

Translator's Subjectivity from a Gender Perspective—A case study of the Translation of Chen Zhong de Chi Bang

Cui WenJing

Xi'an International Studies University, Shaanxi Xi'an, 710119;

Abstract: Chen Zhong De Chi Bang is a novel by contemporary writer Zhang Jie, and there are two English versions translated by Gladys Yang and Howard Goldblatt respectively. At present, there are many studies on Howard Goldblatt in China, but most of the research on Gladys Yang lies in her co-translation with Yang Xianyi, little attention is paid to her independent translation activities. gender and translation studies has been integrated since the cultural shift in translation studies and the feminist movement of the 1980s, feminism translation theory emphasize that translators should exert their own subjectivity from a gender perspective and confront patriarchal culture through the manipulation of language. Based on feminist translation theory, from the aspects of gender stance, gender stereotypes and androgyny, this thesis attempts to compare the ways in which female and male translators deal with the female characters in the ST, and explores how translators can influence the translation by exerting their own subjectivity. Through comparative analysis, this thesis finds that female translators are more like to adopt feminist translation strategies in the translations, which can highlight the status of female subjectivity and made the female characters visible in her own way.

Key words: gender perspective; feminist translation; translator's subjectivity; Chen Zhong De Chi Bang; Zhang Jie

DOI: 10.69979/3041-0843.25.04.022

1 Introduction

Before the culture turn of translation studies, most attention was paid on either the ST (source text) or the TT (target text), the criterions of a good translation are mainly about whether it is "faithful" or "fluent". For TR (target reader) and viewers, when they are giving comments on a translation, the translator will seldom be mentioned. As the bridge of the two languages, translator's stance and choice of translation strategies surely make a great influence of the translation. The invisible of the translator will undoubtedly led to the incompleteness of translation studies. Therefore, in the following culture turn of translation studies, the importance of the translator has been emphasized. More and more attentions have been given to the studies of translators. Among which, feminist translation theory made a conjuncture of gender studies and translation studies since the late 1980s. Feminist translation holds the belief that in the process of translation, translators will be affected by different factors, such as social, cultural and gender characteristics, and these influences will be reflected in their works.

1.1 Aim of the study

The notion of gender also appears in the feminist movement, as one of the core concepts of feminism, it emphasizes the status built by the society from aspects like culture and phycology, which made a difference from the biological notion "sex". A famous saying written by Simon Beauvoir has said that one is not born but becomes a woman, which depicts the difference perfectly. Therefore, from the perspective of social gender we can see how culture influence translator's subjectivity in a more detailed way, and how female translator make her way to bring female characters in to the stage in a mostly male dominant novel.

This thesis, through comparing two English versions of translation of Zhang Jie's novel Chen Zhong De Chi Bang, point out that though the female translator did not officially claim herself a feminist, her translation is still in a female stance. When they are translating female writer's work, female translators obviously has their advantages because women share

same life experiences that no man can understand, so they can grasp the spirit of the ST and the writer's intention.

1.2 Significance and necessity of the study

Women's voice should be heard. Most history people learned are about men, women's thoughts and experiences people has been taught are very partial. Women make up half of the world's population and they gave birth to the other half of it, their voice is of great importance to the world. Due to some historical reasons, women are excluded from the public education system for a long time, many of them then were expected to devote most of their time in their families, which would distract most of their energy. As in her book *A Room of One's Own* in 1929, Virginia Wolf said that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction." Unfortunately, the situation hasn't been changed much now.

"Discussions of 'patriarchal language' have played an important role in feminist research on gender, and language transfer is the basic element under discussion in translation studies." (Luise Von Flotow: 1997) Feminist translation hold the belief that translation is a process of conveying, rewriting and manipulating a text so that it can be adapted to the target reader. Rewriting is, when making decisions in the process of translation, translator can use their subjectivity to make changes in the text.

It is not until the culture turn of translation studies did the translators stop being invisible, and people started to focus how translator's language, psychology and ideology effected their translation. Present studies on translators are mainly about men, especially when it comes to co-translation. There are many studies on Howard Goldblatt in China. As co-workers and a couple, Gladys Yang and Yang Xianyi did many contributions in translating traditional Chinese culture. However, there's little research on Gladys Yang's own translating activity.

Thus, this thesis, on the base of feminism translation, will seek how female translator bring the female characters up on the stage and how did translator's gender affect their use of subjectivity in the process of translating. points out that when translating a female writer's work, female translator obviously has their advantages because women share same life experiences that no man can understand, so they can grasp the spirit of the ST and the writer's intention.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into five chapters. In chapter one, the aim, significance and the structure of the thesis will be presented. Chapter two is the literature review, mainly introduces the development and strategies of feminist translation theory. The writer, translators and their works will be presented in the third chapter, how the writer created the ST and why and how did the translator make their translations. In chapter four, a detailed text analysis will be given from gender perspective, which include gender stance, gender stereotypes and androgyny. The last chapter is chapter five, a conclusion of the thesis.

2 Literature Review

Among all the theories put forward in the culture turn of translation studies, translator's subjectivity takes high priority in feminism translation theory. In feminism translation studies, translator's subjectivity becomes the basic awareness in the process of translation. the manipulation of the ST gives the translator an enormous power.

2.1 Feminism Translation Studies

In translation history, there is a close relationship between women and translation. From the beginning of European Middle Ages, women were forbidden to write anything. They have been excluded from the "privilege of authorship" (Simon, 1990). At that time even highly-educated women are only allowed to translate, not write. And religious text is the only kind of text they were allowed to translate, because people think it is both sacred and safe for women. Feminism translator tries to discover women's writing history and let female writers and translators be known.

In late 1960s and early 1970s, feminist movements start to develop in West Europe and North America, women's self-consciousness has been awakened. They struggled for equality between men and women, and realized that language is a powerful weapon in the struggle. Feminism translation stresses translator's subjectivity from a gender perspective, which is different from the general research on it. They hold the view that gender factor also has great impact on translator's

subjectivity as the national, political, classical factors do, but it does not gain enough attention.

In the west, the most representative figures of feminism translation are Susanne de Lotbiniere-Harwood, Sherry Simon, Luise von Flotow, Lori Chamberlain and Barbara Godard. Works such as *The Body Bilingual: Translating as a feminine* published in 1991, "Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation" (in which Lori Chamberlain explains how translation has been related to sex discrimination. This essay serves as a trigger of feminist translation theory.), *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* published in 1996 and *Translation and Gender: Translation in the 'Era of Feminism'* published in 1997. These books give a clear direction to the study of feminism translation theory. In Spivak's *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, she gives us a viewpoint of post-colonialism.

In China, the modern feminist thoughts were first introduced in the 1980s, and have had a great influence on China's research in the following 20 years. At first, these thoughts had little effect on translation theories and practices at home. The influence was not that noticeable until 2000. However, it is in 2002 that the feminism began to show its great influence in China.

Since 2002, many researchers began their researches on this field, such as Yang Liu (2002), Ge Xiaoqin (2003), Liao Qiyi (2002), Zhang Jinghua (2004), Jiang Xiaohua (2004).

All these studies put out a same point that the translation strategies of feminist translation are too radical. However, the author considers radical as a necessary attitude when it comes to fighting for rights, women's voice has been ignored in a long history, which proves that modesty cannot win power. As mentioned above, language is a powerful weapon in the struggle for women's right, many words used to describe the positive sides of women has now evolved into bad ones. For example, the original meaning of the character "嫖" is light on one's feet, brave and sturdy, but it has been changed into "buying prostitute". And the original character of buying prostitute is "鬪", which is more in line with the symbolic character of Chinese characters. By derogating characters with "女(woman)" in it, the society has completes the second sexualization of women. Thus, remarks can be make that feminist translation still has a lot to do in future.

2.2 Previous studies on Chen Zhong De Chi Bang

Chen Zhong De Chi Bang is a novel written by Chinese female writer Zhang Jie, it reflects the construction of the four modernizations and industrial reform in China. It has been translated in to many countries, such as Germany, British, and France ect. In 1985, it won the second Mao Dun Literature Prize, since then it attracted lots of attentions.

Studies on the ST are mainly about its artistic features and different editions. In his paper, Zhou Zhixiong (2011) said that this book expresses both the political struggle of the society, and the family life of the characters of the book from the author's unique female perspective, the incorporation of the author's personal life experience, and her deep thinking about love and fate makes this novel go beyond the limitations of general reform literature. Compare Chen Zhong De Chi Bang with another novel Wu Zi, which is also written by ZhangJie, Ren Meiheng (2011) points out that Zhang Jie's literary creation has undergone a profound modern transformation. Wu Xiuing, Zhang Tao (2015) considers that as a product of a specific historical context, the generation of "award-winning revised editions" of Chen Zhong De Chi Bang and Bai Lu Yuan for Mao Dun Literature Prize contains both political and non-political revisions, and is interpreted from two perspectives, namely, "external research" and "internal research".

Studies on the translation of Chen Zhong De Chi Bang can be divided into English versions and Germany version. Xin Hongjuan, Tang Hongmin (2019) interpreted Gladys Yang's view of translation from the paratexts of the English translation of Chen Zhong De Chi Bang. Yan Xiaohong (2019) takes ecological translation as a theoretical framework, she compared and analyzed the two English translations of Chen Zhong De Chi Bang so as to explore how the two translators, Gladys Yang and Howard Goldblatt, made corresponding choices to adapt to their specific translation ecological environments. The studies on Germany translation of the book are carried from the perspective of the skopos theory (Zhang Jiexuan:2023) and functionalist perspective (Chen Yue: 2017).

Chinese literature history is mainly composed by male, that is because female talents and achievements has been deliberately ignored. To prevent this from happening again, more attention should be given on female writers and translators. This thesis, through comparing and analyzing the two versions of the book, focusing on the translator's subjectivity, shows

that gender awareness will significantly influence translators decision in the process of translation.

3 Introduction of the Author and Translators

In this chapter, the background of the writer, translators and their works will be presented. Translation is not just about the language, it also about culture so it is necessary to know about under what circumstances the ST is being created.

3.1 Zhang Jie and Chen Zhong De Chi Bang

Zhang Jie is a writer born in 1937 in Beijing. She is the first female writer to win two Mao Dun Literature Prizes since the New Era, and is regarded as the flag-bearer of feminist literature in the New Era. She uses her novels to reflect the difficulties of women's survival and is in the front line of exploring the issue of women's marriage. Zhang Jie's novels are always full of sympathy for women, and the omniscient and omnipotent outward-focused narratives overlap with the inward-focused narratives of the characters at times, forming the meaning of women's texts narrated by women with a strong sense of women's propriety(周志雄, 2010). She is a classic realist writer, whose exceptionally sensitive and delicate emotions are always directed towards society and “reality”, writing personal and female stories(戴锦华, 1994).

Chen Zhong De Chi Bang is a novel written by Zhang Jie, a female writer who was born in 1937. Published in 1981, it is the first novel in China to reflect the construction of the four modernizations and industrial reform. In 1985, it won the second Mao Dun Literature Prize. On September 23, 2019, the book was selected for the "70 Masterpieces of Novels in 70 Years of New China" collection. The novel focuses on the reform process and contradictions of the State Ministry of Heavy Industry and its affiliated Shu Guang Automobile Manufacturing Plant, showing the complex and arduous struggle experienced after the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee when the Party's center of gravity shifted to the right track of the four-form construction.

3.2 Gladys Yang and Leaden Wings

As a British expert of the China Literature Press, a translator and Chinese-foreign cultural exchange activist with a high international reputation, Gladys B Taylor was born in Beijing in 1919 to a British missionary family. She returned to England at the age of seven, after that she was educated at a church high school, and in 1937 was admitted to Oxford University, where she initially studied French language and literature, but later switched to Chinese language and literature, and was the first to receive a Bachelor of Arts degree in Chinese language and literature from Oxford University. Gladys's parents were British missionaries to China, and she married Yang Xianyi in Chongqing in 1940. She settled in China in the 1940s and died on November 18, 1999 in Beijing.

With her life experience of a woman and of living in two countries, and what she had suffered in the Culture Revolution, she may be the perfect one to translate the book Chen Zhong De Chi Bang. She has the same gender with the writer, knowing the TR's reading habit, what's more she can totally understand the historical backgrounds of the book, which is hard for any other translator because it is a complex history.

In her translation, Gladys Yang showed her feminism thoughts. The first one to be mentioned is the selection of ST. Before she started her independent translation activities, the works she translated is mainly up to the sponsors and the publish institutions of China, most of them are related to politics. When she can make her own decisions in what she likes to translate, she decided to translate women's work. Cheng Zhong De Chi Bang is one of those. The second feature of the translation is she wrote a preface for her translation, in the preface she presents the writer, and then gives an introduction to another work of the writer which is about love and marriage. When it comes to the story, instead of the industrial revolution, Gladys Yang stressed the value and happiness of individual person, besides she also brought up the problem showed in the institution of marriage. The third one is showed in the postscript wrote by her feminist friend. The postscript analyzed the female character's temper, image and their living conditions, and discussed how the writer's marriage had influenced the portrait of the female characters. Besides, there has a list of the main characters before the preface, within which the female character's name is carefully chose, while male character's name is literal translation. All these can be seen as the strategies of feminist translation which showed great subjectivity of the translator.

Gladys Yang is the first one translating the book, the ST focused more on the industrial revolution but she made her

efforts to show the subjectivity of the translator, female characters had been emphasized, women's voice had been heard.

3.3 Howard Goldblatt and Heavy Wings

Howard Goldblatt is a famous translator who had translated many Chinese works into the English world. One reason for him to translate this book is during that period of time the outside world is very curious about a just opened up China, they want to know more about China's economy. Another reason is that American readers at that time were more interested in novels concern sex and politics.

In his translation, though there are deletions and additions, we can see more about the politics and the revolution itself.

Both of the translators have showed their subjectivities in their own way, but if we take it from a gender perspective, we can see that there is a clearly different between the two versions of translation.

4 Text Analysis from Gender Perspective

At the beginning of the second wave of feminism, feminists adopted the division of sex and gender proposed by psychologist Robert Stoller (1968) to distinguish the sociocultural significance of gender differences from their biological basis. (Sonya Andermahr: 1997). "In the courses we teach, we tell our students that sex is something that is described by biology: the human body, hormones, physiology, and so on. Gender is an acquired status that is constructed through psychological, cultural and social means." (Candace West; Don Zimmerman: 1998). From then on, this concept has been one of the core concepts and has been discussed by many schools of feminisms.

4.1 Gender Stance

Gender stance is who did the words speaking for, though the female character in the ST was portrayed with not so many words, in Gladys Yang's translation, the focus has changed from the revolution itself to the value and feelings of individual person and the institution of marriage.

Gladys Yang: Joy had not had a happy marriage. And now that she was a widow life was even harder for her. But she was a strong-willed woman, reluctant to be indebted to anyone. (Zhang, 1987: 28)

Goldblatt: Wan Qun was blessed with a happy marriage. However, she was disappointed in love itself, which she discovered to be nothing more than a means of satisfying one's need for possession. (Zhang, 1989: 47)

Here, as a female herself, Gladys Yang takes her female stance pictured the inner world of Wan Qun, which make her transferred from a from a passive bearer of events to a woman with initiative and control over her own destiny.

4.2 Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are generalized perceptions or stereotypes of character traits, appearance, behavior, and roles for one gender. When people hold a gender stereotype in their work the real personality of the character would be concealed, and with the spread of the work, readers may be further influenced when in their association with people in real life, it is like a vicious circulation. To avoid such stereotypes, language is an important part of it. Gladys Yang gave the female characters a more three-dimensional image in her translation.

Gladys Yang: Fang had heard about her maneuvers, but never yet seen her in action.

In the patriarchy society, when there's a woman takes part in the competition, she must overcome much more obstacles than a man. A man plays harmless tricks to get a promotion will be comprised as "ambitious", while when that comes to a woman, she's "maneuvers". Men has built a sexist system against women, when women speak up for themselves, men "bestowed" women a fake disease of hysterious. Here, Gladys Yang deletes words that shows stereotype of a powerful woman like "放肆" and "胡搅蛮缠".

4.3 Androgyny

The word "Androgyny" is a combination of the prefix "Andro" for "male" and the suffix "gyny" for "female". The word "Androgyny" is a combination of the prefix "Andro" for "male" and the suffix "gyny" for "female", which is derived from the biological phenomenon of androgyny and the Greek mythological phenomenon of androgyny. Bisexuality in translation means that the translator has a bisexual perspective when translating, i.e., the translator should not only get rid of

her/his own gender restriction, but also consciously and freely change her/his gender perspective, and play the gender role of the author as well as the gender role portrayed by the author in her/his works.

Yang: If I saw my wife pregnant or suckling a baby, I'd feel I'd committed a crime. That would kill my love for her. (Zhang, 1987: 28)

Goldblatt: If I were to see my own wife pregnant, like a kangaroo with a bulging pouch, or nursing like any other common mammal, I'd feel like a sinner and I'd stop loving her. (Zhang, 1989: 47)

In the ST, He Jiabin compared a pregnant woman to a kangaroo, which is very disrespectful. Male don't have the ability to reproduce, so they try to possess female's uterus, but at the same time they despise the appearance of pregnant female. China did not experience feminist movement as the west did, so people is not that sensitive with sexism. Though as a female, Gladys Yang made some deletion on He Jiabin's remark so that the character looks nicer.

5 Conclusion

"The cultural turn of translation studies has not only opened up a new space for translation studies, but also put the study of translation subjects on the important agenda of translation studies" (查明建, 田雨: 2003). Among many translation theories, feminist translation theory gives more focus on the subjectivity of the translator than any other ones by emphasizing that translators should exert their own subjectivity from a gender perspective and confront patriarchal culture through the manipulation of language. Based on feminist translation theory, from the aspects of gender stance, gender stereotypes and androgyny, this thesis attempts to compare the ways in which female and male translators deal with the female characters in the ST, and explores how translators can influence the translation by exerting their own subjectivity.

Through comparative analysis, this thesis finds that Gladys Yang, as a female translator, has a clear awareness of her identity of being a woman, so in the process of her translation, she shows her female subjectivity and made the female characters visible in her own way.

References

- [1] Flotow, Luise Von. Translation and Gender: Translating in the 'Era of Feminism' [M]. London: Routledge, 1997.
- [2] Simon, Sherry. Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Political of Translation[M]. London: Routledge, 1996.
- [3] West Candace, Zimmerman Don H. Doing Gender in Myers, Kristen A. (ed.) 1998p. 167.
- [4] Andermahr Sonya, Lovell Terry and Wolkowitz Carol 1997p. 102.
- [5] Zhang Jie. trans. Howard Goldblatt. Heavy Wings[M]. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989.
- [6] Zhang Jie. trans. Gladys Yang. Leaden Wings[M]. London: Virago Press, 1987.