

Construction of Gender in Two Chinese Translations of Little Women

Xinyang Peng

University of Melbourne, Australia

pengxinyang1209@163.com

Abstract. This paper aims to explore the influence of the translators' sexual difference on their construction of gender identity in the two translations of *Little Women* written by Louisa May Alcott. The influence of the translators' gender on the translations is a controversial topic. However, most of gender and translation studies have been done from a restricted feminist translation viewpoint. Based on Judith Butler's gender performativity theory, this paper thus takes the two Chinese translations of *Little Women* as examples to explore the differences between the male and female translators and their gender constructions in the translations. This paper adopts a critical discourse analysis of the source text and the translations of the characterisation of the female characters and the gendered discourses in *Little Women*. Focus of this paper is on the translator's paratextual elements as well. Since these approaches have rarely been applied in Chinese translation studies, this paper opens more discussion on the gender constructions of translators. It shows that the translators' translation strategies reflect the association of gender with their own gender identity in the translations. However, further research is needed to expand the scope of the data size to include the analysis of multiple translations by different groups of translators of different genders, to explore the operational mechanisms of translation activities and the ways how translation render or even construct gender identities.

Keywords: Gender Construction; Gender Identity; Gender Performativity Theory; Judith Butler; Translation of *Little Women*.

1. Introduction

In the 1960s, due to the second wave of feminism movements, the intricate relationship between gender issues and language became the focus of many researches. Gender discrimination embodied in language and other patriarchal language forms that also played a crucial role in the construction of gender identity and stereotypes (Meng 2019: 15). In the 1990s, under the influence of post-structuralist theory, a new definition of gender identity emerged, which is regarded as a "performance" that changes with context, so the gender identity of an individual is multiple and mobile. This view greatly shakes the essentialist's gender views, resulting in a change in the focus of gender and language research. Researchers are beginning to pay attention to the use of language by men and women to construct their own gender identity in a specific context (Meng 2019: 16).

According to West et al. (1997), language is not a marker of gender, rather, it is the most basic way of constructing gender identity. As a result, using language in different ways in certain contexts construct different gender identities. Translation, as a linguistic communication activity, has become one of the ways or tools for the translators to perform their gender identities (Meng 2019:22). Translated languages are classified as "mediated languages" and is the product of a shared influence between the source language and the target language. A translator is not a sounding board for the source text, rather, is a subjective person who can choose to leave his or her own voice or fingerprint in the translation.

Louisa May Alcott, who was an influential American abolitionist, feminist, and novelist, has created many excellent works depicting American female images in the 19th century to show her own personal feminist beliefs. Throughout her life, Alcott remained unmarried and she was involved in reforming movements such as temperance and women's suffrage. Since she published her first popular novel *Little Women*, she has accomplished remarkable achievements in writing. Set during the American Civil War, *Little Women* follows the lives of the March sisters and reflects the gender

consciousness in America at that time. Topical issues including female consciousness, female emancipation, and female rights. From 1992 to the present, at least 45 Chinese translations of *Little Women* have been published. (The number is obtained from Jingdong, China's largest online retailer, and counted manually by the author of this paper. There could be more than 45 versions.)

However, studies on the Chinese translations of *Little Women* have mostly been based on the feminist translation theory so far. Most of these studies label any hint of feminism in the translations of female translators as feminist, while the gendered translations of male translators as patriarchal. The characteristics of male and female language patterns attributed to these studies reflect deeply rooted gender stereotypes and gender ideologies in society, which have limited the development of gender studies as seen in the study of the translation of *Little Women*. According to Sara Mills and Louise Mullany (2011), both genders negotiate their gender identities through language, which changes according to the context and is influenced by factors such as social class, ethnicity and region, resulting in the construction of gender identities that are in constant flux. This paper, therefore, attempts to examine whether genders of the translators may have any influences on the translations of *Little Women*. If so, How do female and male translators construct their gender identities through language in translation?

This paper examines gender construction in the 2020 edition of translation of Liu and Chen's and the 2017 edition of translation by the male translator Wang Zhiguang. (Liu and Chen's version was first published in 1997, Wang's version was first published in 2004.) Since the two translations were accomplished by translators of different gender and time, the differences in the translation can yield insights into how the translators' different ideologies might have played a part in their translation approaches.

I first briefly distinguishes the Western feminism in the nineteenth century during the American Civil War, and Chinese feminism, illustrating the contexts where *Little Women* was composed and where the two translations were published. I also introduce the use of Judith Butler's gender performativity theory in the field of translation, and consider the implications of applying this theory in gender and translation studies. Then, I examine the differences in translators' mediation translation strategies such as rewriting, omission, etc., adopted by the two translators for the specific gendered discourses. I also explore Louisa May Alcott's ambivalent feminist tendencies embodied in the source text, and discuss how translators can reflect their gender concepts in their translations.

2. The Contradictory Feminism Embodied in Little Women

In the West, women in the past have experienced a lengthy tradition of being excluded and marginalized by a men-dominated society, which has resulted in the emergence of women's movements since the nineteenth century (Eicher 2019:64). According to Li (2005:24), over the last two centuries, the globe has seen two crucial waves of feminist movements (“两个世纪以来，世界经历了两次女性主义运动的高潮。” Translated by myself). It is now generally accepted that the first wave of feminism took place between 1840 and 1925, and it focused on the debates over women suffrage, women's right to education and women employment. The goal of the first wave was to fight for women's rights in education, economy, legislation, and governance in a male-dominated society. The second wave began in the 1960s and lasted until the 1980s. There were two main streams: one followed the liberal feminism tradition, while the other shifted to radical feminism, claiming that sexism is the source of male domination (Li 2015:40). After the 1980s, the third wave emerged, the focus of which was changed to exploring theories on studies of women or gender.

First published in 1868, *Little Women* was created during the first wave of the feminist movement. Set during the American Civil War, *Little Women* is a story of women's growth centered on the March sisters, which is full of ups and downs and painful memories. Setiowati (as Ekasanti and Hernawati cited 2019: 113) states that *Little Women* reflects the state of women's consciousness and trends in American history at the time. The four characters in the novel pursue their rights as women, realize their autonomy and respect each other of their individuality. However, due to the social and

ideological constraints of the time, the idea of female liberalism in the novel is not fully developed and presented.

Ekasanti and Hernawati (2019: 114) state that most of American women in that era entered marriage in their early twenties and married up to the older, richer men because it was in line with the so-called natural “hierarchy”. The gender stereotype which was constructed by the society, and the image of “true woman” means that females should remain in the “domestic sphere”, taking care of their husbands and children (Ekasanti and Hernawati 2019:114). As the Civil War came to a close, movements on women paving their way beyond the home realm were starting, and Louisa May Alcott was one of those feminists at that time. What Alcott was attempting to express by the portrayal and characterization of the March sisters in *Little Women* was that American women in the 19th century encountered several obstacles as they tried to break away from the stereotype that “women should remain at home” and therefore not be relegated to domesticity.

Massey (1994: 3-4) argues that even though the American feminist movement flourished against the backdrop of the end of the American Civil War, traditional patriarchy continued to restrict severely women’s personal freedoms. This was also reflected in *Little Women*. Although the four sisters in the novel have a rebellious spirit and criticised bluntly the various unreasonable phenomena in the society at the time, they were still bound by the overall social framework. Living in the patriarchal era, they still show their reliance on men, since traditional social concepts are like a shackle affecting their behavior and perceptions.

3. Feminism in China

According to Schaffer and Song (2007), Chinese feminism has undergone a masculinization phase, which suggests that feminism in China was originally intended to empower women to share men’s social roles and duties rather than to advocate for women’s rights. This illustrates that women’s movements in China were predominantly a passive awakening driven and supported by men, with the aim of overthrowing feudal autocracy rather than combating male authority. However, unlike western feminism movements, feminism in China does not only emphasize women’s individual liberation, nor does it directly oppose the state, the nation, society and the male community (“中国的女权主义并不只强调女性自身个体解放，也不直接与国家、民族、社会及男性群体对立。” Translated by myself) (Cheng and Zhao 2015: 183).

Before the 1980s, Chinese feminism, which was heavily affected by western radical feminism, saw men as enemies, feminists at that time were more like man-haters (“仇男者” Translated by myself) (Li 2005). In the 1990s, a new translation of “feminism” as “女性主义nǚxing zhuyi” was introduced since “女权主义nǚquan zhuyi” was considered to imply ‘man-hating’ or ‘woman starving for power’ which is strongly aligned with western political feminism (Yu 2015:18). According to Schaffer and Song (2007:20), the new translation illustrated that Chinese-styled feminism was “sharp but not aggressive” and ‘achieving the harmonious development of both sexes’. Men were seen as an integral aspect of resistance and opposition in western mainstream feminism, while Chinese feminism, influenced by Confucianism, aims to strengthen women’s own voices while acknowledging gender differences without putting men against each other.

4. Theories of Translation and Gender Studies

According to Flotow(1999) and Candace West and Sarah Fenstermaker (1995), the study of gender and translation in the West has followed two major paths in the last forty years: one is along the conventional lines, advocating that the two sexes are opposed and translation is primarily a research of ‘the unfair treatment of women in a patriarchal culture, where women’s positions are, by necessity, placed and abused by men’ (Flotow 1999: 276); the other direction is the interpretation of women’s gender identity from the perspective of post-structuralism, which argues that women’s gender identity is constructed by discourses, and therefore women’s gender identity is constantly being reconstructed

and is indeterminate (West and Fenstermaker 1995: 98). Translation should be considered as a way of reconstructing gender identity, not a tool to rebel against another gender.

In the early 1990s, influenced by post-structuralism and cultural relativism, feminism underwent the third wave of feminist movement, which spread to more countries and regions other than the UK and the US, and it triggered an epistemological shift among some feminist scholars. In 1990, Judith Butler published her theoretical monograph *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, which marked the formal formation of the post-structural feminism. In contrast to the earlier feminist reliance on gender essentialism, the post-structural feminism proposes a new vector of gender research, including cultural contexts, subject differences, knowledge and power relations, gender discursive constructions and performance practices. In her 2004 book *Undoing Gender*, Butler explains how she has formed the gender performativity theory based on her own personal “trouble” with the only two gender identities available in society (Butler 2004: 3). As Terrell Carver (2014) illustrated, in Butler’s understanding, “perform” refers to the fact that masculinity and femininity are not established facts that are physically portrayed in the biological bodies of men and women, but rather stereotypes that are formed through the repeated practice of acting, such as style of dress, behavior, tone of voice and social etiquette, which convey and tell people who they are through these impressions.

According to Lori Chamberlain (1988), early feminism and feminist translation studies were dedicated to deconstructing the patriarchal center and abolishing the misogynistic gender metaphors of theoretical discourse, merely establishing a new idealized feminine superiority. Gender performativity theory, however, broke with the dualistic rhetoric of essentialism. In the 1990s, scholars began to investigate how such diverse gender perspectives can be applied to translation studies. Carol Maier and Françoise Massardier-Kenney (1996: 230) state that “gender definitions are neither universal nor absolute manifestations of inherent differences but relatively local, constantly changing constructions contingent on multiple historical and cultural factors”, and gender characteristics “do not represent a fixed, seamless identity”, but rather are influenced by a variety of factors. They also advocate for a study on how translation may contribute to a rethinking of gender and gender identification by putting aside “natural” translation meanings and trying to deal with whatever gender definitions the source text can offer. They recommend that translators use their work as a vehicle for probing the nuances of translation’s relationship with gender, suggesting that they use words like “women-identified” and “gender” instead of the word “feminist”, which they find controversial for those looking to question the very concept of gender (Meng 2019:28). For them, translation is the ideal vehicle for revealing the insufficiency of the definition of gender. According to Li Hongyu, research on gender and translation started late in China:

直至1999年才有学者注意到译者性别也是影响的一个重要因素。2000年才有学者介绍西方女性主义对翻译的影响。2001年对女性主义翻译理论的译介出现。到2002年我国翻译研究者才开始关注女性主义翻译。(2007: 50)

in 1999, many scholars realized that the gender of translators significantly affected translations; and in 2000, some scholars introduced the impact of Western feminism on translation; in 2001, translations adopting feminist translation theories appeared in China; and in 2002, translation researchers in China began to pay attention to feminist translation. (Translated by myself)

Since there were no feminist movements in China like those in the West, the researches on gender and translation in China are seldom combined with practice, but mostly focus on translating the achievements of gender and translation studies in the West, such as the implementation and integration of western feminist translation theories and the case studies of Chinese female translators or translations. The problems are mainly manifested in the following aspects: Firstly, the theoretical research perspective is single; secondly, the studies on the history of local women translators either

fall into the rut of feminist political demands or lack the necessary gender awareness; and finally, the case studies of translations lack contextual awareness.

Previous studies of gender and the Chinese translation of *Little Women* are primarily derived from a western feminism perspective and around the feminist translation strategies used in the novel, but little research examines the context. Therefore, I compare Liu Chunying and Chen Yuli's and Wang Zhiguang's translations from a post-structural perspective, mainly concentrating on the gendered discourses, to examine how the translator dealt with the gender issues.

To make the reading of the article more agile, I have introduced the following abbreviations:

- Source Text: ST
- Target Text: TT
- 2020 edition of 《小妇人》 translated by Liu and Chen: TT1
- 2017 edition of 《小妇人》 translated by Wang: TT2

5. Differences between Translators' Mediation in TTs

Hatim and Mason (1997: 147) define translator's mediation as 'extent to which translators intervene in the transfer process, feeding their own knowledge and beliefs into their processing of a text', and translators are most possible to modify their translations in terms of lexical selection, sentence structure and discourse. The translator's mediation is perhaps most apparent in terms of discursal features, which may reveal the translator's conscious or unconscious performance of gender as well as their assumptions of ideological issues (Meng, 2019: 121). The discursal features that are investigated in this section include the naming of characters and the paratextual elements.

5.1 Naming of Characters

As Cameron pointed out, many feminists have argued that the names we give our world are not "mere reflections of reality, nor arbitrary labels with no relation to it". Rather, names are "culture's way" of fixing "what will actually count as reality in a universe of overwhelming, chaotic sensations, all pregnant with a multitude of possible meaning" (Cameron, 1990: 12). This implies that names, whether of people or objects, are more ideological statements or values than simple marks. Since Chinese and English have very different forms of naming people and have different cultural traditions, translators must make choices on how to transfer between the two. In certain ways, this implies that translators are allowed room to do manipulation and mediation (Meng 2019: 129).

The common practice in translating English names into Chinese is to transcribe the English names phonetically following the English alphabetic system. However, Meng (2019) indicates that it is not necessary for all the translators to name characters in this way, they can rename the characters depending on their appearance (as depicted by the writer), personalities or the meaning of their names. For example, "Meg" and "Amy" are translated as "梅格" and "艾美" in TT1, and "美格" and "艾美" in TT2. Liu Chunying tries to give each character a different character, choosing the characters '梅' and '美' as the sisters' names, perhaps suggesting that although Meg is keen on fame and fortune, she has more of her own ideas than those girls who are obsessed with luxurious life. And the Chinese character for "梅" means perseverance and noble character. Amy is mentioned several times in the text as being concerned with her appearance, and "艾美" sounds the same as "爱美" (pursuit of beauty), therefore this translation is appropriate to Amy's personality. However, Wang Zhiguang simply translates the sisters' names according to their pronunciation.

5.2 Paratextual Elements

Paratextual elements are the features that appear alongside the text but are not the part of the text itself, and serve as additional or supplemental remarks on the text, the adoption of which is a means for translators to "claim subjectivity and perform identity" (Meng 2015:133). It is part of what Theo

Hermans (1996) called the “translator’s voice”, or what Mona Baker (2000) labeled the “translator’s thumb-print”. In the case of literary translation, “common paratextual elements in translation include preface, afterwords, footnotes or endnotes, and list of characters” (Meng 2015:133). There are differences between the two translations investigated in terms of how the paratextual means are employed. Both translations are accompanied by a translator’s preface and footnotes. Yet the content of the preface and the footnotes differ.

In Wang’s translation (TT2), the translator’s preface is composed of six paragraphs, running only two pages. It gives a very brief introduction to the prize that the novel has won, a plot summary, and an introduction to the author, without stating some of the translator’s strategies. Wang Zhiguang says in the preface that with women in a subordinate position in the 19th century, the novel helps girls to submit to fate and explore their possible endings in society in a variety of ways. In his preface, *Little Women* is more like a narrative text of four young girls’ coming-of-age story, without emphasis on feminism-related content.

However, from the preface to the TT1, we can clearly see Liu’s own views and understandings about female image and feminism in this book. (Liu Chunying contributes the most of this work and she wrote the preface for the 2020 edition of *Little Women*.) First of all, she enjoys the novel and is struck by the portrayal of the four sisters. In the preface, she explains the genre and the main content of *Little Women*, and suggests the sources of the thematic ideas. More importantly, she felt that the March sisters in the novel did reflect the American spirit-independence and self-reliance, which most women of the time did not yet possess. Liu (2020) also claims in the preface that *Little Women* reflects feminist ideas, such as the struggle for women’s liberation and women’s rights. Also, Alcott’s commitment to the women’s suffrage movement is mentioned in the preface. This allows the reader to understand more about the feminist consciousness in the novel. As a result, Liu Chunying may use some translation strategies to reveal the feminist consciousness of the female characters in the translation.

Their translations each have over 100 footnotes, which mainly explain poorly understood words such as names of people and places, book titles, some French and German terms. The female translators, Liu Chunying and Chen Yuli, focus heavily on introducing the reader to female writers. The male translator, Wang Zhiguang, on the other hand, does not add footnotes in these places. The following are some examples:

1) In TT1 “UNCLE TOM” (Alcott 2017: 61) is explained in the footnote as “女作家斯托写的一部反奴隶制小说” (An anti-slavery novel written by the female writer Stowe). The translators tend to put emphasis on the female writer.

2) In TT1 “Edgeworth” (Alcott 2017:109) is introduced by Liu and Chen as “埃奇沃思：英裔爱尔兰女作家，以写儿童故事和反映爱尔兰生活及风土人情的小说著称” (an Anglo-Irish woman writer known for her children’s stories and novels reflecting Irish life and customs). The footnote in TT2 reads “爱尔兰作家” (Irish writer). It is clear that the Liu’s translation focuses more on the details of the women writer, while Wang merely introduces the writer’s nationality.

3) In TT1, Miss Burney (Alcott 2017:227) is footnoted as “伯尼：英国女小说家，作品多写涉世少女的经历” (Burney: an English female novelist whose works are mostly about the experiences of young girls in the world). The footnote in TT1 highlights the writer’s gender and feminist work. Although in TT2, Wang Zhiguang also introduces the author in a footnote, he spends more time stating when her work *Evelina* was published than focusing on her own contribution to feminism.

It is worth mentioning that in Wang Zhiguang’s translation, five footnotes add to the characters in Dickens’ novels. In Chapter 33, two footnotes are added to the characters from Shakespeare’s writings. These are not added in Liu and Chen’s translations. It is also worth noting that the translator

of TT2, Wang Zhiguang, cites the translation of TT1 in the footnotes to help readers understand some of the original texts, but he renders some gendered discourses in a different way. This may suggest, to some extent, Wang Zhiguang deliberately employed different translation strategies from that of the two female translators' for these gendered discourses.

6. Differences between Translations of the Gendered Discourses

In the ST, there are gendered depictions of male and female characters, distinguishing men and women and placing them in the society using various ways. As a result, these characters' actual behaviors differ from what is expected of them. I found more than 40 stretches of text that explicitly construct gender, however, due to the word limit for this paper, I focused my discussions on 16 examples. The following are few examples of gendered discourses from the source text. English explanatory text for TTs are put in the brackets in my analysis.

6.1 Masculine Features

1) ST: Fifteen-year-old Jo was very tall, thin, and brown, and reminded one of a colt... She had a decided mouth, a comical nose, and sharp, gray eyes, which appeared to see everything, and were by turns fierce, funny, or thoughtful. Her long, thick hair was her one beauty, but it was usually bundled into a net, to be out of her way. Round shoulders had Jo, big hands and feet, a flyway look to her clothes...(Alcott 2017: 6)

TT1: 十五岁的乔身材修长, 皮肤黝黑, 见了使人想到一匹小公马。她嘴巴刚毅, 鼻子俊俏, 灰色的眼睛异常敏锐, 似乎能看穿一切, 眼神时而炽烈, 时而风趣, 时而又像在沉思。浓密的长发使她显得特别美丽, 但为了方便, 长发通常被她束入发网。她双肩圆润, 大手大脚, 穿着又宽又大的衣服。(Liu and Chen 2020: 6)

TT2: 乔, 大名叫约瑟芬, 十五岁, 长得又高又瘦, 肌肤偏黑, 不由得让人想起小公马。她嘴巴刚毅, 鼻子有点滑稽, 灰色的眼睛炯炯有神, 好像洞察一切, 眼神时而凶巴巴的, 时而滑稽可笑, 时而若有所思。浓密的长发是她的一个亮点, 但为了利落, 通常用发网束起来。乔肩膀厚实, 大手宽脚, 穿的衣服显得很松快。(Wang 2017:7)

A rather lengthy and detailed description of the appearance of the major female character Jo, the second daughter of March family, who rejects her femininity and always wishes she were a "free" boy, the passage successfully represents the image of a rough looking woman. As can be seen from their translations, TT1 weakens the description of Jo's masculine features and adds the positive descriptions of Jo's appearance by describing her figure as "修长的" (slender), her nose as "俊俏的" (charming), her long hair as "特别美丽" (particularly beautiful), etc. In TT2, on the other hand, the translator is more faithful to the original text and does not hesitate to use relatively negative terms to describe Jo, such as "滑稽" (comical) and "凶巴巴"(fierce).

Liu and Chen's translation appears rather positive, suggesting that they try to embellish the image of Jo by using the feminism translation strategy "hijacking". According to Flotow (1991), "hijacking" is a highly controversial method by which feminist translators manipulate parts of ST texts that do not adhere to feminist viewpoints based on their own preferences or subjective intentions. In this way, while the content of the original text remains unchanged, the translation takes on a gender meaning that the original text may not contain or may even oppose.

Wang Zhiguang, who is more faithful to ST, does not replace these neutral or even somewhat negative adjectives in TT2. There may be two possible reasons for this: the first is that Wang is firmly committed to the original image of Joe as boyish and believes that these words he literally translates precisely reflect masculinity; another possible reason is that he doesn't see the need of adding femininity to Jo, and doesn't believe that words denoting "beauty" are necessary when describing

women's appearance. For either reason, Wang does not display the feminist tendencies that both female translators do.

6.2 Accents in Relation to Social Class

2) "Some poor creeter came a-beggin' and your ma went straight off to see what was needed. There never was such a woman for given away vittles and drinks, clothes and firin'", replied Hannah. (Alcott 2017:18-19)

TT1: "一些穷人来讨东西,你妈马上就去看他们需要什么,她是天底下最菩萨心肠的女人",罕娜答道。(Liu and Chen 2020:15)

("Some poor people came to ask for something and your mother immediately went to see what they needed, she was the most Bodhisattva woman in the world", Hannah replied.)

TT2: "有个穷棒子跑来讨饭,妈妈马上就去了,说是去看看人家缺什么,从来没见过这样的女人,把吃的、喝的、穿的和烧的都送给别人,"汉娜回应道。(Wang 2017:15)

("A pauper came to beg for food and mum went right away, saying she was going to see what they needed, never seen a woman like that, giving away foods, drinks, clothes and firing," Hannah responded.)

In this scenario, Hannah, the March family's maid, who is portrayed by Alcott as a grumpy, uneducated woman, explains to the four girls where their mother has gone. As footnoted in *Little Women* (2017), Hannah mispronounces "poor creature" as "poor creeter", and "begging" as "beggin". Her vulgar words are modified by translators in TT1 by adjusting the wrong expressions. Instead of literally rendering the phrases "for given away vittles and drinks, clothes and firin'", translators use "菩萨心肠的" (perform like a bodhisattva) in Chinese to describe Mrs. March. "菩萨" is equivalent to the western "god" in Chinese, who will fulfil people's wishes and bless them. Hanna's use of "bodhisattva" to describe Mrs. March contains an implication of worship.

In TT1, Liu and Chen embellish both female characters mentioned in the text, creating the image of a gracious maid and a kind-hearted mistress. In TT2, however, the translator is more obedient to the original text, translating "poor creeter" with a discriminatory connotation as "穷棒子" (pauper), implying that those poor people are obnoxious beggars from Hannah's viewpoint. In the original text, Alcott states that only rough women would use vulgar words. As a result, TT2 reflects Hanna's poor socioeconomic status as she was uneducated. Also, it reflects Hanna's negative attitude towards those she refers to as "the poor". The male translator portrays the female character Hanna as crude.

6.3 Gendered Roles and Social Expectations Towards Women

3) To be loved and chosen by a good man is the best and sweetest thing which can happen to a woman. (Alcott 2017:140)

TT1: 被一个好男人爱上并选为妻子是一个女人一生最大的幸福。(Liu and Chen 2020: 102)
(To be loved and chosen as a wife by a good man is the greatest happiness of a woman's life.)

TT2: 被好男人爱上娶走,是女人一生最大的幸事。(Wang 2017:113)
(To be married by a good man is the greatest blessing in a woman's life.)

In this scenario, Marmee tells her daughters about the significance of marriage, saying that marring a good man is the best thing to a woman. In TT1, translators just literally translate "chosen by a good man" as "被好男人选为妻子", suggesting that men take the initiative in the marriage, while women are in a subordinate position, packaging themselves up like a commodity and waiting for men to pick them out. In the previous analysis we can see that Liu Chunying and Chen Yuli, as women translators, subconsciously rewrite the stereotypical portrayal of women's roles and status in the original text, but in the case of marriage, they seem to compromise with the original text. However, Wang render these

words as “被好男人娶走”, he rewrite the word “chosen” into “marry” (“嫁” or “娶” in Chinese), implying that women and men are in a equal position in marriage, despite the fact that he kept the latter part of the sentence just like Liu and Chen do. (In Chinese, the characters “嫁” and “娶” (both translated as “marry” in English) have different meanings. When Chinese people say “嫁”, it means “a woman marries a man”, implying the woman’s right to choose in the marriage. When Chinese people say “娶”, it means “the man marries the woman”, indicating the man is the one who actively chooses in the marriage.)

4) “Suppose you learn plain cooking. That’s a useful accomplishment, which no woman should be without.” (Alcott 2017:158)

TT1: “建议你学做饭；这个本事十分有用，女人都得学会。” (Liu and Chen 2020: 125)

(I recommend that you learn to cook; it's a very useful skill that all women need to learn.)

TT2: “假如学会烧家常菜，这本领可有用啦，主妇少了它可不行。” (Wang 2017:139)

(If you learn how to cook home cooked food, this will be a useful skill, housewives cannot live without it.)

These are Mrs. March’s words, telling the four sisters the importance of plain cooking. In TT1, Liu and Chen translate “which no woman should be without” as “女人都得学会”, implying that “women can cook” is a matter of course, is their nature and instinct. This sentence, sounding so authoritative, can be interpreted either as women must cook but men don’t have to, or cooking is a mission for women. Based on our previous analysis, it is clear that the two female translators have a feminist tendency, however, they do nothing to polish this extremely gendered statement. As a result, even though this translation may be a reflection of the translators’ fidelity to ST, it is more likely to be a reflection of translators’ male assumption of appropriate female behavior. While in TT2, Wang changes the meaning of woman by rendering it as “主妇” (housewife), showing that he disagrees with the idea that “women should cook”. Here the male translator tries to break the female stereotypes in a way.

5) Men must work and women marry for money. (Alcott 2017:229)

TT1: 男人得工作，女人得嫁人，这样才能有钱。(Liu and Chen 2020:168)

(Men must work and women must marry, so that they can have money.)

TT2: 男人得干得好，女人得嫁得好，才能有钱。(Wang 2017:186)

(A man has to work well and a woman has to marry well to be rich.)

This source text portrays a fairly common gender stereotype, stating that women married to become rich. In TT1, what “work” means to a man equals to what marriage is to a woman - a prerequisite for being rich. As we have analyzed before, when the translators of TT1 deal with statements related to marriage, they tend to be faithful to the original text, without using translation strategies to deal with the stereotypes in the original. However, the strategy of “addition” is used in TT2, the translator renders “have to work” as “干得好” (have to work well) and “marry” as “嫁得好” (have a good marriage). This suggests that ‘a man who works well and a woman who has a good marriage’ is the prerequisite for being rich, and “a man who does not work well” and “a woman who does not marry to a good man” may not be rich. Work and marriage, at this point, are just two of the many ways to become wealthy. As a result, Wang indirectly negates the idea in the original that “women can only become wealthy through marriage”, attempting to hide the patriarchal express in ST.

6.4 Diminutives

In addition to these sentences or paragraphs, there are a few scattered words or phrases that express the gender ideologies constructed by the translators, and which can also be considered as conspicuous gender performance. The most obvious phrases are terms of endearment consisting of a diminutive prefix “小” (little or small) plus a noun. According to Schneider (2003), diminutive is a term that refers to all expressions of diminution and includes both size and attitude. It is defined as ‘an affix expressing the meaning of smallness’ in linguistics, and it always “extends to the meaning of loveliness”, for example, “-let” in English, “-ita” in Spanish, and “-ino” in Italian (Crystal 1997:116). Most diminutive affixes are suffixes, prefixes such as “小 -” are also found in Chinese and Japanese. This indicates that “小” in Chinese to denote not only a reduced dimension of an entity or an individual, but also to elicit subjective value judgments.

What seems particularly significant is that there is a striking amount of terms of endearment employed in TT1, especially in the text describing the physical appearance of the four sisters. In TT2, on the other hand, the translator does not add any extra diminutives except rendering those from the ST, he even omits some of the translations of ‘little’ and ‘small’ in ST. The following are some examples:

Table 1. Narrator’s words

	ST	TT1	TT2
6)	Chapter 3 pp.34 “...but no cloud of ringlets appeared.”	Chapter 3 pp.27 “但却看不见那堆 小鬟发 (little ringlets)”	Chapter 3 pp.30 “她果然撕掉了油纸，却并没有出现 云鬟卷发 (ringlets)。”
7)	Chapter 4 pp.49 “...each hugging her little warm turnover. ”	Chapter 4 pp.39 “各自揣着自己暖烘烘的 小卷饼 (little turnover)。”	Chapter 4 pp.44 “各自用 热酥饼 (Warm turnover) 捂着手。”
8)	Chapter 4 pp.52-53 “...and she was by nature a busy bee. ”	Chapter 4 pp.41-42 “而她天生就是个 勤劳的小蜜蜂 (a little bee)。”	Chapter 4 pp.46-47 ‘而她天生就是 劳碌命 (born to be living)’
9)	Chapter 4 pp.60 “...for she had told stories to this little audience for many years.”	Chapter 4 pp.47 “她跟这帮 小听众 (little audiences) 讲了多年故事。”	Chapter 4 pp.52 “她为这帮 听众 (audience) 讲故事已经多年。”
10)	Chapter 4 pp.61 “...help getting a morsel of fun out of the little sermon. ”	Chapter 4 pp.48 “乔情不自禁地从这个 小布道 (little sermon) 中发掘出一点乐趣。”	Chapter 4 pp.54 “乔打死也忍不住从这个 布道 (sermon) 中发掘出些许乐趣出来。”
11)	Chapter 7 pp.99 “...and comforted her afflicted little daughter in her tenderest manner”	Chapter 7 pp.73 “只是无限温柔地宽慰自己受了伤的 小女儿 (little daughter)。”	Chapter 7 pp.81 “只是用无限的温情安慰这个 受伤的女儿 (daughter)。”

The diminutives are used especially in the narrator’s words, affecting the narrator’s image, whether purposely or unconsciously. Marcello Giugliano and Elia Hernández Socas (2019) argue that readers may get the impression that the narrator holds a patronizing attitude towards the four sisters since the narrator often uses diminutives when depicting the personalities and appearance of the girls. These diminutives are often associated with notions like fragility, physical vulnerability, tenderness and passivity, and can be seen as part of a strategy aimed at enhancing women’s conventional image and role (Giugliano and Hernández Socas 2019:321). As a result, the diminutives describing Meg, Beth and Amy in TT1 infantilizes them and clearly shows the narrator’s condescending attitudes to them.

Also, diminutives are used in Marmee's words, as illustrated in Table 2, therefore I assume that the translator Liu Chunying has given both herself and the narrator a maternal, extradiegetic and omniscient image in TT1.

Table 2. Marmee's words

	ST	TT1	TT2
12)	Chapter 1 pp.13 “Do you remember how you used to play Pilgrim's Progress when you were little things ?”	Chapter 1 pp.11 “你们还记得演《天路历程》的情形吗？那时候你们还都是些 小东西 (little things).”	Chapter 1 pp.12 “还记得小时候 (when you were young) 扮演《天路历程》的情形吗？”
13)	Chapter 3 pp.36 “...and Marmee will lend me her little pearl pin .”	Chapter 3 pp.28 “妈妈会把她的 小珍珠发夹 (little pearl pin) 借给我。”	Chapter 3 pp.31 “妈咪会把她的珍珠发夹 (pearl pin) 借给我。”

Table 3. Jo's words

	ST	TT1	TT2
14)	Chapter 4 pp.48 “We are a set of rascals this morning, but we'll come home regular angels .”	Chapter 4 pp.38 “我们今早真是一帮 小坏蛋 (little rascals), 不过我们回家时一定还是平日的小天使 (little angels).”	Chapter 4 pp.43 “今天早上, 我们成了一窝坏蛋 (rascals), 但回家的时候会成为正宗天使 (angels).”
15)	Chapter 4 pp.49 “...for more ungrateful wretches than we are were never seen.”	Chapter 4 pp.39 “因为我们是天底下最不知道感恩图报的 小混账 (little wretches) 了。”	Chapter 4 pp.43 “世上再没有比我们更加忘恩负义的混蛋 (wretches) 了。”
16)	Chapter 5 pp.61 “...and not being a pussycat ...”	Chapter 5 pp.49 “我又不是 小猫咪 (little cat).”	Chapter 5 pp.55 “我又不是懒猫 (pussycat).”

“As for Jo, in the ST, the narrator defines this character in opposition to her sisters' femininity by using adjectives such as gentlemanly, unladylike, unmanly” (Giugliano and Hernández Socas 2019: 321). We can see from Table 3 that in ST there are few diminutives in Jo's discourses, however, TT1 employs the strategy of addition, blurring the contrast between Jo and her sisters. Jo's masculine traits are attenuated and her flippant features are downplayed in the translation by omitting these adjectives, keeping original diminutives in the ST or adding extra diminutives (Giugliano and Hernández Socas 2019: 322). However, in TT2, Wang does not introduce any additional diminutives other than those used in the ST, avoiding showing endearment to the characters in his translation.

In conclusion, Liu and Chen tend to modify discourses related to “motherhood” and “womanly” for the young daughters and to avoid expressions that affect unfavorable images of women, but cannot completely avoid the influence of “patriarchal thoughts” pertaining to their time. That is to say, when translating discourses related to marriage, their translation indicates a gender stereotype of women. They also use a large number of diminutives to infantilize female characters in *Little Women*. Wang's translation, on the other hand, tends to modify gender-biased discourses and stereotypes, but the jokes about female and terms like “big men” and “weak women” are used. This is some reflections of his masculine gaze and prejudice towards women.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, two aspects of translators' language usage are investigated, which include translators' mediation and gendered discourses. The findings show that the man and woman translators use language to construct their gender identities in different ways, though the distinction is blurry. The

female translators manipulate the text more obviously so the distinctive women characterization is more apparent, as they adopt feminist translation strategies by “omitting” and “hijacking” the target texts, promoting women characters to a more equal position and emphasizing women’s works by prefacing and footnoting. However, their gender construction as expressed in their translation seem to be self-contradictory at times. Sometimes they consciously rewrites degrading terms or discriminatory of women in the source text, whilst on the other hand, they expose the influence of a patriarchal society by leaving out some and rendering directly some other gender stereotypes. The male translator Wang Zhiguang, however, is more faithful to the original text in textual aspects and expresses the original’s feminine image more from a masculine perspective.

Overall, the gender of the translators has some influence on the translation of *Little Women*, as evidenced by the tendency of female translators to uphold women’s rights in the preface, footnotes, the naming of characters and the translations of gender-related discourse, whereas male translators do not show such a tendency. In addition, when translating *Little Women*, the two female translators construct gender identities with stronger feminist tendencies, while the male translator shows ideas of male hegemony.

References

- [1] Alcott May, Louisa (2017) *Little Women*. China Astronautic Publishing House.
- [2] Alcott May, Louisa (2017). *Little Women*. China Astronautic Publishing House.
- [3] Alcott May, Louisa (2020) *Little Women*. Yilin Press.
- [4] Butler, Judith (1990) *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*, New York: Routledge.
- [5] Baker, Mona (2000) ‘Towards a Methodology for Investigating the Style of a Literary Translator’, *Target*, 12 (2): 241-266.
- [6] Butler, Judith (2004) *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge.
- [7] Chamberlain, Lori (1988) ‘Gender and the metaphoric of translation’, *Signs*, (13): 454-472.
- [8] Cameron, Deborah (1990) *The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader*. London: Routledge.
- [9] Crystal, David (1997) *A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- [10] Carver, Terrell (2014) ‘Men and Masculinities in International Relation Research’, *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, (xxi): 113-126.
- [11] Cheng, Mingli and Zhao, Haiyue (2015) The national revolutionary responsibility and male characteristics of Chinese feminism, *Guangxi Social Sciences*, (3): 183-186.
- [12] Eichner, Carolyn (2009) ‘La citoyenne in the world: Hubertine Auclert and feminist imperialism’, *French Historical Studies*, 32(1): 63–84. DOI: 10.1215/00161071-2008-013.
- [13] Ekasanti Rahmadhiya Nkasanti and Hernawati Mala (2019) ‘Representation of Gender Stereotyping in Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*: Endorsement of Traditional Gender Roles’, *Lexicon*, 6(2): 111-118.
- [14] Giugliano Marcello and Hernández Socas Elia (2019) ‘Ambivalence, Gender, and Censorship in two Spanish Translations of *Little Women*’, *Meta*, 64 (2): 312-333.
- [15] Hermans, Theo (1996) ‘The translator’s voice in translated narrative’, *Target*, 8(1): 23-48.
- [16] Hatim, Basil and Ian Mason (1997) *The Translator as Communicator*. London & New York: Routledge.
- [17] Li, Yinhe (2005) *The Feminism*, Jinan: Shandong People’s Publishing House.
- [18] Li, Hongyu (2007) Gender and Translation: On the Development and Status of Gender Perspectives in Translation in China, *Journal of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies*, 18(1): 49-52.
- [19] Massey, Mary Elizabeth (1994) *Women in the civil war*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- [20] Maier, Carol and Françoise Massardier-Kenney (1996) ‘Gender in/and Literary Translation’, in Rose, Marilyn Gaddis (ed.) *Translation Horizon. Beyond the Boundaries of “Translation Spectrum”*, Binghamton: SUNY, 225-242.
- [21] Mills, Sara and Louise Mullany (2011) *Language, Gender and Feminism*, London and New York: Routledge.

- [22] Meng, Lingzi (2019) *Gender in Literary Translation: A Corpus-Based Study of the English Translations of Chenzhong De Chibang*, Springer Singapore.
- [23] Schneider, P Klaus (2003) *Diminutives in English*, Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- [24] Schaffer, Kay and Song Xianlin (2007) 'Unruly Space: Gender, Women's Writing and Indigenous Feminism in China', *Journal of Gender Studies*, 16(1): 17-30.
- [25] von Flotow, Luise (1991) 'Feminist translation: Contexts, practices, theories', *TTR*, (2): 69-84.
- [26] von Flotow, Luise (1999) 'Genders and the translated text: Developments in transformance', *Textus*, (XII): 275-288.
- [27] West Candace, Michelle Lazar and Cheri Kramarae (1997) *Gender in Discourse*, in Teun A van Dijk (ed.) *Discourse as Social Interaction*, London: sage, 119-143.
- [28] Yu, Zongli (2015) *Translating Feminism in China: Gender, Sexuality and Censorship*. London: Taylor and Francis.