
The Reconstruction of Female Images in the English Translations of *Shui Hu Zhuan*

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ABSTRACT

Shui Hu Zhuan, a classical Chinese novel, depicts an uprising led by Song Jiang that took place in the late Northern Song Dynasty (960–1127). Characteristically, most women in *Shui Hu Zhuan* are portrayed negatively, showing a misogynistic tendency. This study aims to examine the female images in the four full English translations of *Shui Hu Zhuan* to explore how the translators reconstructed the negative portrayal of women by the original narrator with the theoretical guidance of feminist translation theory and strategies. The translators of the four translations are from different socio-cultural backgrounds and serve different publishers and publishing purposes; therefore, these socio-cultural factors influencing their reconstructions of female images are also discussed in this study.

摘要:

中国古典小说《水浒传》描写了北宋末年（960-1127）宋江领导的起义。《水浒传》中的大多数女性形象都是负面的，表现出厌女倾向。本研究旨在考察《水浒传》四个英译本中的女性形象，探讨译者如何在女性主义翻译理论和策略的理论指导下，重建原叙述者对女性的负面描绘。这四个译本的译者来自不同的社会文化背景，服务于不同的出版商和出版目的，因此，本研究还讨论了影响他们重建女性形象的社会文化因素。

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1. Introduction

There are three types of women in the novel. The first are female outlaws. Among the 108 Liangshan outlaws in the novel, there are only three females, who are described as less capable than males. Moreover, even if they are positive figures, they cannot control their own destinies as men do. The second are ordinary women, some of them submissive wives, old mothers in poor health, and young, beautiful sing-song girls and servant girls who are bullied by men, and all of them share the common trait of a tragic fate and a desperate need for men to save them. These female characters are relatively numerous, and the amount of space each character is depicted in throughout the novel is not large. The third are female villains according to the narrator of the literary work. These women

have complex personalities and stories, and they are by no means singularly villainous characters in my opinion. But the narrator of the novel portrays them as villainous characters. These women are often unfaithful in their marriages and brutally murdered as a result. These women take up a relatively large amount of space in the novel, usually two chapters. After being killed, the men who killed these women flee to Liangshan to join the uprising, thus these women are also the plot drivers of this uprising-themed novel.

With the negative portrayal of women in the novel, *Shui Hu Zhuan* is considered a misogynistic literary work (Hsia 98). Using feminist translation theory and strategies as a theoretical framework, and by comparing the original text with various English translations, this study reveals how the translators make use of a variety of translation strategies to portray or reconstruct the female images. This analysis may inspire scholars to further look at feminist translation studies from a more diverse and macroscopic perspective, as well as inspire translators to develop the translation strategies available to them when they reconstruct the female images in literary works according to different needs.

1.1. Feminist translation studies

Feminist translation studies originated in the 1980s as a product of the combination of the feminist movement and translation. Feminist translation studies critique the traditional male-centeredness and original-centeredness by revealing metaphors and other languages that relegate women and translation to secondary status. By adopting various translation strategies, feminist translators actively present and make women visible in the translation (Xiang 153).

The first academic work in this field was Myriam Diaz-Descartes's *Translating Poetic Discourse: Questions on Feminist Strategies in Adrienne Rich* published in 1985. This book is about the relationship between translation and feminism as revealed in Spanish translations of the works of American poet Adrienne Rich (Diaz-Descartes 1985). Diaz-Descartes argues that translators are omniscient readers and active authors who mediate between the original text and the readers. Feminist translators are encouraged to add their own ideologies, including feminism, to the translated texts.

In 1991, Susanne De Lotbinière-Harwood published *The Body Bilingual*, a work in which she promotes diversity in translation and argues that feminist translators are encouraged to actively reflect their feminist ideology in their translations. De Lotbinière-Harwood proposed some corresponding translation strategies such as taking advantage of the preface and translators' notes where translators can express their feminist ideas, explaining the translation strategies they used to reflect their feminist thoughts (150–159).

Neither of the studies reviewed before has developed a theory yet. Feminist translation theory took shape gradually with the publication of *Gender in Translation – Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* by Sherry Simon published in 1996 and Luise von Flotow's *Translation and Gender: Translating in the "Era of Feminism"* published in 1997. Simon stated that feminist translation theory aims to explain and criticize views that place women and translation at the bottom of society and literature. She deconstructs the traditional notion of faithfulness in translation studies and argues that under feminist translation theory,

translators do not need to be faithful to the original work because translation is a joint writing done by the translator and the author (2). Von Flotow (1997) reviewed the relationship between translation and gender and summarized the strategies employed by feminist translators, which are specifically addressed in the next section. Von Flotow argued that these strategies reveal the discrimination against women in the original texts and allow translators to demonstrate their feminist consciousness.

1.1.1. *Feminist translation strategies*

Feminist translators employ various translation strategies to realize their goals. Among them, Luise von Flotow (1991, 1997) has made significant contributions by summarizing three commonly used strategies by feminist translators: prefacing and footnoting, which are the strategies at the paratextual level, and supplementing, and hijacking, the strategies at the textual level.

Prefacing and footnoting are approaches frequently and most commonly employed by feminist translators. Von Flotow argues that feminist work is controversial because it questions the traditional heteronormative, patriarchal, and sexist social order; therefore, a common strategy when translating feminist works is to explain these texts and feminist translation strategies used and presents the readers with challenging feminist perspectives in the translators' preface (*Translation, Feminism and Gender* 181). For example, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood translated Lise Gauvin's *Lettre d'une autre* (1984) into English and articulated her purpose of translation in the preface: "My translation practice is a political activity aimed at making language speak for women . . . making the feminine visible in language" (9). Von Flotow argues that translator's footnotes in feminist translation projects serve similar purposes: to point out and discuss specific translation difficulties and to indicate the presence and involvement of the translator (181–182). Both the preface and the footnotes allow the translator to point out feminist aspects of the translation and/or the original text, to explain their approach to translation, and to inform the readers of their intentions. To sum up, prefacing and footnoting are spaces in the translated texts for translators to provide background information about the source text, the original author and the translators themselves and the translation strategies employed by them in their translations. These approaches also allow translators to express their feminist opinions in their translations (181–182).

Feminist translation is a supplementing process in which gender issues in language use are increasingly being addressed. Supplementing involves translators actively engaging with the original text by adding certain information that is not included in the original text and it is a strategy that can compensate for differences between languages and cultures. While it is a frequently used strategy for translators, feminist translators pay special attention to convey gender-related perspectives by using this strategy (Von Flotow *Translation, Feminism and Gender* 75).

Hijacking is an approach used by feminist translators to appropriate, rephrase or amend the original text that lacks feminist connotations and awareness, all in an effort to assert their feminist perspectives and include feminist connotations in the body of their translations (Von Flotow 24). For example, in translating a French text *Lettre d'une autre*, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood (1984) created a new word "Québécoises" containing

the feminine indicator “e” to replace the original “Québécois,” which is a masculine generic meaning any native or resident of Quebec.

In addition to the three feminist translation strategies summarized by Von Flotow, there are other translation strategies that have been proven to be frequently used by feminist translators. Wallmach (2006) found that substitution, deletion, addition, and repetition are translation strategies that are not exclusive to feminist translation but are often used by feminist translators. Substitution means replacing the relevant source text with the relevant target text item. The use of deletion as a translation strategy implies that source text items are not rendered at all in the target text. This is a very common phenomenon in translation practice. The opposite process to deletion is addition, whereby the target text contains distinct linguistic, cultural or textual component features that are not found in the source text (Delabastita 1993). Addition may also be due to conscious and intentional intervention by the translator and can therefore be seen as the most important strategy for creating difference. Repetition implies that the content of the source text is not replaced but repeated or transferred directly from the source text into the translation (Wallmach 2006). These strategies, which have proved to be commonly used by feminist translators, will also enter into the consideration of the textual analyses of this study.

Feminist translation theory and strategies have developed since the 1980s, and the translations in question were produced far before the development of the theory and the strategies, so the translators were decidedly not affected by the theory and strategies. However, feminist translation theory examines translation activities through the lens of gender and feminism and focuses on how the female images are reconstructed in translations, which coincides with what this thesis is going to investigate. Furthermore, feminist translation strategies proposed by Von Flotow are a summary of translation strategies frequently used by feminist translators and proposed by previous researchers and are well-established strategies. Therefore, I believe that in this study, feminist translation theory and strategies can be used as a theoretical guide to investigate the translators’ reconstruction of women’s images in their translations and its effects. Therefore, the textual study in the current research will be based on the three feminist translation strategies.

Von Flotow’s feminist translation strategies, especially hijacking, are related to the incorporation of feminist political ideologies in the translation. *Shui Hu Zhuan* is not a feminist novel, and the translators in question are not necessarily feminists according to the current literature, so their reconstructions of the negative portrayal of women does not necessarily represent feminist ideology with political implications, but more of a positive portrayal of women for different purposes, respect, sympathy, understanding, and acknowledgment of the female characters, etc. Therefore, in the textual research section, it is possible that the analysis of the application of each strategy does not reflect a strong feminist ideology, but each translation example is about the reconstruction of the female images.

1.2. Methodology

The present research will cover three dimensions: paratextual analysis, textual analysis and a contextual discussion. This research will begin with a paratextual level study,

analyzing the prefaces and footnotes given by the translators with regard to the portrayal of women. As for the textual analysis, I will analyze the language used to depict the female images and its translation, analyzing the translator's reconstruction of the female images in relation to feminist translation strategies. Although the feminist translation strategies summarized by Von Flotow are relatively comprehensive, they are based on translations of English and French language pairs, and I will investigate whether other strategies for reconstructing female images were used by the English translators of *Shui Hu Zhuan* in the course of this textual analysis, so that I can summarize some suitable strategies for reconstructing female images in traditional Chinese literary works. However, textual analyses alone are often neither comprehensive nor insightful enough. After the paratextual and textual analyses, I will discuss the contextual reasons for the translators' reconstruction of the female images in terms of the translator's style, external factors, etc.

The language data I use in the textual study part comes from all the language used by the narrator to portray two female images in *Shui Hu Zhuan* - Yan Poxi, Pan Jinlian. Yan Poxi, Pan Jinlian are both portrayed as adulteresses who are young and beautiful but forced to marry the men they do not like. They all then cheat on their husbands and are eventually killed by men, specifically their husbands and (or) their husbands' brothers or male friends, as a result. Yan Poxi is a sing-song girl of 18 or 19 years of age. To earn a living, her mother arranges for her to marry Song Jiang, who is much older than her. Poxi is later killed by Song Jiang after she cheats on him and steal his money and some important documents. Pan Jinlian is the sister-in-law of Wu Song. Originally, a pretty-looking servant girl in her early twenties, Jinlian is married by her master to the short and ugly Wu Da, Wu Song's brother. Jinlian later cheats on her husband with her lover Ximen Qing and murder Wu Da with him, and thus is killed by Wu Song.

2. Analysis of the reconstruction of the female images in the translations

In this section, I will use feminist translation strategies as a guide to analyze the translators' reconstruction of the female images and identify other translation strategies that were widely used by the translators to reconstruct the female images. It is possible, of course, that the translators did not reconstruct the female images, and I am going to compare their translations to find out their different handling of the female images.

2.1. Prefacing

With the exception of the Dent-Youngs, none of the translators mentioned their views on the women in the novel in their translators' prefaces. In the translators' preface, the Dent-Youngs clearly stated that *Shui Hu Zhuan* "is misogynistic" and "women play no significant part" in the novel, which reveal women's "unfortunate position in society" (Dent-Young & Dent-Young, 2002, III). The translator's preface is an effective way for the translator to be visible. Through the translator's preface, the translator can help the readers to understand the cultural gap between the source language and the translated language (McRae 2012). Thus, it is conceivable that the prefaces of the translators of *Shui Hu Zhuan* have had some effect on the readers. The Dent-Youngs' preface shows that they did pay attention to the issue of women's images in the novel and they recognized the misogyny in

the novel, which can influence their readers' attitude toward the women in *Shui Hu Zhuan*. Readers of other translations, however, may need to become aware of this issue themselves as they read the novel as the translators did not mention misogyny at the paratextual level. Of course, readers may not have been aware of the issue due to cultural differences and the translators' domesticated translation.

2.2. Supplementing

In the original text, the narrator assigned negative perceptions to women's behaviors such as cheating on their husbands and disliking their husbands. In his narrative, these behaviors are immoral and reviled. The Dent-Youngs and Jackson, however, did these women justice by filling in certain information that highlights the free will of these women to pursue happiness in a marriage that is not of their own choosing and is not enjoyable.

Example 1: This example comes from a general introduction of Pan Jinlian by the author in the novel. Pan Jinlian is a beautiful young girl in her early twenties who is forced to marry the older, ugly, and short Wu Da after angering her employer. Pan Jinlian is not satisfied with this marriage and therefore wants a lover.

ST:原来这妇人, 见武大身材短矮, 人物猥獠, 不会风流。这婆娘倒诸般好, 为头的爱偷汉子。

TT by the Dent-Youngs: The girl herself, naturally enough in view of Wu Da's lack of inches and unimpressive character, was eager for something better and she made it her prime objective to find herself a lover. (p.27, Chapter 24, volume 2)

TT by Buck: Now this woman, seeing how short and dwarfish Wu the First was and how mean and insignificant he was to look upon and how he could not play and be merry, turned over and considered him wholly contemptible, and she desired above all of a lover. (p. 212, Chapter 23)

In the original text, the narrator told readers that Jinlian wanted a lover, and his tone was a bit scornful, especially in this line 这婆娘倒诸般好, 为头的爱偷汉子, reflecting the author's contemptuous attitude toward Jinlian. The words before this sentence are all about Wu Da's shortcomings, and compared to Wu Da's dullness, the author points out that 这婆娘倒诸般好, 为头的爱偷汉子, i.e., Jinlian has plenty of interests, and the first of her interests is to find a lover. In the Dent-Youngs translation, they explained 偷汉子- Jinlian cheating on their husbands - is about pursuing something better by adding the information "was eager for something better," which is not included in the original and Buck's translation. By supplementing this information, the readers can understand that being unfaithful to the marriage is Jinlian's plan for pursuing a better life after she realized that her husband is not good enough for her. Thus, compared to the original and Buck's translations, in the Dent-Youngs' translation, this act of Jinlian wanting a lover is relatively rationalized, and Jinlian's portrayal is accordingly improved.

2.3. Hijacking

Example 2: Pan Jinlian used to be a servant in a rich man's house. Her employer (master) was attracted to her and wanted to force her to develop an extramarital affair with him, which she did not comply with. The sentence in the following translation example is about the employer trying to force an affair with Jinlian.

ST:那个大户要缠他

TT by Jackson:Her master made base suggestions (314)

TT by Buck:. . . the lord of the house desired her . . . (211)

The act of the master pestering Jinlian is simply carried over by other translators with a single verb (such as “desired” by Buck, “pestered” by Shapiro), whereas Jackson's translation is different, as he translated it as “made base suggestions.” This translation is a rewrite and hijacking of the original, but with the context the readers should be able to understand what the so-called base suggestions are. Importantly, the adjective base points out the egregiousness of this behavior, and can also reflect the translator's attitude toward Jinlian and her master, even if Jinlian is just a servant girl, and even if she is a morally tainted person, the master, this married man's one-sided desire and pestering of her is still egregious and indecent. I argue that the study of feminist translation strategies and the translation of female images should not be limited to the portrayal of female characters themselves, but also to the portrayal of men around them, which can reflect the translator's attitudes about how women should be treated by men, the translator's views on women, and have a certain impact on the readers.

Example 3: This quote appears in the paragraph that the narrator used to explain why Poxi disliked Song Jiang. As previously analyzed, sexual desire was a sign of immorality and sin in ancient China. Song Jiang, the hero of the novel, usually never indulged in sexual desire but practiced martial arts, and thus Poxi disliked him. The quote in the example is used by the narrator to explain why Song Jiang does not indulge in sexual desire, which means that the quote is a compliment from the narrator to Song.

ST:宋江是个好汉

TT by the Dent-Youngs:Song Jiang was a man's man. (380)

好汉 means a good and heroic man literally, but I argue it has more profound meaning in the context of *Shui Hu Zhuan* - it means a good man who cares so much about the friendship with his male friends and spends much time on social justice rather than seeking for any pleasures. In fact, many of the so-called 好汉, including Song Jiang in the novel, are not considered good men by modern moral standards (Shao 2014). In this story of Song Jiang and his concubine Yan Poxi, he killed Poxi. Poxi was not a good person in the moral sense, but she had not committed any capital offense, and Song Jiang's murder against her was not a heroic act at all. The Dent-Youngs' translation, “a man's man,” which abandoned the adjectives “good” or “heroic,” corresponds to the

above argument and reconstructs the image of the 好汉. Moreover, in *Shui Hu Zhuan*, 好汉 care more about their friendships with their male friends than they do about their relationships with women. The heroes in *Shui Hu Zhuan* have strong friendships with each other, and they even kill women for their male friends (e.g., Shi Xiu helps Yang Xiong kill Yang's cheating wife). As for this translation example, the sentence following it is “只爱学使枪棒，于女色上不十分要紧，” which roughly means that Song only loves martial arts, but not women. There are many more expressions like this in *Shui Hu Zhuan*. In the context of *Shui Hu Zhuan*, 好汉 not only despise women, but also regards staying away from women as a virtue and a sign of heroism (Yu 2009), which is unreasonable and misogynistic. The Dent-Youngs' translation “a man's man” points out the profound meaning of 好汉 and mitigates the misogyny as they did not express the literal meaning “good man.” This rewrite echoes what I mentioned earlier: the translators' reconstruction of female images is not limited to the translation of direct depictions of women, but in contexts related to women, the depictions of men also convey a certain image of women. In *Shui Hu Zhuan*, since staying away from women indicates morality, women naturally possess a risky and a troublemaking image. If the image of men is rewritten – so that their distancing from women becomes neutral rather than virtuous – the female image as a troublemaker is thus not valid anymore.

Example 4: This is an example taken from the words of Poxi's mother praising Poxi.

ST:从小儿在东京时，只去行院人家串，那一个行院不爱他!

TT by the Dent-Youngs: Even when she was a child, in the Eastern Capital, she was the talk of all the houses of entertainment; there's not one where they didn't love her. (378)

The above quote is said by Poxi's mother to Song Jiang, and her purpose of saying it is to praise Poxi so that Song Jiang would agree to marry Poxi. The Dent-Youngs did not stay true to the original text and replaced 行院 (brothels) with “the houses of entertainment” in the broader sense. Therefore, the image of Yan is of a beautiful and talented singer who is popular in the entertainment industry, rather than a prostitute. This rewrite semantically reconstructs Poxi's identity from that of a prostitute to that of a practitioner in the entertainment industry in the broader sense.

2.4. Deletion

Deletion as a strategy is not included in feminist translation strategies, but it is a frequently used strategy by feminist translators according to Wallmach (2006) and I found that the use of deletion strategy in the translation of *Shui Hu Zhuan* to a certain extent also plays a role in reconstructing female images. Therefore, I include this strategy here as a supplement to feminist translation strategies.

Example 5: Jinlian adores Wu Song, so she cooks a meal for him and hopes to get him drunk and seduce him in the meantime. The following example is a quote from Jinlian to Wu Song during this dinner with a hint of seduction.

ST:那妇人笑容可掬,满口儿叫:“叔叔,怎地鱼和肉也不吃一块儿?”

TT by Shapiro:“You haven’t touched the fish or meat,” she cried. (236)

This quote is from Jinlian to her brother-in-law, Wu Song. Jinlian is young and beautiful, but she married the ugly Wu Da, whom she did not like. Wu Da’s brother Wu Song is tall and handsome, and Jinlian, who has been in a loveless marriage for a long time, naturally falls in love with him. The narrator described Jinlian’s attitude and facial expression when she said this, i.e., she said it with a big smile on her face. This expression reflects Jinlian’s adoration for Wu Song and her desire for love, but in the context of *Shui Hu Zhuan*, the narrator’s attitude toward Jinlian is negative, believing her to be a slut, so this expression also reflects Jinlian’s intention to “seduce” her brother-in-law, Wu Song, which is obviously immoral. Shapiro removed the depiction of this expression in his translation, which diminished Jinlian’s attempts to seduce Wu Song and her immorality. I would argue that it is impossible for translation to be totally accurate, and while this deletion undermines Jinlian’s immorality, it makes Jinlian’s state of longing for love as a young girl no longer exist. Jinlian’s fate is tragic; she is unable to dictate her own destiny and has no way to have a healthy romantic relationship; her desire for love is a proof of her free will despite her tragic fate. Therefore, this deletion has the effect of diminishing the unethical nature of Jinlian, but it also regrettably fails to convey the free will of Jinlian as a young woman.

Example 6: This example shows that Jinlian wants her husband to leave the house as soon as possible so that she can go out and meet her lover.

ST:这妇人巴不能勾他出去了,便趲过王婆房里来等西门庆。

TT by Shapiro:No sooner had he gone than Golden Lotus hurried over to Mistress Wang’s to wait for Ximen. (253)

In the original, the narrator used an ironic tone to convey that Jinlian is eager to get her husband out for work early so that she can meet her lover Ximen Qing. The translator deleted the ironic 巴不能勾他出去了 (she is eager to get him out) and translated this sentence as less judgmental. In the translation, the translator did not first mention that Jinlian longs for her husband to leave, but only that she goes to see Ximen Qing immediately after her husband left. In *Shui Hu Zhuan*, the narrator often used an ironic tone to depict women, such as this example and the example mentioned earlier 他倒无般不好,为头的爱偷汉子. This tone of the narrator deepens the poor portrayal of women and expresses his own disdain for these women. The narrator’s negative attitudes toward women are interspersed throughout the storytelling, and it is hard not to have an effect on the readers. When translators remove or rewrite the ironic tone to neutralize the sentence, the narrator’s disdain for women in the original disappears at least here and the female images therefore can be modified.

3. Discussion

The above analysis reveals that Jackson, the Dent-Youngs, and Shapiro have a tendency to reconstruct female images in a positive manner. However, Buck almost conveyed the same portrayal of female characters in her translation as in the original.

Shapiro is knowledgeable about Chinese history and culture, as well as the literary work *Shui Hu Zhuan* and its historical and social context. Shapiro understands that the ancient Chinese feudal society in which *Shui Hu Zhuan* is set is a hierarchical society in which men are subservient to the feudal government led by the emperor and women are subservient to men – women are at the bottom of ancient Chinese feudal society. Shapiro also has a unique view on the Liangshan heroes: he does not consider them to be moral and heroic, and he especially disapproves of their brutal killings of others. Furthermore, he believes that the Liangshan heroes are defenders of the feudal system and they are against corrupt officials rather than the emperor and the feudal imperial system (*I Chose China*). It is thus clear that Shapiro empathizes with the misery of the women of *Shui Hu Zhuan* as the Dent-Youngs do – firstly, he acknowledges the low status of women in feudal society and disapproves of violent killings, including the killings committed by the Liangshan heroes against the villainous women. Moreover, he believes that the Liangshan heroes are the defenders of the feudal society, which means that their revolution cannot save women from their long-suffering lives at the bottom of society; but on the contrary, it would lead to the low status of women even more.

Furthermore, Shapiro does not promote literal translation; he believes that translators are rebels and need to use translation strategies such as supplementation, deletion, and even reformulate the original sentences to add to the readability of the translation while remaining faithful to the original (1991, *English Translation of Chinese Literature* 3–4). Shapiro's reconstruction of the female images is not only due to his own empathy and understanding of the female characters – his translation principle – but also related to the publishing house he worked for. Shapiro worked for Foreign Languages Press, a foreign propaganda publisher run by the Chinese government, and his translations are therefore ideologically influenced by the Chinese government and are propaganda oriented, so any information that is detrimental to China's image should be removed from the translations (Zhang & Chen, 2005). The negative portrayal of women in *Shui Hu Zhuan*, especially some vulgar words and scenarios that may cause discomfort for the readers could be detrimental to the image of China, thus Shapiro cut and modified the relevant details.

The Dent-Youngs, as I mentioned earlier, talked about female images in their translators' preface. They unequivocally expressed their views that violence against women and misogyny are evident in *Shui Hu Zhuan*, and the description of female characters show the unfavorable status of women within that society in which the novel is set. This argument shows that the Dent-Youngs identified the misogyny in the original text, and in their translation, as analyzed in the textual analysis, they reconstructed the female images in a positive direction. Moreover, the Dent-Youngs' translation is the most recent one, and their translation is influenced by previous translations, especially Shapiro's. They acknowledged that Shapiro's translation served as a blueprint for their retranslation. As already argued, Shapiro's translation of *Shui Hu Zhuan* shows a domesticated translation trend and a positive reconstruction of the female images. This undoubtedly had an

impact on the Dent-Youngs, who modeled their translations on Shapiro's translation. Plus, the target readers of the Dent-Youngs' translation are English readers without any Chinese background, so their translation has to be in readable English. In their translation, they tried to avoid any expressions that can create inappropriate meanings and associations in English, even though how much these expressions are of Chinese characteristics and how close they are to the style of this novel (2002 III).

Unfortunately, Jackson's relevant contextual sources have not yet been found, and the reasons behind his translation strategies cannot be deduced at this time.

Buck essentially did not reconstruct female images in her translation as can be seen in my textual analysis. One of the reasons why Buck developed such a translation style is due to her admiration for Chinese novels and the language style of them, and especially the colloquial and simple language style of *Shui Hu Zhuan*, which she wanted to present to English readers (Buck, 1948, xxi). In the first half of the last century, Chinese writers widely learnt the writing style of Western writers, which Buck disdained (Buck, *The Chinese Novel* 1938). Buck loved the Chinese language and Chinese novels. She also felt that it was a pity that Chinese novels, which have a long history, were not regarded as formal literature by the Chinese people of the time and were not known to English-speaking readers. She hoped that readers of her translations would feel like they were reading the original novel that she liked so that the readers could maximize their appreciation of the novel. Therefore, in translating *Shui Hu Zhuan*, she tried to stay close to the style of the original text (Buck, 1934, xxi).

In addition to the perception of the original text and the style of the translation, I would also like to mention the influence that Buck's attitude toward the underclass women in China may have had on her translation. After marrying a missionary, Buck and her husband moved to a small town in Anhui Province, China. As a missionary's wife, Buck also had missionary responsibilities, which were directed at the local women, most of whom had no access to education and were at the bottom of the social ladder. Regarding the Chinese women who were missionized, Buck in personal letter dated December 12 1918 commented, "all Chinese women are totally unaccustomed to using their minds for anything more difficult than gambling or their very simple housekeeping, and so a sermon is quite beyond their reach, often." From this expression, I argue that it is likely Buck had a certain prejudice against women from the lower classes in China. Most of the female characters in *Shui Hu Zhuan* are uneducated women from the lower classes, such as songstresses, prostitutes, and maidservants, and Buck was likely prejudiced against these women, which may have had an impact on her translation.

4. Conclusion

Using the feminist translation theory and strategies as a theoretical framework, this study analyzed the portrayal of female supporting characters who are portrayed as villainous women in *Shui Hu Zhuan* and the translators' reconstruction of them in their translations. The analysis reveals that these female images are seen in the original text as unfaithful, lecherous and treacherous. The translators adopted various translation strategies for such female images. The feminist translation strategies summarized by Von Flotow (1997) are reflected in the translations, and these strategies also work well to reconstruct the female images in a positive direction.

Of the four translations in question, Buck's translation shows female images which are not very different from those in the original text, so the misogyny in it has nowhere to hide. This is because Buck has a strong love for the Chinese novel and its linguistic style, so she adopted the strategy of foreignization to translate this novel so that she can preserve this style of language she favored in her translation. However, I also argue that Buck likely had prejudices against women from the lower classes in China, which might have affected her translation. Shapiro positively reconstructed the female images through rewriting and deleting, circumventing the offensive depictions of women in the original text. This is firstly because Shapiro is understanding and sympathetic to the women in the novel and opposes the Liangshan heroes' killings and their defense of the feudal society. Moreover, Shapiro's translation principle tends to be domesticated, and he placed great importance on the readability of his translations. Additionally, Shapiro worked for a translation publishing house operated by the government of the People's Republic of China for the purpose of foreign propaganda, and he needed to remove from his translations content that was not beneficial to China's image. The Dent-Youngs also rewrote the original text and supplemented it to reconstruct the female images, as well as indicating their sympathy for the women in *Shui Hu Zhuan* in the preface. The reasons behind their translation strategies are due to their recognition of *Shui Hu Zhuan*'s misogyny, their emphasis on the readability of the translation, and their borrowing from Shapiro's translation. Jackson also provided a positive reconstruction of the female image through his strategies of rewriting, deleting and supplementing, however the reasoning behind it is not known at this time, as no contextual information has been found about this translator.

Disclosure statement

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