TRANSLATE OR NOT: REPETITION IN LITERARY TRANSLATION

In both English and Chinese literary works, there are many repetitions: repetition of words, repetition of phrases, and even repetition of sentences. To the specific repetition in English or Chinese, how should we deal with it in translation? Represent the same structure in target language, or just remain its meaning? Translate or not, that’s the question.

In literary works, there are two main functions of repetition. First, use repetition as a cohesive device. According to systematic function grammar, text cohesion can be divided into five types: nominatum, substitution, ellipsis, connection and word cohesion. Word cohesion includes reiteration and collocation. Second, use repetition as rhetoric. Repetitions are quite common in literature works, to strength momentum, or render some certain atmosphere.

Repetition: As a cohesive device.

According to Pan Wengu (1997:350), English tend to use substitution methods such as preparation, while Chinese usually use repetition such as recurrence of the same words. Thus in translation, relevant transformation is necessary, in order to make the translation text smooth.

For example:
Chen Zhen nodded and scooped up a handful of snow, which he squeezed into a ball of ice. (Goldblatt, 2008)

Obviously, the second “雪” in Chinese is used for text cohesion. In English translation, the translator uses “which” to fulfill this function.

“Dorian! Dorian!” he cried, “Don’t talk like that. I have never had such a friend as you, and I shall never have such another. You are not jealous of material things, are you?” – you who are finer than any of them!” (Wilde, 1997)

“巴兹尔,” 道连说着走到他近前,直视着他的脸, “咱俩都有各自的秘密。把你的秘密告诉我, 我也把我的秘密告诉你。你过去为什么不肯展出我的画像呢?” (郑晓园、魏文峰译, 2007)