history, and combinations thereof. See Clute and Nicholls, 1993: 1144; and *Collins English Dictionary*, "Speculative Fiction" (https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/speculative-fiction).

[4] Ken Liu's story "The Paper Menagerie" is the first piece of fiction to win all three prestigious speculative fiction awards: the Hugo, the Nebula, and the World Fantasy Award. See *Science Fiction Awards Database*, "Hugo Awards," "Nebula Awards," and "World Fantasy Awards."

By using the query "Ken Liu" in the CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure), one of China's major databases for academic literature references, there are 130 results by the end of 2024, showing that there is mere 19 articles published in academic journals, while the majority are master's theses analyzing the translation of the novel *The Three-Body Problem* and the story "Folding Beijing" with various translation theories such as the Hermeneutic Motion, Skopos Theory and Corpus-based Study. Therefore, research dedicated to Ken Liu and his translation remains limited. To study Liu's translation of Chinese sci-fi, this paper cannot mention all of his works and then choose the translation anthology *Invisible Planets: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation* (2016), hereafter referred to as *Invisible Planets*, to focus on the translator's subjectivity with cases of short stories. *Invisible Planets* is the first anthology of contemporary Chinese SF in English translation in the 21st century, whose are all translated by the editor himself.

2. The Translator's Subjectivity:

The concept of "subjectivity" comes from philosophy, commonly used to explain what influences, informs, and distorts people's judgments about truth or reality. Subjectivity is about "the individual subject/agent as a fully formed, stable and unified entity that then gets caught up in power relations which are external to its constitution" (Allen 2002: 135) and "the subject and his or her particular perspectives, feelings, beliefs, and desires" (Solomon 2005: 900). For translation, it is not merely about linguistic transfer but also influenced by the social, cultural, and political environment of the target language. Since the cultural turn in Translation Studies, scholars have turned their eyes to the translator. For example, Venuti (1995) notices the visibility of the translator, Hermans (1996) puts forward the translator's voice to tease out the presence of the translator, and Robinson (2001) focuses on the translator's selfhood or individual agency. The translator's role is grouped under the term "Translator Studies" by Chesterman in "The Name and Nature of Translator Studies," claiming that "a broad outline of Translator Studies would cover sociology, culture, and cognition, all looking at the translator's agency" (2009: 13).

Among Chinese scholars, Xie (2003) believes that creativity in literary translation indicates that the original can only be approached and reproduced by the translator's subjective efforts with their artistic creation, and Hu (2004a, 2004b) argues that a translator-centered concept is required to legitimize the translator's central status and dominant role in translation. On the premise of respecting the translation object, the translator presents the subjective initiative in translation activities to realize the translation purpose, reflected in the translator's conscious cultural awareness, humanistic character, and aesthetic creativity. Tu and Zhu (2003) believe that the translator's subjectivity has the characteristics of autonomy, initiative, purposiveness, and creativity, thus refer it to the translator's subjective initiative displayed in translation practices to meet the needs of the target language culture, under the influence of surrounding subjects or external environments and the translator's fields of vision. According to Pei (2010: 34), the translator will "feed his own knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes into his translation. Thus, his subjective role could be achieved."

Based on the above interpretation, the translator's subjectivity means the way the translator manipulates the translation according to the subjective values and cultural awareness, while

at the same time, respecting the objective external factors like the culture and society where the translator has been brought up. As a translator and a special reader of the source texts, Ken Liu is an active creator in the translation process. His subjectivity is formed by the cultural contexts of both China and the United States, reading habits, language competence, knowledge of sci-fi and translation experiences, thus guiding his selection of source works by Chinese writers and translation techniques adopted in the translational action.

3. Discussion: The Translator's Subjectivity Reflected in *Invisible Planets:*

Invisible Planets consists of thirteen of Ken Liu's translated stories from seven Chinese writers and three essays also translated by him that explore the current situation of science fiction in China. For discussion, this paper presents a list of the collected stories with the information of the author, the English title, the first Chinese publication and the English one based on the copyright page in *Invisible Planets* (Liu, 2016: 5–6), shown in Table 1.

Table 1. A Profile of the Short Stories Collected in *Invisible Planets*

Author	English Title	First Chinese Publication	First English Publication
Chen Qiufan	The Year of the Rat	*Science Fiction World*, 2009	*The Magazine of Fantasy Science Fiction*, 2013
	The Fish of Lijiang	*Science Fiction World*, 2006	*Clarkesworld*, 2011
	The Flower of Shazui	*ZUI Ink-Minority Report*, 2012	*Interzoon*, 2012
Xia Jia (Female)	A Hundred Ghosts Parade Tonight	*Science Fiction World*, 2010	*Clarkesworld*, 2012
	Tongtong's Summer	*ZUI Novel*, 2014	*Upgraded*, 2014
	Night Journey of the Dragon-Horse	*Fiction World*, 2015	*Invisible Planets*, 2016
Ma Boyong	The City of Silence	*Science Fiction World*, 2005	*World SF Blog*, 2011
Hao Jingfang (Female)	Invisible Planets	*New Science Fiction*, 2010	*Lightspeed*, 2013
	Folding Beijing	*ZUI Found*, 2014	*Uncanny*, 2015
Tang Fei (Female)	Call Girl	*Nebula*, 2014	*Apex*, 2013
Cheng Jingbo (Female)	Grave of the Fireflies	*Science Fiction: Literary*, 2005	*Clarkesworld*, 2014
Liu Cixin	The Circle	*Sichuan Science & Technology Press*, 2015	*Carbide Tipped Pens*, 2014
	Taking Care of God	*Science Fiction World*, 2005	*Pathlight*, 2012

In the following, this paper will analyze the translator's subjectivity in four sections to exemplify Liu's translation of Chinese sci-fi short stories.

3.1 The Translator's Selection of the Short Stories for *Invisible Planets:*

Chinese science fiction encompasses a wide variety of themes, styles, and voices, reflecting China's rapid technological development and its evolving societal concerns. However, despite the richness and diversity of this literature, many Chinese sci-fi stories remain inaccessible to non-Chinese readers due to a lack of English translations. This limits global appreciation of the genre's unique contributions. Ken Liu's anthology *Invisible Planets* attempts to bridge this gap by introducing English-speaking audiences to some of the most compelling contemporary Chinese SF, and his selection criteria emphasize the subjective role of the translator as a cultural mediator.

Firstly, Liu selects stories not only for their literary merit but also for their ability to reflect a conscious effort to present the thematic and stylistic diversity of Chinese science fiction. His selections span multiple subgenres, each offering a distinct perspective on contemporary and futuristic societal issues. For example, "The Flower of Shazui" embodies cyberpunk aesthetics and depicting a high-tech yet decaying urban society with the problem of aging population; "The City of Silence" employs dystopian political metaphors to explore a silent city due to the government censorship and digital surveillance; and "Folding Beijing" constructs a fantastical, spatially divided city to critique class stratification and economic inequality. Despite these stories are rooted in the context of Chinese society, like the consequences of the one-child policy, state internet controls, and urban-rural disparities respectively, the underlying anxieties transcend national boundaries. The tension between technological advancement and social fragmentation, the erosion of privacy by dictatorships, and the growing disparity between the wealthy and the marginalized are issues that resonate on a global scale. Consequently, Liu's anthology does not focus solely on Chinese issues, but rather situates these narratives within a broader transnational dialogue about humanity's shared future. In this way, Ken Liu (2016: 14) is resistant to generalizing about a large body of literature like "Chinese science fiction" or "American science fiction" because generalizations will tend to shape a preconceived set of expectations that is unfair to both authors and readers. Instead, it is more useful to study the authors as individuals with their works on their own styles.

Secondly, the anthology features stories that have received considerable acclaim within this genre. For example, "Folding Beijing" by Hao Jingfang won the prestigious Hugo Award, drawing international attention to the ability and potential of Chinese SF. Another story "A Hundred Ghosts Parade Tonight" by Xia Jia won the Science Fiction & Fantasy Translation Awards[5], and was praised for its lyrical blend of folklore and futuristic themes. Other selections, such as Tang Fei's "Call Girl" have received positive reviews from critics and have been included in "Year's Best" anthologies[6], further highlighting their significance within this genre. Additionally, Liu includes his debut translation "The Fish of Lijiang" by Chen Qiufan, marking a personal milestone in Liu's career as a translator. As for the original authors, except for Liu Cixin, the other six all belong to the younger generation of Chinese sci-fi writers. Even Liu

[5] See http://www.sfftawards.org/.

[6] "Call Girl" is in the anthology *The Year's Best Science Fiction & Fantasy: 2014 Edition* edited by Rich Horton, a long-time reviewer for Locus Magazine since 2002. He launched companion annuals for sci-fi and fantasy with *Prime Books* in 2006 (for stories published in 2005), and after three years the two were combined into a single volume titled The Year's Best Science Fiction & Fantasy.

Cixin, who is better known to the Anglophone sci-fi readers for the *Three Body* trilogy, which included his lesser-known works "The Circle" and "Taking Care of God" in this anthology, offering the target reader a different perspective on his writing.

3.2 The Translator's Relationship with Original Authors:

The translator and the original author are not in a primary-and-secondary relationship but an intersubjective dialogue. Translation is neither a monologue in which the translator conquers the author nor a mechanical response by the translator to the author, but rather for both parties to exercise the initiative. In the process of translation, the understanding of the target texts is inevitably slightly different from the meaning expressed in the original. The attitude of the original author towards the translated text affects the extent and manner in which the translator adapts the original text.

For translated works collected in *Invisible Planets*, the original authors are still active in China's sci-fi community. As a result, it is easy for Ken Liu to contact them to make sure that the texts are better rendered. They are Ken Liu's contemporaries and some even his close friends. In an interview[7], Liu narrated how he started working as a translator: Chen Qiufan asked him to help proofread the English translation of "The Fish of Lijiang" someone else had done, after suggestions and edits, Liu needed to redo the translation. In the end, Liu's translation of this work won the Science Fiction & Fantasy Translation Awards. This experience made Liu realize that what Chinese sci-fi lacked is not works, but translations that are well-received by the Anglo-American literary field. As a member of the field who also speaks fluent Chinese, Liu seizes the opportunity.

Liu prefers to be able to consult the original author that "Sometimes I feel that a change or adjustment in the story would allow the story to work better in English, and I like to have the chance to discuss such change with the author and secure their approval" (Liu, 2012). In *Invisible Planets*, Liu edited together the works of the same author, providing a brief introduction to the author before the translated texts of stories. When introducing Ma Boyong, Liu mentions that, for the translation of "The City of Silence," he and Ma have "worked together to restore the text to its original form, but also made additional changes to help the story work better for Anglophone readers" (Liu, 2016: 152). In addition, among the collected works, "Call Girl" and "The Circle" were first published in English before the Chinese publication[8]. It can be inferred that Liu keeps a friendly relationship with the authors; otherwise, he could not have acquired unpublished work to enrich his translation anthology. As far as the translator-author relationship is concerned, Liu exercises his subjectivity to produce appropriate translations.

3.3 Comprehension of Chinese and English Cultures:

The translator's value orientation can be either identifying with the mainstream culture of the target language, strengthening certain ideologies and poetics through translation, or promoting the source language culture to offer an exotic flavor of cultural and literary model, or both. As a Chinese American, Ken Liu can be viewed as an intermediary between

[7] See "Spotlight on: Ken Liu, Author," *Locus Magazine*, 2013. https://locusmag.com/2013/04/spotlight-on-ken-liu-author/.

[8] See Table 1. The first Chinese publication of "Call Girl" by Tang Fei was in August 2014 while the English version was published in June 2013. The Chinese version of "The Circle" by Liu Cixin was published in 2015, while the first English publication was in 2014.

the dual cultures. His understanding of the two cultures enables him to exert the translator's subjectivity.

On the one hand, Liu's comprehension of Chinese culture is reflected in his translations. Liu mentions in the translator's postscript to *The Three-Body Problem* that the best translation does not read as if it were originally written in the native language; instead, the translated text is arranged to make the target reader "sees a glimpse of another culture's patterns of thinking, hears an echo of another language's rhythms and cadences, and feels a tremor of another people's gestures and movements" (Liu, 2014a: 398). In *Invisible Planets*, Liu's translation of all Chinese names is given with the surname first by Chinese custom. According to Liu (2013), a translation "should not feel like something that could have been written in English in the first place. It should have a hint of strangeness, of a vision and mode of thinking not entirely like the Anglophone reader's own home culture." As for culture-specific words exclusively in Chinese, Liu uses transliteration in italics rather than the translation strategy of domestication, such as "*baijiu*" (2016: 254) and "*mantou*" (ibid.: 324). The former is a Chinese spirit made from fermented sorghum or maize; the latter is a white, soft Chinese steamed bun, made with milled wheat flour, water and leavening agents. In a sentence, literally translating "*baijiu*" [白酒] to "liquor" or "alcoholic drink" is not a mistranslation; similarly, translating "*mantou*" [馒头] to "steamed bun" is also proper. However, Liu actively uses transliteration to arouse the reader's interest in the cultural background.

On the other hand, Liu has a good understanding of American culture and language. As a translator, he is a crucial gatekeeper in the translation process, making critical decisions that determine how the original Chinese text is adapted for the target audience. His role involves more than a simple word-for-word conversion; he must consider the cultural and linguistic expectations of the target audience to ensure the translation is accurate, engaging and natural in English. This requires him to exercise his judgement and make subjective decisions to make the translation more understandable to the Anglo-American reader. For example, Liu's translation strategy involves converting traditional Chinese units of measurement into the approximate English equivalents. Both a unit of length, the "*zhang*" [丈] equals 10 feet and the "*li*" [里] is about 0.3 miles (Liu, 2016: 311). These conversions are necessary because these units primarily serve as standardized units of measurement rather than conveying additional symbolic meaning. Therefore, retaining them in the original form, using the Chinese phonetic alphabet (also known as "*pinyin*") for *zhang* or *li*, would instead create unnecessary confusion for the target reader and disrupt the flow of the narrative. His approach reflects the broader principle of translation, that is, when a term serves a purely functional purpose, it is preferable to rewrite it rather than retain it in its original form. This strategy reduces cognitive friction for readers, enabling them to focus on the story rather than becoming confused by unfamiliar measurements. Liu's translations demonstrate his commitment to bridging cultural gaps while preserving the integrity of the original text.

3.4 Ken Liu's Strategic Application of Translation Techniques:

Due to the complexity of translation practices, it is challenging to render the original information into the target text. Different languages have distinct grammatical structures, idiomatic expressions, and sociocultural contexts, so the translator's subjectivity in the translating process is

reflected in striking a balance between accuracy (faithfulness to the original text) and acceptability (naturalness in the target language). To achieve this balance, this paper analyzes the various translation techniques employed by Ken Liu in *Invisible Planets*.

Firstly, omissions and additions are frequently employed as translation techniques to adapt source texts for target readers. Take the story "The City of Silence" as an example. The original Chinese text contains a repeated slogan that literally translates to "Let us build a healthy and stable Web, long live America!" (Ma, 2005). The phrase *wan sui* [万岁] (ten thousand years) is thus used to wish someone a very long life or even immortality. It is a cheering slogan that originated from the blessing of the people for the emperor, monarch, or the throne of the country during the imperial era in the Sinosphere. In Ken Liu's translation, all texts of "long live America" are omitted to weaken the propaganda and personal worship for reading. This strategic omission aligns with the concept of domestication by Venuti (1995), whereby translators modify foreign elements to align with the expectations of the target culture.

In addition, it is used to translate expressions that contain implicit information. An example can be found in Liu's translation of "Folding Beijing." The literal translation of the original text is "if you want to climb up in the future, it is very useful to have management experience in the Third Space" (Hao, 2014). While the English translation expands this to "if he wanted to climb up the ladder of government administration, some managerial experience in Third Space would be very helpful" (Liu, 2016: 235). The addition of "the ladder of government administration" explicitly conveys the implied meaning of bureaucratic promotion, which might otherwise be lost on readers unfamiliar with China's hierarchical work culture.

Secondly, the translation of neologisms from the original text is coined or borrowed by the translator. According to a model of translation principles and techniques proposed by Loh Dian-yang (1958), the coinage of new characters is a way of translating nouns. In science fiction, coinage is often used for new words or phrases invented in a language. For example, "Invisible Planets"—the same title as that of this anthology—tells of 11 imaginary planets, each with a unique name originally created by the author. In translating these names, Liu adopts transliteration or creates neologisms that follow the English pronunciation conventions based on the Chinese phonetic alphabet, such as "Chichi Raha" (Chinese equivalent of "*xi xi la jia*") and "Tisu Ati" (Chinese equivalent of "*ti su a ti*"). For the original name *xi xi la jia* [希希拉加] rendered to "Chichi Raha" (Liu, 2016: 201), the pronunciation of *xi* [希] is adapted to "Chi" because the former is uncommon in English, whereas the latter is more intuitive just as "Chicago," and the word *la jia* [拉加] is rendered as "Raha," softening the "la" to "ra" that is a common shift and simplifying the "jia" to "ha" for articulation. As for *ti su a ti*, this name is rendered as "Tisu Ati" (ibid.: 212) through transliteration. The original name consists of four syllables, but Liu contracts two of these syllables into the units "Tisu" and "Ati" respectively for better readability and poetic rhythm.

Another example in "Grave of the Fireflies" is a fictitious bird called *Xueji*, which means it is stopped snowing and is clearing up. With the translator's subjectivity, Liu translates the name of the bird as Snow-No-More, imitating the flower called Forget-Me-Not. Some words in English are loaned from other languages. In Vinay &

Darbelnet's model of translation strategies, borrowing means "transferring the SL (source language) word directly to the TL (target language) without formal or semantic modification" (Saridaki, 2021:135). In the Chinese version of "The Fish of Lijiang," there are three four-character idioms as parallelism sentences called "*xing zai le huo*" [幸灾乐祸] (taking pleasure in the misfortune of other people), "*xiao ren de zhi*" [小人得志] (accomplishing the ambition of a person with low character), and "*luo jing xia shi*" [落井下石] (adding to the misfortunes of a man who is already unfortunate). For translation, Liu integrates the three sentences into one borrowed word "Schadenfreude" (Liu, 2016: 53). This term is borrowed from German, combining Schaden ("harm") and Freude ("joy"), which means a feeling of pleasure at misfortunes that happen to other people.

Lastly, Liu adds footnotes to the translations for further explanation. Considering that the global influence of Chinese literature does not correspond with China's economic strength, it is necessary to provide footnotes when translating Chinese works to help Anglo-American readers understand the cultural context involved. However, the footnote is an intrusive tool, and the translator's arrangement cannot satisfy every reader's expectation. Some readers may consider that the explanation is not enough, while others think excessive explanation means that the reader is predicted to be ignorant by the translator. Liu's basic principle is to leave the smallest fingerprint and present exactly what the reader needs to understand the story, but at the same time, a curious reader will be attracted to search online for more details (Liu, 2014b).[9]

Take "Night Journey of the Dragon-Horse" as an example, a science fiction story that blends Chinese mythological symbolism with futuristic themes. The protagonist, Dragon-Horse, is a hybrid creature that embodies both a Chinese dragon, a celestial and auspicious symbol in East Asian culture, and a horse, an animal often associated with endurance. For the sentence "Like all poets who make dreams their horses" (2016: 138) in *Invisible Planets*, Ken Liu adds a footnote to expand that this line comes from the poem "With Dreams as Horses" by Hai Zi, a celebrated but tragically short-lived Chinese poet in the late 20th century. Through this allusion, Liu connects Chinese poetry with modern sci-fi encouraging a cross-cultural dialogue about the power of dreams and artistic creation.

Another example is "The Circle," an adaptation of a section from Liu Cixin's novel *Three Body*. It is about a manpower computer setting during the Warring States Period (475–221 BCE), a tumultuous era marked by military conflict, philosophical flourishing, and technological innovation. Recognizing that English-speaking readers may lack familiarity with this epoch in Chinese history, Ken Liu adds a footnote to offer more information about the period, explaining that China at that time was characterized by the fragmentation into seven independent states: Qin, Qi, Chu, Wei, Zhao, Yan, and Han, and then unified by King Zheng of Qin under the Qin Dynasty (ibid.: 301). Liu's decision to place this footnote before the story rather than embedding it within the text prevents interruptions to the narrative flow, preserving the immersive quality of the original's storytelling. Besides, this approach exemplifies Liu's broad translation strategy of respecting the integrity of the original text while making the

[9] The author of this paper rephrases it from Ken Liu's interview manuscript in Chinese by *Beijing News*. See http://www.bjnews.com.cn/book/2014/12/13/345580.html.

nuances of Chinese history accessible to a global audience.

4. Conclusion:

This paper argues that Ken Liu's translations of Chinese science fiction, exemplified by *Invisible Planets*, reflect the active translator's subjectivity shaped by his unique bicultural background, personal literary preferences, and relationships with the original authors. Liu's story selection demonstrates his judgment of what would resonate with Anglo-American readers, while representing the diversity of voices within Chinese science fiction. Liu's cultural fluency enables him to navigate linguistic and cultural differences, skillfully balancing foreignization and domestication to maintain the integrity of the original work while ensuring it is accessible. Through the deliberate use of translation techniques, including omissions, additions, coinages, borrowings, and footnoting, Liu mediates between two literary traditions, creating translations that introduce Anglo-American readers to the imaginative worlds of contemporary Chinese science fiction. His work exemplifies how a translator's subjectivity can facilitate intercultural communication and contribute significantly to the global circulation of Chinese literature.

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