

An Analysis of English Translation of Li Qingzhao's Ci Poetry with Feminist Translation Theory

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Abstract. Feminist translation theory has a long history and has been developed and perfected in the translation practice of many works. This section explains feminist translation theory and also explains the translation perspective of "bisexual homology" that belongs to the feminist translation methodology. This essay proposed to discuss a famous poet in Song Dynasty, who is Li Qingzhao. Her poems reflect the characteristics of the Song Dynasty women's euphemisms and shallow feelings, and reflect women's keen intuition. In this paper, it aims to analyze how a variety of translators express feminism in translated texts. It is obvious that translators always use preface, footnoting, hijacking and supplement to represent feminism. After the analysis of translated text, the strategies that used in these texts can be an effective and efficient method to make the readers have a deeper and more clear understanding of some traditional Chinese stuffs in the these poems and the representing in feminism.

Keywords: Li Qingzhao; Ci Poetry; the feminist translation strategies.

1. Introduction

1.1 Basic Information

Li Qingzhao, alias Yi'an Jushi, was a native of Zhangqiu, Qizhou (now northwest of Zhangqiu, Jinan, Shandong Province) in the Song Dynasty. She was an outstanding female lyricist of the euphemism school in the Song Dynasty. She was born in a scholarly family and was skilled in poetry and song, as well as in music, calligraphy, and painting. Her father, Li Gefei, was a famous scholar, and her husband, Zhao Mingcheng, was an examiner of epigraphy.

Li Qingzhao possessed literary qualities and situations that were not available to ordinary women at that time, which provided Li Qingzhao with the realistic possibility of using a female perspective to elaborate narratives. Li Qingzhao's poems are collected in "Yi'an Collection" and "Shuyu Lyrics", and her representative works include "Recalling Flute Song on Phoenix Terrace", "Being Intoxicated in Flowery Shade", and "Like A Dream Verse".

Li Qingzhao's poetry creations have different purports due to the changes in life in the Northern and Southern Song Dynasties: the themes cover natural scenery, thoughts in the boudoir, nostalgia and hometown, loneliness, and melancholy.

1.2 Summary of Translation

From the perspective of Chinese culture's "Going out strategy", the overseas circulation and acceptance of literary classics such as Li Qingzhao's works is a key topic of academic concern. American poet and translator Kenneth Rexroth, James Cryer, Chinese translator Wang Jiaosheng, and famous scholar Zhuo Zhenying have all tried to translate Li Qingzhao's poems into English. For example, Zhuo Zhenying translated "Fisherman Proud (They could waves fly to the foggy sky in the morning)" into English, using old English to connect the ancient Song poetry, adding annotations, helping the readers of the translated text to understand the cultural meaning of the poetry, and reflecting the translator's subjectivity and feminist translation view.

1.3 Subjective Consciousness

Li Qingzhao's personal image is multi-dimensionally shaped in translation practice. In the English translation of Rexroth's "Like A Dream Verse", Li Qingzhao is a "talented girl" who travels the mountains and waters and is an ordinary wife. Among the many English translations of poems which are related to "wine" like "The Partridge Sky (The wooden windows were with rustling cold daylight)", Li Qingzhao is a "female drinker" who indulges in fine wine and expresses her feelings through drunkenness. In the English translation of Rexroth's "Butterflies Fallen in Love with Flowers (The winter ice began to melt with the warm breeze and rain)", Li Qingzhao is a sorrowful and desolate woman who expresses her feelings through drunkenness. In the English translation of Wang Jiaosheng's "Beautify Lips by Crimson (Let feet touch ground stop the swing)", Li Qingzhao is a "strange woman" who is spontaneous and unrestrained. In addition, poems such as "Washing Brook Sand" (Her pretty face is like a brodered lotus with a smile), "Fisherman Proud (They could waves fly to the foggy sky in the morning)", "To The Tune 'Picking Mulberries' (Who Planted banana trees in front of my window)" and other poems also contributed to the construction of Li Qingzhao's female image. Multi-dimensional construction promotes the birth and translation of the ontology of graceful female consciousness and feminism [1].

1.4 Feminism

Li Qingzhao's lyrics are subordinate to the female lyrics of the Song Dynasty. There are three female lyrics in the Song Dynasty: the lyrics made by songstresses, the boudoir lyrics written by women, and the female lyrics created in the war. Among them, the second and third types are full of feminine color and have the awakening of female consciousness. Li Qingzhao's lyrics are the outstanding representatives of female lyrics in the Song Dynasty, and her feminist consciousness can be summarized in four aspects.

First, the female self-images she portrays, regardless of age, are distinct and vivid. For example, "Seeing guests come in, I put off shoes, but socks put on, my hairpin slipping down. In shy manners, I walk along, looking back, I lean upon the gate, To sniff the plum blossom fragrant" vividly depicts the image of a lively and mischievous girl. Secondly, Li Qingzhao's lyrics focus on the self-respect and self-improvement requirements of women's poetry in Song Dynasty. Self-esteem and self-improvement are the most valuable parts of female consciousness in Song Dynasty, which is closely connected with modern consciousness in recent times. Furthermore, Li Qingzhao's poems reflect the complex of "narcissism" and "self-pity" in female poems in the Song Dynasty, which is a detailed expression of self-worth and self-confidence. For example, "Slow Tune of Clear Morning Auspiciousness" compares her own beauty with flowers. In the end, with the understandable and affectionate language, Li Qingzhao's lyrics reflects the euphemism and beauty of the Song Dynasty's female lyrics, and it reflects the keen intuition of women, which helps women use the female consciousness to perceive their own growth and development in a patriarchal society [2].

2. Case Study of Feminist Translation Strategies in the Translation of Li Qingzhao's Ci Poetry

There are lots of feminist translation strategies summarized by the feminist translators. Among them, the most representative ones are prefacing and footnoting, supplementing and hijacking summed up by Luis Von Flotow [3]. The following case study will be based on this theory.

2.1 Prefacing and footnoting

In the preface, feminist translators frequently express their ideas clearly. By providing more information, footnotes aid in the readers' understanding of the author's aim. The link between the source text and the target text is redefined by prefacing and footnoting, which show the translators' subjectivity. This exemplifies the feminist translation spirit.

In feminist translation, the author and the translators may create or use some new phrases. Prefacing and footnoting are useful methods to explain the new words and the strategies behind. It is the same for some culturally exclusive phrases. In the procession of translating Ci poetry, the translators should make clear explanation about the culture-specific words, footnoting can be helpful. In the meantime, allusion is frequently-used in the creation of Chinese Ci poetry, the translators' detailed footnotes is helpful for the target readers to understand the metaphor and implication behind the allusion.

2.1.1 Prefacing

In Xu Yuanchong's preface, he stated that he felt inspired to introduce Li Qingzhao to the world and make a few contributions to the translation culture at large.

Along with introducing Li Qingzhao and her Ci style in the preface, Mao Yumei also explained why she chose to translate Li Qingzhao's Ci poetry.

Li Qingzhao was highly regarded by Mao Yumei, who also desired to introduce and disseminate Chinese literature around the world. She used the Preface to discuss her perspective on translation and the rationale behind specific translation strategies. This underscores the significance of the translator while letting the western audience know the strategies the translator employed.

The translator will draw readers' attention and introduce the author's key idea by including preface and footnotes. The target readers would benefit from having a thorough understanding of the two cultural variances.

2.1.2 Footnoting

The translator sometimes provides footnotes when dealing with languages difficult to comprehend. Footnotes can be added to texts to assist readers in answering reading-related questions while preserving the distinctive cultural elements of China. It is fundamental for promoting cultural diversity.

There are no footnotes for individual words, phrases, or sentences in Xu's translation. Instead, Xu Yuanchong provided a summary of each Ci poem's topic at the bottom.

Additionally, Mao Yumei's translation contains 40 footnotes. They are generally included to account for geographic information, words with cultural connotations, and other things. Let me now display a few footnotes from Mao Yumei's version.

Example 1:

永遇乐元宵

On the **Full Moon Day** in January to the tune of Yongyule.

"Full Moon Day" is also called the Lantern Festival, and it is held on January 15th in the Chinese lunar calendar. On the day people light colourful lanterns of various shapes at home and also in the streets to celebrate family reunions and the coming spring [4].

In the second example, “元宵” was translated into "Full Moon Day". People in China often connect the moon to a longing for home and family, especially around the full moon.

And Li Qingzhao's desire for a family reunion is primarily the subject of this Ci poem. There is no question that the most accurate translation is "Full Moon Day."

The translator avoided the more common translations in favor of some unknown words with culturally specific Chinese implications from the aforementioned instances. It demonstrates the significant efforts the translator did to dismantle cultural barriers and promote our Chinese culture. The feminist translation theory states that by including footnotes, translators can inform readers the intention of the translation.

Example 2:

九万里风鹏正举。

风休住，

蓬舟吹取三山去！

注释：

《庄子·逍遥游》：“鹏之徙于南冥也，水击三千里，抟扶摇（风名）而上者九万里。”
三山，指的是蓬莱，方丈，瀛洲三神山。

Since th'Roc'll fly nine myriad li and nine,
Would you ask th'blow
To send my boat to th'Three Isles at a go?

Notes:

In the light of Zhuangzi's fable, the Roc is capable of covering a very long distance. The Three Isles refer to the Isles of Penglai, Fangzhang and Yingzhou, which are the abodes of Immortals' [5].
("Pride of the Fisherman" Translated by Zhuo Zhenying)

The footnote explains the allusion about Zhuangzi, a famous ancient Chinese philosopher who describes a giant fictitious creature named Roc. Another allusion is Three Isles in ancient Chinese mythology. Originally, Zhuangzi uses the figure of Roc to express the Taoism philosophy. But it is commonly used as a symbol of ambition and lofty sentiments in late time Chinese poetry. The Three Isles is the symbol of an ideal world where there is no annoyance, grief and pain. In Song Dynasty which is still in the feudal and patriarchal period, there is nearly no chance for women to make great achievements and accomplish their ambitions. Society is controlled by men, the ladies who are born in the upper class are expected to be docile and competent to manage the household, rather than secure an official position and learn about politics. The allusions express the author's ambition of making great achievements and the depression of being obstructed by the patriarchal society. She cannot find her place in the real world, can only comfort herself by dreaming of the futile mental world [6].

2.2 Hijacking

The subjective nature of feminist translators is best exemplified through hijacking. The hijackers must rewrite the translation and erode the patriarchal consciousness in order to achieve gender equality. They modify the female characters' images, making them independent and unique rather than being the accessories and decorations. By using the strategy of hijacking, the feminist translators find a way to reduce gender discrimination in literature works and improve female status. Li Qingzhao is known to have written the majority of the elegant and euphemistic poems. She enjoyed using descriptions of objects or scenes to convey her emotions. In this instance, the translator should make sure that the female awareness to a great extent.

Example 3:

一种相思，两处闲愁。

I am longing for thee

Just as thou art for me [7].

Example 3 was taken from Tune: A Twist of Mume Blossoms, a song that Li Qingzhao had written while her husband was away on a study tour. They have only recently become husband and wife and would have to part ways. Li Qingzhao longed for her husband's return and missed him. This sentence's structure was revised by the translator, who also added the subject and object. His interpretation highlighted the couple's intimate bond. Despite being equal and autonomous, they are concerned about one another. This demonstrates how the method of "hijacking" can affect the translation's form and structure in addition to its meaning. In a more surface-level manner, it demonstrates gender equality.

Example 4:

一面风情深有韵，

半笺娇恨寄幽怀。

Love at first sight,

Letter follows, inviting him to come.

("Love at First Sight—to the tune of Huanxisha", Translated by Mao Yumei) [8]

This is a Ci poetry about a girl in love who longing to meet her lover. The original text uses delicate and fancy words to describe her beauty and subtle thoughts about love. The expressions “风情” and

“韵” are used to emphasize the heroine’s great charm and affinity when she expresses Infatuation for her lover. The phrase “娇恨” and “幽怀” describe her frustration and melancholy of their departure and anxiety of the tryst. In the translation, the female translator Mao Yumei chooses to delete the redundant expression about the heroine’s appearance and focuses on her mood about falling in love. The translator put more emphasis on her joy and coyness to create a girl’s awareness of love rather than a flirtatious and resentful woman who is concerned about gain and loss in a relationship.

The translators use the strategy of hijacking properly, not only creating an independent figure of a girl who dares to love, but also expressing the original text’s purport of encouraging girls to chase love.

2.3 Supplementing

Supplementing is a common strategy for extending the original text. The translators rewrite the content to supplement the information lost in the procession of translating two languages that have different cultures. Based on the translators’ comprehension of the author’s original intention, they try to make up the information gap by using the strategy of supplementing. In feminist translation, the translators rewrite the text which may be unfriendly to female characters by supplementing. For example, Flotow cites the translation of the Bible where the word “Sisters” is added to the former “Brothers” to eliminate the patriarchal bias towards women [9]. In the translation of Li Qingzhao’s Ci poetry, the lines are concise but full of meanings. Translators must enrich the details to assist the readers to picture the image the author creates by using the strategy of supplementing.

Example 5:

试问卷帘人，
却道海棠依旧。

I ask my Chambermaid as she rolled up my screen/

She replied: “The same begonias are seen in the courtyard!”

(“Late Spring——to the tune of Rumengling”, Translated by Mao Yumei)

I ask the maid rolling up the screen,

“The same crab—apple tree,” she says,” is seen.”

(Tune: “Like a Dream”, Translated by Xu Yuanchong) [10]

The selected piece is translated by two different translators. The upper is translated by female translator Mao Yumei and the lower one is by male translator Xu Yuanchong. The female translator uses the strategy of supplementing frequently compared to the male translator. She adds two “my” in front of “Chambermaid” and “screen” separately and stresses the location “in the courtyard”, displaying the female consciousness and subtle inner world of women.

3. Conclusion

To conclude, Li Qingzhao’s poems represents feminism and illustrates the power of women. We mainly want to know how they use translation strategies to show feminism in Li Qingzhao’s Ci poetry. From different perspectives of translators, they translate the poems depend on their life experiences and their aesthetic and educational background. By using supplement, hijacking and footnoting, translators can compensate for the loss of information caused by cross-cultural differences. In addition, the number of the Ci poetry is far less than the Tang Poems, thus the samples for our studies are rather scarce, which may lead to a slight deviation in the conclusion. What’s more, a comparative study of the versions that applied the feminist translation strategies and those versions that don’t may add more accuracy to this study. In the future, the translation of Li Qingzhao’s poems still needs to face greatly difficulty, so the authors hope more and more scholars can join in the study of this field. In this way, Chinese culture and feminism in these poems can be widely spread all over the globe.

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