

Research on Changes of Women Images in Chinese Translations from the Perspective of Rewriting Theory

A Case Study of The Complete Classic Series of Sherlock Holmes

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Abstract—This essay chooses two typical translations of *The Complete Classic Series of Sherlock Holmes* and compares the women images. Based on Lefevere's rewriting theory, this thesis attempts to find the reasons for the changes of women images. By analyzing different patronages, ideologies and poetics in the two different times, the essay argues that the translators of the two versions rewrote the original women images under the influence of the then patronage, ideology and poetics, which leads to the change of women images.

Keyword—*Sherlock Holmes*; *rewriting theory*; *women images*; *Lefevere*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Complete Classic Series of Sherlock Holmes (*Sherlock Holmes Series* for short) has exerted great influence on the development of modern Chinese literature, especially the development of detective novels and influenced the modern Chinese literature in both the first person narration and the writing structure. Arthur Conan Doyle described some women with distinctive characters in the novel. However, in Chinese translated versions, these images changed among different versions, which is worth our studying. But just a few people paid attention to this change and most of them are studying the influence of the target culture on the translation from the cultural perspective. Few had paid attention to the change of women images in different versions translated in different times. Since the Cultural turn in 1980s, Andre Lefevere put forward his rewriting theory, which argues that translation is a kind of rewriting under the manipulation of patronage, ideology and poetics. This theory has been applied to the description and explanation of many translation phenomena. Based on Lefevere's rewriting theory, this paper is going to compare between the women images presented in the 1916 version and the 1981 version of *Sherlock Holmes Series* and research into the deep reasons based on Lefevere's rewriting theory.

II. LEFEVERE'S REWRITING THEORY

As the main representative of Cultural School, Andre Lefevere (1944-1996) stated that translation is a rewriting of an original text. All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. [8] In Andre Lefevere's opinion, there are three factors that influence translation, namely, patronage, ideology and poetics.

Patronage means something like the powers (persons, institutions) influencing the reading, writing, and rewriting of literature. It includes three basic elements: the ideological component acts as a constraint on the choice and development of both form and subject; the economic component will enable writers and translators to make a living; the last element, i.e. the status involved, controls the status of writers and rewriters. These three elements can be dispensed by the same patron, or by several different patrons. Ideology taken here is not limited to the political sense. Ideology can be held by a particular group or person. There are both individual ideology and the dominant ideology. The dominant ideology will have a considerable effect on individuals. Moreover, Lefevere emphasizes that ideology is often enforced by the patrons, the people or institutions that commit or publish translations, and this ideology controls a translator's translation activities. Poetics is about what literature should (be allowed to) be according to Andre Lefevere. Translators will rewrite the original texts under the constraints of the dominant poetics in order to make it acceptable to the target culture.

III. A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF WOMEN IMAGES IN TWO DIFFERENT VERSIONS

A. General Introduction to the Two Versions

In this essay, two versions of *Sherlock Holmes Series* will be chosen, the one published by Chinese Publishing House in 1916, and the one published by Mass Press in 1981. The 1916 version was the first collected edition published in

China which was translated by Liu Bannong, Zhou Shoujuan, Cheng Xiaoqing, Yan Duhe, Tian Xuwosheng, etc. This version was so popular that it was republished after only three months and had been republished twenty times by the end of 1936.

The other version published in 1981 was also a best seller: it was also republished many times and the total printing copies amounted to 414,000, which made it the best selling collected edition in China. Nearly all the stories of Sherlock Holmes were collected in this version and the whole version included three volumes. Translators were not that famous as the translators of the 1916 version but were all experienced translators: Ding Zhonghua, Li Jiayun, Chen Yulun, Yan Renzeng, to name just a few.

B. Changes of Women Images

Women differ from nation to nation. Each nation has its own typical women images and has certain words to define women images. In other words, different nations will have different opinions on women and on the standards of beautiful women.

According to Kong Huiyi, there are mainly three types of typical women in English-speaking countries. The first type is the classic beauty with blond hair, the typical example being Jane Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice*. Another type is clever, strong-minded and black-haired women, for example, Elizabeth Bennett. The last type is the dumb blond, who are lovely but not very intelligent. Another woman, Kitty Bennett, is just this kind of beauty. Kong Huiyi concluded that very intelligent and strong-minded women are usually not blond and blue-eyed and without regular features. What's more, "some opinions of black hair women in the English culture have become common sense, for instance, Celts (people lived in Wales and Ireland) usually have black hair and in English culture, they are impulsive and mysterious in characters, which are different from Normans and Saxons." [7] The last but not the least important, she also noticed that women from South Europe such as Italy and Spain who had dark hair and dark eyes were generally considered as more bad-tempered than blue-eyed blond and they also played an important role in English novels.

While a traditional beautiful woman in Chinese culture is often with willow leaf-like eyebrow, almond-like eyes, small cherry-like mouth, oval face, and slim waist. [7] Words used to describe women's appearance are "肤如凝脂"(soft and glossy skin), "肌肤胜雪"(snow-white skin), "仪态万千"(graceful and elegant behavior) and so on and words used to describe women's character are "细致"(careful), "落落大方"(easy and graceful), "灵慧"(clever), "温柔"(soft and gentle), etc.

In Sherlock Holmes Series, the women were mostly clever, strong-minded, firm in character and able to make their own decisions. According to Kong Huiyi, women in Sherlock Holmes Series were in accordance with the typical women images in the English culture. [7] When translating them into Chinese, translators in different times made different choices.

The most typical example is the translation of Anna, a character in Naval Treaty. The original description for her is:

Example 1: She was a striking looking woman, a little short and thick for symmetry, but with a beautiful olive complexion, large dark Italian eyes, and a wealth of deep black hair." [3]

It is obvious that the woman portrayed here was a typical South European beauty who had dark eyes and dark hair. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle even used "Italian" to describe her eyes. Anyone who has read the story must know that she was an independent and strong-minded woman. But in the 1916 version, she was translated into:

Translation 1(a): 安娜貌颇映丽，肤色雪白，柔腻如凝脂，双眸点漆，似意大利产。斜波流媚，轻盈动人，而鬓发压额，厥色深墨，状尤美观。性体略短削，微嫌美中不足。—《海军密约》 [5]

The dark complexion was translated into "肤色雪白，柔腻如凝脂"， which was a traditional character of beauty in Chinese culture. And some more characteristics were added to show that this was a beautiful women: "斜波流媚，轻盈动人". In this story, Anna played an important role in the solving of the case, which clearly showed that she was indeed a brave and strong minded woman. While, in the translation, the woman in the readers' eyes was a typical Chinese beauty with snow-white skin and with tiny figure.

If the changes in the 1916 version can be regarded as "transformation" to some extent, then in the 1981 version, some kind of "return" occurred. Anna in the 1981 version was:

Translation 1(b): 她是一个异常惹人注目的女子，身材略嫌矮胖，显得有些不对称，但她有美丽的橄榄色面容，一双乌黑的意大利人的大眼睛，一头乌云般的黑发。 [4]

Here the woman image is more loyal to the original woman image, a typical South European beauty.

There are even more such examples:

Example 2: ...and a young lady came in. She was rather above the middle height, slim, with dark hair and eyes, which seemed the darker against the absolute pallor of her skin. I do not think I have ever seen such deathly paleness in a woman's face. Her lips, too, were bloodless, but her eyes were flushed with crying. As she swept silently into room she impressed me with a greater sense of grief than the banker had done in the morning, and it was the more striking in her as she was evidently a woman of strong character, with immense capacity for self-restraint. [3]

Translation 2(a): 一女郎款步而入，身躯殊苗条，发睛俱黑色，而双颊白如梨花。一若夜来余惊尚未去者。—《翡翠冠》 [5]

The original text of example 2 has shown clearly that this woman was one with strong character and capable of controlling herself, while in the translation, she became a pitiful and easily frightened woman, which was in accordance with traditional Chinese women.

Translation 2(b): 一位年轻的女士走了进来。她身高在中等以上，身材苗条，漆黑的头发和眼睛，在她十分苍白的皮肤衬托下似乎显得分外黑。我想起几时曾经见到过脸色如此苍白的妇女。她的

嘴唇也是毫无血色，她的眼睛却因为哭泣而红肿。她静悄悄地走过来，给我的印象似乎她的痛苦更甚于银行家今早所感受的，因为她显然是一位个性很强、并且具有极大的自制力的妇女，这就显得更加引人注目。[4]

The part omitted in the 1916 version was translated here, which helped us to have a better understanding of the woman's character. Here the image that appears in our minds is a typical independent and strong-minded woman, which is closer to the original woman Arthur Conan Doyle wanted to show us.

Examples above are all about the direct description of women appearance. There are even more examples about women images that described them in an indirect manner.

Example 4: She was brown with the dust and draped with the cobwebs which had come from the walls of her hiding-place. Her face, too, was streaked with grime, and at the best she could never have been handsome, for she had the exact physical characteristics which Holmes had divined, with, in addition, a long and obstinate chin. ...And yet in spite of all these disadvantages, there was a certain nobility in the woman's bearing—a gallantry in the defiant chin and in the upraised head, which compelled something of respect and admiration. Stanley Hopkins had laid his hand upon her arm and claimed her as his prisoner, but she waved him aside gently, and yet with an over-mastering dignity which compelled obedience. [3]

From the above description, we know that the woman here was just an ordinary woman with a plain face, who did something rare for a woman, thus looking respectable. But in the 1916 version, she was depicted somewhat as a beautiful, heroic and mysterious woman:

Translation 4(a): 但见面前所立之一人形状至奇：异蛛网结其人如瓔珞，面目尘封，亦黛黑如布耳人种，细目高鼻。正如福尔摩斯所度，其下颔特长，示人以不可侵犯之态……哈伯根此时尽露得意之色，如猎狗之得兔，径前捉其臂。夫人怫然以袖拂之，懔懔之态令人不禁畏敬，故哈伯根亦即退。——《雪案沉冤》[5]

Here the expressions “怫然以袖拂之” and “懔懔之态令人不禁畏敬” will give us an illusion that this woman was a hero and had done something heroic, while in fact she was just an ordinary woman. In short, here her image was beautified by translators of the 1916 version.

Translation 4(b): 她满身都是一道道的尘土，衣服上还挂着从墙上蹭来的蜘蛛网。她长得并不漂亮，她的体型和脸型正是象福尔摩斯所推测的那样，此外，她的下巴也比较长，显得很顽强。……尽管她并不漂亮，但是举止端庄，神态从容，表现出一种顽强和豪迈的精神，使在场的人无不为之敬慕。斯坦莱·霍普金抓住她的手臂，就要给她戴上手铐。她神色庄严地把霍普金轻轻推开。[4]

Again, the omitted part was back here and the woman was no longer like a hero, but just a respectable woman.

From people's handwriting, experts can tell something about the person's character and it is universally accepted that men's handwriting is different from women's. In the English culture, women with strong characters will have similar handwriting as men, but in China, women's handwriting were usually connected with such words as “娟

秀” and “秀美”. Thus, translators of the 1916 version made many changes.

Example 5: ...the letter was superscribed to “Sherlock Holmes, Esq. To be left till called for.”[3]

Translation 5(a): 信面则书为留上大侦探福尔摩斯。字迹绝秀媚，望而知为女郎手笔。——《倩影》[5]

The woman in example 5 is one woman worth our mention. Being the heroin in *Scandal in Bohemia*, Irene Adler was the only woman who had defeated Sherlock Holmes and was also admired by him. She was no common woman but with a tough character. However, the translators used “秀媚” and added their own opinion that this letter was from a woman and the handwriting must be with the characteristics of women.

Translation 5(b): 信封上写着：“歌洛克·福尔摩斯先生，留交本人亲收。”[4]

In the version in 1981, it changed with the detail faithful to the original description.

From the above quotations and analysis, we can find that women's images in these two versions are much differentiated. Generally speaking, the women images in the 1916 version were transformed into traditional Chinese women images while in the 1981 version the women images to a certain degree returned to the original images, i.e. the typical English women images. These changes must have happened for some reasons. The following part will try to find out the reasons from three perspectives, namely, patronage, ideology and poetics.

IV. STUDY ON THE CHANGES FROM THE PROSPECTIVE OF REWRITING THEORY

According to Andre Lefevere, all translations are rewritings and so are the women images in the two versions of *Sherlock Holmes Series*. It is apparent that these rewriting of women images are under the manipulation of patronage, ideology and poetics.

A. Manipulation of Patronage

As for the two versions, both of their patrons are publishing house, one being Chinese Publishing House, the other Mass Press. This is a common point; however, due to the time differences, their interference resulted in different translations.

1) *Patronage of the 1916 version*: The Opium War in 1840 ended the feudal age and from then on China gradually turned into a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. In the meantime, various new thoughts, new concepts and new things came in. The old translation system broke down along with the old literature system and the rising bourgeois turned to be one of the sources of new patronage. They adopted evolution theory as well as the innate right of man to argue against the fatalism and the divine right and science and metaphysical materialism to prove atheism. By translating western books, publishing newspapers,

propagating their scientific and democratic thoughts, the rising bourgeois came to be relatively independent patronage besides the feudal government. Against this background, publishing houses established by the rising bourgeois became the main motivator of translation activities, while some translators from the rising bourgeois became the pioneers in reform and salvation.

The rising bourgeois represented by Liang Qichao (1873-1929) and Yan Fu (1853-1921) were aware of the great social effect of novels and attached great importance to the translation of novels. After their advocacy, not only the translation of political novels but also the translation of other kinds of novels became a common practice. The translation of Sherlock Holmes Series was just under such a circumstance.

Before the publication of the 1916 version, the stories of Sherlock Holmes had already been known to Chinese readers and were very popular. In view of the popularity of the stories of Sherlock Holmes, Chinese Publishing House decided to translate and publish a collected edition of his stories.

At that time, though the Opium War opened the door of China by force, the Chinese society was still very conservative and unprivileged Chinese people were also ignorant. For them, foreign women seemed very strange and even indecent for some of their behaviors. Most women then could not accept formal education, and a woman without talent was regarded as virtuous. Women could not have their own decisions, and they must obey the main principles of social order and be obedient.

In such a case, if the translators translated all these women images faithfully, common readers would have difficulty in accepting these images, which would in turn influence the sale of the novel. Therefore, translators would do some rewritings in consideration of the sales volume, or in other words, in consideration of their own income. That is why the women images in the above examples were totally changed into traditional Chinese women images, no matter in the aspect of appearance or in the aspect of handwriting.

2) *Patronage of the 1981 version:* Since the foundation of the People's Republic of China, China has established the socialist ideology. In order to consolidate its dominant position, the socialist ideology set new rules and principles for literature and literature translation. In the 1950s, the government reorganized the publishing institutions and only a few presses were qualified to publish translated literature works. The translation was no longer the privacy of translators but arose to the national level and was institutionalized. People under the lead of Communist Party of China became the new patronage of China and new system of translation was set up. Due to the opening of relevant academic conferences, the publishing of academic journals and works and the developing of translators' organization, translation research became one of academic branches which developed the most rapidly. Meanwhile, the number of translators increased unprecedentedly and many

new translation researchers appeared besides those famous translators and writers. In the late 1970s, the work of translation started anew and made great achievements.

Being a national press directly under the police, Mass Press did not publish the 1981 version at first, instead, it published three novellas translated in 1950s firstly. And these three novellas were used to broaden the outlook of members of the police and the judiciary and for their reference. Due to the popularity of these three novellas, Mass Press began to publish a collected edition which included five volumes. Then in 1981, on the basis of the five-volume edition, the version discussed in this thesis was published and soon became a best seller.

In the preface of the 1981 edition, Wang Fengzhen wrote that "Though in the orthodox history of literature there was no position for Conan Doyle and his detective stories, as the European and American detective stories developed, recently some western critics began to make new evaluation of him. Conan Doyle, an important writer in the early stage of detective stories, and detective stories, a popular school of literature, should both have their proper positions in literature history."^[4]

Since he was invited by the press to write this preface, it can be inferred that Mass Press agreed with his opinion. That is to say, Mass Press also thought that Conan Doyle's detective stories were worth translating and publishing. However, it is obvious that if the first three novellas were not popular, the Mass Press would not publish the other two editions. At that time, since the People's Republic of China had been established, many western works were translated in China despite of the stop of literary translation during the Cultural Revolution and people were not so ignorant as the people in the late Qing Dynasty. In addition, since Mass Press is a national press under the police system, the press must have set some rules for the translators and the quality of the works translated in this press should be of guarantee. As a result, women images in the 1981 version were much closer to the original women images.

B. Manipulation of Ideology

As one of the two factors that basically determine the image of a work of literature as projected by a translation, ideology will also influence translators' translation activities. Before translation, translators should fully understand the meaning of the original text, including the cultural background of the original text. In this cross-cultural activity, translators have several different cultural identities thus having complicated ideology. When translators try to express the original meaning with the target language, they will inevitably adopt omission, addition and adaptation or some other strategies. When the translators of the two versions discussed in this thesis were translating *Sherlock Holmes Series*, they were also influenced by this tendency. In this way, their translations would better meet the ideology of target culture and would be accepted by the target readers more easily.

According to Lefevere, it is just through translators that the ideology exerts its influence on translation behaviors. Translators could approve the ideology of the then society, or oppose to it. Translators' viewpoints of women are an important part of their personal ideology. Since the two versions were translated in different times with different ideologies, women images inside are understandably different.

1) *Ideology of the 1916 version:* Opinion on women is an important part of the social ideology. In the 1916 versions, western women images were changed into traditional Chinese women images and besides the reason of patronage, there is also the reason of ideology.

In Liang Qichao's preface of *Translation and Publication of Political Novels* in 1898, he clearly stated literature's importance of social revolution, which indicated its social utilitarian nature. [9] It was also true in literary translation. Literary translation in the 20th century had two value orientations: to meet the demand of politics and to satisfy the need of literature development. Most times these two value orientations were differentiated since works met the demand of politics were usually with little or no literary value and vice versa. Literary translation was usually in this dilemma. Nevertheless, the literary translation in the 20th century on the whole had the orientation of meeting the demand of politics. In other words, the dominant ideology in the beginning of the 20th century was to learn from the foreign countries and restore the prosperity of China.

Published in 1916, the 1916 version was translated in the phase of illuminating the people's wisdom and seeking reform. Detective stories were chosen as a means of enlightening people, so did *Sherlock Holmes Series* for the following reasons: first, it was brand new for Chinese readers; second, it advocated the spirit of law; finally yet importantly, it was apt to be accepted.

In order for the novel to be accepted easily by the readers in the target culture, translators have to cater for the dominant ideology. That is to say, if the translators wanted *Sherlock Holmes Series* to be popular, in the readers, they must pay special attention to the dominant ideology, whether they embraced it or not.

Since most people in China were unprivileged and had no access to advanced education, people's opinion on women was still influenced by Confucianism and the traditional ethic instead of the budding capital ideology. In Confucianism, women had no place and should be delicate, fragile and dependent. Thus, when encountered with a woman with "a beautiful olive complexion", the translators made adaptation to cater for the readers' interest. Another woman with "a curved nose" and "a straight, thin-lipped mouth" was turned into an angel-like beauty in example 3.

There was an exception in the examples. In translation 4(a), the woman seemed somewhat heroic, mysterious and courageous, which was not identical with the dominant ideology. However, descriptions such as "不可侵犯之态", "怫然以袖拂之" and "懔懔之态令人不禁畏敬" would remind us of a type of women who were respected by people who

believed in Confucianism—Xia Nv (chivalrous women), for example, Hong Fu Nv, Lv Si Niang in folklores. This type of women was special in China society and was admired by people. Anna in the original text was a woman with general appearance but did something rare for a woman. While in the 1916 version, the translators depicted her as a mysterious, beautiful and somewhat heroic woman. In fact, by weakening the position of women and strengthening the heroic aspect in her, Anna's character was beautified.

2) *Ideology of the 1981 version:* After the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the dominant ideology turned in to the socialist ideology. The latter half of the 20th century witnessed an agreement between the dominant ideology and the state statement due to the unification and stability of the government and its firm control over ideology. During this period, intellectuals were on the side of the government most of the time.

After the short transition from 1976 to 1979, to achieve modernization and to get well-to-do became a notion recognized almost throughout China, which is also the ideology with the most followers in history. At the same time, the government didn't in the least lose its control over ideology and kept alert to possible peaceful evolution from socialism back to capitalism and any tendency towards bourgeois liberalization so as not to completely let free the senses which had been oppressed and blunted in the previous period. The phenomenon most worth noting in this period is the renaissance of the translation of popular literature. In such a situation, the 1981 version was translated and published.

At the same time, with the development of society and the change of ideology, people's opinion on women changed. According to Wang Xinlin, this change was related to the liberation of women. Though in the late Qing Dynasty women were viewed as weak, fragile and dependent, women's liberation began in this period. From the May Fourth Movement to the foundation of the People's Republic of China, the problem of women was discussed in a broad background and was concluded as the problem of independent personality and value. Women in new China have the right in politics, economy, education, work, and speech and to take part in social activities, which means the end of women's dependency on men in economy. Meanwhile, women in new China were no longer fragile and dependent, instead, they were viewed as "half the sky" and the equality of men and women was gradually realized.

From the above statement, it is not hard to find the reasons why women images in the 1981 version were close to the original ones. Since people no longer thought women were dependent and should be obedient, descriptions of women's strong character that were omitted in the 1916 version were translated in the 1981 version. At the same time, due to the communication with foreign countries, people were more familiar with foreign people than before. Therefore, women with typical foreign features were translated accordingly.

C. Manipulation of Poetics

Translators are usually influenced by the prevalent literary form in poetics when they are choosing translation strategies and this influence can be conscious and unconscious. As for the literary form, according to Lefevre, there are “literary devices, genres, motifs, prototypical characters and situations, and symbols.”[8] The change of women images in the two versions of *Sherlock Holmes Series* belongs to the prototypical characters.

1) *Poetics of the 1916 version*: In the late Qing Dynasty, the poetics was in a transitional stage. Different western thoughts such as romanticism, naturalism and realism were introduced in while the old Chinese cultural form and thoughts were gradually disintegrating. Novels in Europe and America were totally different with Chinese novels and even the language and behavior were very different from each other. If translators translated them literally, the readers would be like reading a sealed book, which would make the readers confused and puzzled. In order to cater for readers’ aesthetic demands and interests, translators would give up literal translation and adopt domestication when they came across contradictions between Chinese culture and foreign culture in the process of translating. Therefore, when Cheng Xiaoqing, Li Changjue and some other translators of the 1916 version ran into those descriptions of women, they made some adaptation or even omitted some parts considering Chinese readers acceptance.

Though in the late Qing Dynasty, New Novel was developing swiftly, many works still kept the traditional women images especially in the works written and translated by the School of Mandarin Chinese Duck and Butterfly, for example, Zhou Shoujuan’s translated work Famous Short Stories of Europe and America, and Lin Shu’s translated novels. Apart from these two translators, there were more translators who adopted domestication when translating women images. Then the change of women images in *Sherlock Holmes Series* was not an accident but was because of the manipulation of the dominant poetics.

2) *Poetics of the 1981 version*: Different from the dominant poetics in the Cultural Revolution which prescribed the acceptable the prototypical characters, namely, “the heroic workers, farmers and soldiers”, dominant poetics in the late 1970s and the early 1980s had a great shift in perspective of prototypical characters. In this period, the literature translation was more a communicating tool than an educating tool in the late Qing and early Republic Period. At the same time, the form of novel gradually matured and women characters depicted in literature were rich and varied instead of being limited to the traditional Chinese women images. Therefore, it was impossible for translators to beautify women far-fetchedly and they chose to keep their original images.

Since the Opium War forced China to open its door, communication between China and foreign countries was more and more common and it was not that difficult for Chinese people to accept foreign women images. People had

acquired that there were beautiful women even in black people. Thus, women images in translated works were closer and closer to the original women images.

What’s more, though translation studies did not start very early, after several years’ development, it had gained significant progress. Addition, adaptation, omission were no longer used by translators at their will.

To sum up, peopled cognition of foreign women images, the maturity of novel form and development in translation all together decided that in translators of the 1981 version could no longer change women images at their will; instead, they chose to keep the original images and presented the readers with the most original feeling when reading the novel.

V. CONCLUSION

Sherlock Holmes Series is a great work which has been popular since its birth and Sherlock Holmes is a legendary character created by Arthur Conan Doyle. Besides Sherlock Holmes, Arthur Conan Doyle also depicted many distinctive women characters, who were usually strong minded and independent. This essay focuses on the comparison of women images in two different versions of *Sherlock Holmes Series*, the 1916 version and the 1981 version. On the basis of Andre Lefevre’s rewriting theory, the thesis analyzes the three elements of patronage, ideology and poetics in the two then society of China to reveal the reasons of the changes of women images in the two versions. It is found that in the late Qing Dynasty, *Sherlock Holmes Series* was translated as an education tool and the translator had to cater for the interest of readers. What’s more, influenced by the traditional Chinese women images, translators adopted omission, addition and adjustment in their translation. While in the early stage of reform and opening-up, the situation had settled down and translation studies had developed, translation was used as a communication tool and translators paid more attention to the loyalty of the translations.

In sum, the change of women images in the two versions of *Sherlock Holmes Series* is the result of the manipulation of patronage, ideology and poetics. We should reevaluate these two versions against their backgrounds but not limit to the loyalty and faithfulness.

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