

# Analysis of Feminism in the Male Image of Chinese Versions of Pride and Prejudice Done by Translators of Different Genders

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**Abstract.** Feminist Translation is an important research topic of our times. Meanwhile, this trend is gaining increasing attention in China. However, the research on male images in female literature remains insufficient, since those male characters pale easily in comparison with those gorgeous ladies in feminist translation studies. Therefore, the authors choose as the research subject male images in translations of *Pride and Prejudice* as it seeks to analyze the influence of feminism on male and female translators. To achieve this, the authors carry out a contrast analysis of the language of two Chinese versions of *Pride and Prejudice*, done respectively by Mr. Wang Keyi and Ms. Lei Limei. The main logic behind our research method is that nuances in translation can give insight into translators' opinions. As a result, readers can detect the influence of feminism on translators, by comparing the expressions used to interpret male figures of a shared original text. In the third part, the authors conclude that gender plays a certain role in translations: male images created by women tend to be more in line with that of the original text, while gentlemen interpreted by men correspond mostly with that of social cognition. Given this, the authors analyze, at the end of this paper, translators' personal experiences and historical background as a way to seek reasons for these differences.

**Keywords:** Feminist Translation; Feminism; *Pride and Prejudice*; Male Images; Contrast analysis.

## 1. Introduction

The word "feminism" was introduced into China during the May Fourth Movement. At that time, this word was translated as "女权主义" (women's rights), since Chinese women still had to fight for their rights in that society. After the founding of New China, the wave of feminism came to a temporary end in China. In the early 1980s, feminism spread again and has been interpreted by "女性主义" (women), as researchers believe that men and women in China have been completely equal in law [1]. On this very note, there has been a growing number of research on feminist literature and the translation of literary works.

As people step into the 20th century, an era where translation studies present greater diversity, contemporary translation theories reinterpret the relationship between translation and original text, as well as that between translator and author. With feminism casting new light on translation, feminism translation theory came on the scene. Feminist translators emphasize creativity in translation, thus establishing feminist translation strategies. By far, feminism has been influenced by modern theories such as deconstructionism and post-colonialism in its development process. Since the 1980s, these influences have been reflected in translation theory.

Under these influences, female translators have gradually shaped their unique translation perspectives. Sherry Simon and Louise von Flotow are the representatives of feminist translation theory. First of all, Sherry Simon asserts that the object of feminist translation is the works of feminist writers or texts of feminist color [2]. Besides, the translated works are not reproductions of the original works but regenerations of content. The relationship between the original work and the translated one is symbiotic, in which the original works give life to the translated works, whereas the translations

enrich the original works. What is more, feminists also suggest that the translator is no longer invisible in the translation process, but can bring the subjective initiative into translations, to manifest his or her presence and style.

Nowadays, there is plenty of academic research on feminism in the translation of *Pride and Prejudice*. Many scholars have conducted in-depth studies on various aspects of translation, including aesthetic standards, verbal expressions, and translation skills. However, most of them tend to study the image of women, while there is little analysis of the male characters in the work. After researching, the authors found that there are merely a few papers concerning the image of men in *Pride and Prejudice*: "Analysis of Two translations of *Pride and Prejudice* from a feminist translation perspective" by Zhou Mijiang and Zhang Xiangping's "Female Perspectives on *Gentlemen and Knights*". Unfortunately, the former involving also female images did not analyze the men in Austen's writing comprehensively due to the limitation of space [3]; as for the latter, though it elaborated on the male figures in this female literature, the article focuses mostly on the plot and writing techniques, failing to analyze them from the translation perspective [4]. Therefore, there remains research space for the analysis of the image of male characters in different translators' works from the perspective of translation.

In this context, this research aims to probe into the personality traits of male characters in different translation editions of *Pride and Prejudice*, to explore if translators of different genders can both reproduce accurately feminism in this female literature and accordingly gain insight into feminism consciousness translators reveal in the text. To achieve this goal, the authors choose two Chinese versions of *Pride and Prejudice* as research subjects, respectively translated by Mr. Wang Keyi and Ms. Lei Limei. The research revolves mainly around three perspectives: 1) language expression that highlights the social status of different genders; 2) aesthetic standards related to gender stereotypes; 3) translation approaches that translators apply to defend their attitudes and values. By analyzing examples from the aforementioned perspectives, authors seek to explore the feminist consciousness behind those vivid and charming male characters, thus trying to promote the development of feminism translation theory in China.

## 2. Contrast analysis of two Chinese versions of *Pride and Prejudice*

*Pride and Prejudice* is one of the representative works of Jane Austen in Britain. The story takes place in the time of the Regency in Britain. Mr. Bennet, owner of the Longbourn estate in Hertfordshire, has five daughters, but his property is entailed on a male heir. In this context, the writer describes the love stories of the daughters. Specifically, the novel follows the character development of Elizabeth Bennet, the second daughter of the Bennet family. She meets Mr. Darcy at the Meryton Ball. However, pride and prejudice blind them to their mutual love. Fortunately, Darcy and Elizabeth realize this fact and allay their prejudices before the end of the story. At this point, the gentleman proposes again to the assertive lady and is accepted.

The feminist view in this work consists mainly in the heroine, who affirms her feminist perspective by helping to shape Mr. Darcy's moral character to match her own [5]. That reveals her struggle for independence and gender equality and offers evidence of a feminist ability to subvert the male-dominated society of Regency England. On the other hand, male characters in the novel are redefined from a feminist perspective [6]. Gentle, caring, men in the work show respect for women and recognition of gender equality, thereby reflecting the ideal gentlemen of the writer's aspiration as well as her idea against the patriarchy.

Wang Keyi, born in 1925, is a literary translator. He has served as an editor of many well-known publishing houses, such as the Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing Group, and the Shanghai Branch of the people's Literature Publishing House. In 1952, Wang Keyi graduated from the Department of English literature of Fudan University. Three years later, he published a translation of *Pride and Prejudice* in Shanghai Translation Publishing House. There are only a few biographical materials of Mr. Wang Keyi and only a limited number of his translated works, including *The Revolt*

of Islam by Shelley, The Song of Hiawatha written by Longfellow, Great Expectations written by Dickens, and the Decameron written by Boccaccio which he co-translated with Fang Ping.

Professor Lei Limei is the head of the English Translation Department of Hunan International Economic University, and her research interests are translation teaching and literary translation. She has published many papers such as "On the Translation of Poetic Images" and a dozen literary translations, over 600,000 words, including *Pride and Prejudice*. Professor Lei Limei explicates in the preface of the translation of *Pride and Prejudice* that she wants to present an ideal state of marriage to the public through this novel.

## 2.1 Language expressions

Feminist translators can see the world from a female perspective during the process of translating texts, including whether the male characters in the works are viewed from an objective perspective, how to have a correct view of marriage, and whether the women in the marriage are in an independent position. All these points reflect the translator's feminist consciousness through the intervention of the translation. This approach can enrich the reader's reading experience and make readers empathize with the characters in the text, instead of limiting them to an incomplete and biased understanding of women from the male perspective. This paper compares two different translations of the language expression of male characters in this text to see whether feminist consciousness is present in the translations and has an impact on the translators and the translation works.

Example 1:

There is a meanness in all the arts which ladies sometimes condescend to employ for captivation [7]. (p. 36)

Lei: 小姐们为迷住异性而屈尊使用的一切诡计都是卑鄙的 [8]. (p. 33)

Wang: 姑娘们为了勾引男子, 有时竟不择手段, 使用巧计, 这真是卑鄙 [9]. (p. 45)

This passage is taken from Chapter 8 of Volume I. Elizabeth, Darcy, and Miss Bingley discuss what it means to be an accomplished lady. Elizabeth thinks that Darcy is so demanding of women that no one has ever satisfied him, and that no woman in the world is perfect. While Miss Bingley thinks that Elizabeth's objection is just to pander to men and is her ploy to win man's hearts. Miss Bingley thinks that many women are as versatile as Mr. Darcy says, and dismisses Elizabeth's opinion in front of Darcy, and this statement is Darcy's response to Miss Bingley.

"Condescend to do" means "to do something that you think it is below your social or professional position to do" in the Oxford dictionary [10]. (p. 418) In Lei Limei's translation, the word is translated as "屈尊", which is more faithful to the original text and better conveys the meaning of the original text to readers. It reflects Darcy's respect for women and helps to show readers a more elegant image of a gentleman the author wants to present in this novel, which makes it easier to convey the translator's understanding of the author's ideal view of marriage and the positive image of male and female characters in this novel. Translators with feminist consciousness tend to be more neutral in their translations and do not deliberately use a masculine-minded perspective to guide readers to understand the original text according to the idea of female inferiority. The omission of "condescend" in Wang Keyi's translation signaled the ideology of female inferiority in the society at that time, subconsciously beautifying the male image and blurring the independent characteristics of females, which also showed that the patriarchal consciousness was the mainstream consciousness of the society at that time. In this respect, therefore, the translator's careful wording of the translation is not only influenced by subjective experience, but also by the general environment of the time in which he or she lives. The exploration of the translator's intention for the translation cannot be separated from the examination of the time in which it was made.

## 2.2 Aesthetic standards

Aesthetic standards are the criteria that deal with the nature of beauty and taste. Specifically, it shows how people form a judgment about other things. From a social perspective, aesthetic standards represent the ideal image that everyone pursues.

When it comes to the aesthetic standards concerning women, there exist huge disparities between the ones defined by Chinese traditional culture and the feminist. The former, influenced by patriarchy as well as the men's aesthetics behind it over thousands of years, demonstrates a single, fixed female image: young, virtuous, and beautiful [11]. However, spurred by a strong willingness to emphasize ladies' social status and equal rights, the feminist translators tend to relocate the female image, adding new qualities to female characters.

Given this, the authors probe into feminist consciousness in the male character as well as translators behind them, by analyzing the ideal female image in different editions.

Example 2:

Oh! She is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld [7]! (p. 8)

雷: 哦! 她是我见过的最美丽的姑娘 [8]! (p. 8)

王: 噢! 我从来没见过这么美丽的一个尤物 [9]! (p. 12)

The discrepancy in the translation of "creature" illustrates how feminism exerts influence on translation. This phrase is abstracted from a context when Mr. Bingley expresses admiration for Jane's beauty after he has danced with this charming lady. From the perspective of context, the word "creature" has nothing to do with negative connotations. Meanwhile, "creature" is explained in Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary as "(especially following an adjective) a person, considered in a particular way [10]." (p. 480) This paper concludes from this that "the beautiful creature" in this context represents a positive compliment for Jane.

However, Mr. Wang translates it into "尤物", an implicit sexy symbol in Chinese. In ancient China, this word was also used to describe toys, since "物" in "尤物" means object. Therefore, this expression also implies an issue of objectifying the female. Nowadays, "尤物", in most cases, refers to an attractive woman with an extraordinary charm who could be a potential sex mate. They are tantamount to those who please men with their appearance, which means that they are mostly dependent and inferior to men [12]. However, it is misleading to use this word to interpret "the beautiful creature", since it takes more or less a dismissive tone toward women, while that does not exist in the original text. From this difference, the authors find that the female image in this version fully meets the imagination of men's ideal spouse, reflecting the thought of a patriarchal society.

By contrast, Ms. Lei translates it into "姑娘", a relatively neutral expression the Chinese use to call ladies, showing modernity. This word sidesteps the rudeness of putting down women and shows respect to them. Unlike the former creating an arrogant, unpolite male figure showing superiority to women, the gentleman in Lei's version is endowed with gentility, grace, and the consciousness of gender equality. With the feminist consciousness perceived in the translation, Lei's version shows a more appropriate description of male characters in the original text and it could be a better choice in the context.

### 2.3 Translation skills

Feminist translators can see the world from a female perspective during the process of translating texts, including whether the male characters in the works are viewed from an objective

Translation skills are the skills or techniques required for the specific implementation and application of a certain translation method in translation activities. A suitable way to translate can make readers better understand feminism in literary works and avoid the spread of discrimination against women in the literary field. Flotow, a famous Canadian literary translator, summarized the three most effective and widely used translation techniques in her book "Translation and Gender: Translating in the 'era of Feminism'": supplement, frontier and footnote, and hijacking. This article takes supplements as an example.

Example 3:

The word (accomplished) is applied to many a woman who cares it no otherwise than by netting a purpose or covering a screen [7]. (p. 35)

Lei: 人们常常说很多只不过会编制钱袋, 制作屏风的女人多才多艺 [8]. (p. 32)

Wang: 多少女人只不过会编制钱袋, 点缀屏风, 就享有了多才多艺的美名 [9]. (p. 44)

This paragraph is selected from Chapter 8 of Volume 1. Darcy, Elizabeth, and Miss Bingley are talking about what kind of woman can be considered accomplished. In the conversation, Darcy explains a view that he believes is universal in contemporary times.

Wang's translation is a literal translation, which faithfully restores the connotation of the original sentence without adding anything else. Lei's translation skillfully uses the technique of adding translation, adding the restriction "人们常常说" (people often say) before the sentence, thereby turning a given fact into an argument into a point of view. To a certain extent, this weakens Darcy's view that women's accomplishment is an exaggeration of facts and expresses the original meaning more euphemistically. This translation reflects the delicacy of female translators and the feminist thoughts that permeate between the lines.

Example 4:

Her resistance had not adjusted her with the gentleman, and he was thinking of her with some complacency when thus accosted by Miss Bingley [7]. (p. 8)

Lei: 在这位先生看来, 她的抗拒并没有损害她的形象. 正当他怀着几分沾沾自喜的心情想着她时, 宾利小姐走来跟他搭讪 [8]. (p. 22)

Wang: 她的拒绝并没有使达西觉得难过. 达西正在相当高兴地想念着她, 恰巧彬格莱小姐走过来招呼他 [9]. (p. 29)

This paragraph is selected from Chapter 6 of Volume I. Under the strong arrangement of Sir William Lucas, Mr. Darcy offered Elizabeth an invitation to dance with him, but Elizabeth politely refused. Her refusal did not induce any negative feelings for Elizabeth in Mr. Darcy but rather delighted him.

The original text uses the word "complacency" to express Mr. Darcy's emotions at that time. In the Oxford Dictionary [10], (p. 408) it means "a feeling of being satisfied with yourself or with a situation so that you do not think any change is necessary", usually translated as "自满; 自鸣得意". Although "complacency" is derogatory, the author does not express distinctly a negative meaning to Mr. Darcy according to the context.

There is an interesting discrepancy when translators interpret this word. Faithful to the original text, Ms. Lei translates it as "沾沾自喜 (pleased with oneself)", skillfully retaining the original contradictory meaning of the word and avoiding negatively evaluating Mr. Darcy. However, Mr. Wang opts to completely cover up the derogatory meaning of "complacency" and translated it into "相当高兴 (quite happy)". Such translation simplifies the word and is suspected of beautifying the male character deliberately.

### 3. Conclusion

By comparing and analyzing the male images of *Pride and Prejudice* translated by translators of different genders, the author finds that the male images written by male translators are more in line with the male superiority in social concepts, while those described by female translators correspond with the "new gentlemen" in author's expectation.

The authors conclude from this that female translators have a stronger subjective initiative when faced with patriarchal thought. It turns the relation between the original text and the translation from opposite to symbiotic, and that between author and translator from subordinate to equal. Given this, feminist translation opens us to new possibilities in translation activities, which greatly improves the status of translators and reduces the marginalization of women. To a certain extent, works like Lei's translation can stimulate the feminist consciousness in the public.

As for Mr. Wang, his version was less enlightening in awakening people's feminist consciousness. This translation was published by Shanghai Literature and Art United Publishing House in 1955. Less than ten years after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, access to overseas information was limited and only a handful of citizens were well-educated. As a bridge between two

cultures, translated works play a key role in the introduction of excellent foreign literary works and advanced ideas. However, Mr. Wang in this version unconditionally beautifies the male image and blurs women's independence and initiative. That impeded, to a certain extent, the introduction of feminism in China and slowed down the development of Chinese feminism.

The discrepancy in male images of these two versions can be best explained by historical background and personal experiences.

First of all, these differences originate from the gender differences of translators themselves. Lei Limei is a female translator, while Wang Keyi is a male translator. They have different degrees of intervention in translation. With the same gender, female translators like Lei Limei can regard the characters and plots in the novel from the same gender perspective and can empathize with the characters in the works. Therefore, female translators can be more sensitive and can explain the ideas of same-sex authors. This is reflected in the fact that in the translated works, the description of characters, especially those male characters, in Lei's version is similar to that of the original author Jane Austen, which is described from a female perspective. Whether positive or negative, her translation is consistent with the sentiment and choice of words in the original text and is more objective and respectful of women. In contrast, Wang's version is more subjective, and despite Wang Keyi has strong literary skills and ability to formulate words, his words reveal a contempt attitude of men towards women and the idea of maintaining the male image of the patriarchal society. Compared with male translators, therefore, female translators give greater play to the translator's subjectivity and initiative, which is more in line with the feminist translation theory.

The historical background that translators live in represents another contributing factor to the differences in male characters. Born in 1925 and passed away prematurely in 1968, Mr. Wang grew up in an era where the gender perspective changed dramatically. Before the founding of New China in 1949, Chinese women were socially inferior and their basic rights were not guaranteed in that feudalistic society. Deprived of educational opportunity and saddled with abnormal moral rules, sometimes women were even regarded as the property of men. As the New China was founded, women's liberation was embodied in China's constitution and laws. For example, the constitution of 1954 has established that women and men enjoy equal rights legally in many respects. However, the stereotype of women enduring thousands of years in traditional Chinese society could not be transformed easily by laws and regulations, which is also the reason why feminist campaigns remain a trend in today's world. As a result, although there exists respect for women in Wang's work, social prejudice against women still emerges more or less in his translation. By contrast, Ms. Lei is the translator of the contemporary era, when Chinese feminism has made certain progress since the 1980s and gender equality has become a common wish for all, readers or translators, male or female. In this context, people can find an increasing number of open-minded and modern women in many contemporary artworks. They challenge traditional patriarchal concepts and female morality, striving for their due social roles and family status. Consequently, as feminism becomes more widely accepted by the Chinese, it is natural for readers to perceive a more apparent feminist awareness in Lei's work.

There exist limitations in our research. Since this paper mainly focuses on qualitative research and the data are nonnumerical, there exists a certain degree of subjectivity in our conclusion. Alongside that, our research method was relatively single, employing only contrast analysis. It is hoped that more detailed research could be conducted in this field and this paper could enlighten translators of both sexes and therefore help them to cultivate gender equality awareness, so as to promote the development of feminist translation views and integrate them with existing translation views. In doing so, both sides can learn from each other and present better translation effects.

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