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## A Comparison of Styles across Three Versions of *Cranford* in Chinese: 1927, 1937 and 1985

### 1. Introduction

From the 1920s to the present day, the publication of Elizabeth Gaskell's stories has been witness to the transformation in China's publication history from the politics-orientated to independence. With their growing understanding of foreign literature, Chinese scholars have sought to translate and criticize Gaskell's works, with the focus coming to settle on *Cranford*, especially during the early period. It was not by accident that *Cranford* has received so much attention: there is no similar novella in early modern Chinese literature that treats the topic of balance and modernization so gently and delicately, yet the translators' analysis of the texts reveals cultural compromise with distinct Chinese characteristics. In this paper, I argue that the reception of Gaskell in China sheds light on how western literature has been adapted for and accepted by the Chinese domestic market, thus also demonstrating the cultural mobility of Gaskell. The paper will consider how *Cranford* has been translated for a Chinese readership across three specific versions of the text: Woo Kwang Kien's *Cranfin* in 1927<sup>1</sup>, Zhu Manhua's *The Forbidden City for Women* in 1937<sup>2</sup>, and

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<sup>1</sup> Kwang Kien Woo, *Cranf* (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1927)

<sup>2</sup> Manhua Zhu, *The Forbidden City for Women* (Shanghai: Qiming Bookstore, 1937)

Xu Xin and Gu Mingdong's 1985 version published under the original title *Cranford*<sup>3,4</sup>.

Long before ever being introduced to Chinese readers, Elizabeth Gaskell was already an influential writer, her renown and oeuvre permeating the literary circles of the United Kingdom, the United States, and various European nations. Gaskell's novels offer a detailed portrait of the lives lived within the many strata of Victorian society, covering a wide range from the poor to the upper-class. *Cranford*, one of the most well-known and well-liked of her works, was serialized in Charles Dickens' Household Words between 1851 and 1853. In this softly humorous picture of a preindustrial country village, a young woman, Mary Smith, compassionately narrates her visit to the place and describes the genteel poverty of that "Amazon" community.

There existed a huge gap between the historical and cultural background of nineteenth century Britain on the one hand and that of China on the other when *Cranford* first arrived in its translated form. Each of the different Chinese translators that encountered the work, across different periods and in different political circumstances, looked differently at the meaning of the work due to various reasons such as personal cultural capital and the influence of the social and cultural environment in which each translator lived. It was inevitable, then, that the original text would be modified, with some additions and some deletions according to whatever the translator felt their readers required to best understand the text.

With the differences between westernized vernacular Chinese and mature modern Chinese, the three versions of *Cranford* exemplify the development of modern Chinese. Woo's and Zhu's translations are rich

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<sup>3</sup> Xin Xu and MingdongGu, *Cranford*(Tianjing: Baihua Literature and Art Publishing House, 1985)

<sup>4</sup> Thanks to the translators' diligent work with foreign literature, another *Cranford* translation in Chinese appeared on the market in 1984 co-authored by Liu Kaifang and Wu Xuanhao through Shanghai Translation Publishing House. The book marks the beginning of modern Chinese translation and reception of Elizabeth Gaskell, and was closely followed by another version by Xu Xin in 1985. There are many similarities between these two translations, i.e. referring to the writer as Mrs. Gaskell, the use of highly readable modern Chinese for the book's contemporary audience, and the many annotations translated from English sources. However, in this paper I have chosen to consider the 1985 version instead of that of 1984, mainly because of their sources: Liu's 1984 version is based on a 1910 English copy published by Everyman's Library, which is a popular edition aimed at general readers with a less scholarly approach; while Xu's is translated from the 1972 edition published by Oxford University Press, which contains a more comprehensive series of scholarly notes. Xu's version also has two appendices, one being a timeline of the life of Elizabeth Gaskell, and the other is a general discussion on the writer and her works by Xu.

both in classical Chinese elegance and western style, embracing deep personal emotions, while Xu's shows the well-developed quality of the Chinese language. As to the representation of the original linguistic features, Woo's and Zhu's translations partly present the original text, as the early modern Chinese that they employed is full of expressions with western characteristics. On the other hand, Xu's version with its authentic modern Chinese and flexible approaches, represents Gaskell's linguistic features in a more perfect way.

Generally, the 1927 and 1937 versions symbolize the popularization of the vernacular and common spoken Chinese. Using data from his quantitative analysis of the different *Cranford* texts, Zhang Qi illustrates a trend towards clarity in their styles: for example, the translated text in modern Chinese contains more explanatory words, such as "because", "due to", "lead to," and more conjunctions<sup>5</sup>. The increase in these connectives can be seen as a way to lay emphasis on the logical relationship between sentences, which helps readers to better understand the text and also explains a fundamental difference between the Chinese and English languages: English sentences rely on connectives or prepositional phrases to show the relationship between clauses, while Chinese tend to hide that relationship. Another obvious change is the reduced number of personal pronouns in the Chinese version, regardless of quantity or frequency. According to Zhang's data analysis, the number of personal pronouns in the Chinese versions fluctuates but decreases overall compared to the source text. This decrease is largely due to the translator's clarification of the characters referred to by personal pronouns in the translation process, i.e., using clear and precise names to indicate the characters, and Zhang believes this more clearly highlights who the characters are, thus achieving an increase in clarity. The decrease is also reflected in the translation of states of kinship, such as when reference is made to Peter Jenkyns in *The Forbidden City for Women*, the English word "brother" is mistakenly translated into "his elder brother" instead of "younger brother" by Zhu Manhua<sup>6</sup>.

Besides the linguistic components that are adapted in the translations of *Cranford*, there are three further elements that play an important role – the preface, the translator's notes, and the chapter summaries in Woo's

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<sup>5</sup> Qi Zhang, "Translation Clarity Trend of Four *Cranford* Chinese Versions," *Journal of Changchun Education Institute*, no.29 (2013): 34.

<sup>6</sup> Zhang, "Translation Clarity Trend of Four *Cranford* Chinese Versions," 35.

edition. However, this paper limits its scope to the translated text itself in these versions of *Cranford*, and here readers can feel the great differences in the style of each translation and gain a general sense of the changes in the Chinese language that occurred in the space between the first and the most recent versions. Even a consideration of the chapter titles can reveal some sense of the change:

	1927	1937	1985
Chapter 1 Our Society <sup>7</sup>	我们的社会 Our Society	我们的社会 Our Society	我们的社交圈 Our social circle
Chapter 2 The Captain	大佐 Captain (loanwords in Japanese)	伯伦大佐 Captain (loanwords in Japanese) Brown	布朗上尉 Captain Brown
Chapter 4 A Visit to an Old Bachelor	探望一个老鳏夫 Visit to an Old Widower	探望一个老鳏夫 Visit to an Old Widower	拜访上了年岁的 单身汉 A Visit to an Old Bachelor
Chapter 8 “Your Ladyship”	贵夫人 Your Ladyship	贵爵妇 Your Ladyship	高贵的夫人 Your NobleLadyship
Chapter 9 Signor Brunoni	布路耐 Brunoni	白狼拿你先生 Signor (transliteration)	布鲁诺尼先生 Signor Brunoni
Chapter 10 The Panic	恐怖 The Panic	虚惊 The Panic	恐慌 The Panic
Chapter 11 Samuel Brown	森妙布劳唔 (transliteration)	色秒儿佰伦 (transliteration)	塞缪尔·布朗 Samuel Brown
Chapter 13 Stopped Payment	倒闭 Bankrupt	停止兑现 Stopped Payment	停付 Stopped Payment
Chapter 15 A Happy Return	荣归 Return in Glory	快乐的团圆 Happy Reunion	喜还乡 A Happy Return
Chapter 16 Peace to Cranford	一团和气 Peace to Cranford	克兰舫的和平 Peace to Cranford	和睦降临克兰 福德 Peace to Cranford

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cranford, The Works of Elizabeth Gaskell, Volume 2, Novellas and Shorter Fiction I*. ed. by Joanne Shattock and Alan Shelston (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2005)

This table lists the three versions of *Cranford*, with the very left being the English table of contents by Joanne Shattock and Alan Shelston, from Pickering and Chatto, 2005. As shown, there are some culture-loaded expressions in Woo's (1927) and Zhu's (1937) contents, demonstrating how foreignization<sup>8</sup> influences their works. For instance, sometimes the translation is too westernized for present readers to understand, i.e. the transliteration of Signor Brunoni:

Woo's translation: P一〇七(107)第九章布路耐第十一章森妙布劳唔洗努拉

Zhu's translation: P八四(84)百狼拿你先生色秒儿佰伦

Xu's translation: P1布鲁诺先生塞缪尔布朗

Or sometimes the change in appellation makes the Chinese perform beautifully: take the translation of "Your Ladyship" as an example:

Woo's translation: P八一(81)我的爵妇

Zhu's translation: P七二(72)您贵爵妇

Xu's translation: P123高贵的夫人

## 2. Methodology

In order to discuss the styles and effects in these versions in a systematic way, I employ comparative analysis in this paper to look at the three translations. Specifically, I will examine the selected details from the following aspects: (1) beauty in classical Chinese; (2) the charm of appellation; (3) the translation of idiom; (4) rhotic accent and dialect; and (5) excessive westernization and modern Chinese. These details, I believe, indicate how the Chinese translators have paid attention to both domestic and foreign cultures. From the illustration of how Gaskell's original text has been domesticated, we can witness the translators' efforts to send the reader abroad while maintaining their own Chinese cultural values.

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<sup>8</sup> Here I am borrowing the terms "domestication" and "foreignization" from Lawrence Venuti. See L. Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995), 305-306.

### 3. Beauty in classical Chinese

Based on the spoken language in the pre-Qin<sup>9</sup> time, classical Chinese is one of the language systems to have emerged since the ancient period in China. During the Spring and Autumn Period, the articles used for writing had not yet been invented, but bamboo slips, silk, and other instruments were used for writing. In general, classical Chinese is short and pithy, so readers who lack the appropriate background or training generally lacked the ability to understand such texts, but the charm of classical Chinese remains – in most cases, a few words can represent a meaning that vernacular Chinese cannot express. So, an English work translated into classical Chinese will be greatly shortened. The literature of classical Chinese that has survived until the modern day have survived thousands of years of selection, leaving most fine works behind (not including historical materials, etc.), and reading them can enhance common spiritual literacy. These features are shown in the three versions: Woo’s has the richest elegance of classical Chinese yet partly presents some over-westernized characteristics; Xu employs well-developed modern Chinese language; while Zhu’s translation style falls somewhere between the two. In the following example, Woo’s adopted transcription for “Angel” is transcribed into “An-zhe-er” as he considers it to be no more than the name of a hotel. But Zhu translates “Angel” literally – as a spiritual being serving God, especially as a messenger or as a guardian of human beings. Xu uses the modern transcription of “Angel” - “An-qi-er”, being the only one to keep the text “to refreshing slumbers” in parentheses when the previous two translators deleted these few words.

(1) “and I discovered that his lordship retired to rest, and, let us hope, to refreshing slumbers, at the Angel Hotel”

Woo’s translation: P二十一(21)贵族是在安者尔饭店睡觉

Zhu’s translation: P十五(15)我们希望他睡到天使旅馆

Xu’s translation: P22 勋爵大人下榻在安琪儿旅馆里(但愿他起床之后头脑清醒, 精神愉快)

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<sup>9</sup> The Pre-Qin period refers to China’s historical period from the Paleolithic Age to the establishment of the Qin Dynasty (221 BC).

A second example appears in the translation of a poem. Perhaps feeling awkward in dealing with the remarriage of Lady Glenmire to Mr. Hoggins, the town doctor, Woo omits the poem. Ten years later, Zhu does not seek to avoid this issue as the social atmosphere concerning remarriage had become more enlightened or relaxed: the original Scots song is translated and rewritten into the corresponding classical Chinese poem. Xu uses the modern Chinese language and adds a note to inform readers of the context of Robert Burns' version of "Tibbie Fowler".

(2) "Tibbie Fowler—  
'set her on the Tintock tap,  
The wind will blaw a man 'till her" (264)

note:... a traditional Scots song: "...". A version by Robert Burns was printed in *The Scots musical museum*, 6 vols (1803) (356).

Woo's translation: P一百八十六(186) 歌里所说的人是个有钱的

Zhu's translation: P一三一(131)使伊高坐于庭尔之山巅兮

彼大风兮将吹逆一男子於

伊之身边兮

Xu's translation: P203 叫她在廷托克的酒馆坐下，风儿会把汉子吹到她身旁

note: 苏格兰民歌。据说由苏格兰著名的农民诗人彭斯 (1759-1796) 收集整理

#### 4. The charm of appellation

We can see the development of the Chinese language from the changes in the translation of appellation. For instance, "mamma" and "my dear" is combined and translated into "your loving mama" by Zhu, indicating the unstable, transitional status from classical Chinese to modern Chinese.

(1) "your mamma" in "I dare say your mamma has told you, my dear"  
(166)

Woo's translation: P四(4)我相信你的母亲已经告诉你

Zhu's translation: P三(3)我说句放肆的话…我爱你的母亲总和你说过有客来访你

Xu's translation: P4 令堂大人=your bonne mother

Or from their treatment of the name of Byron – only Woo fails to translate his title and adopts transliteration instead; this gives readers a more specific understanding of the language level and social circumstances of the time.

(2) “my Lord Byron” (175)

波尔伦(Woo- “Bo-er-lun”)/我的拜伦公爵(Zhu- “my Duke Byron”)/拜伦爵爷(Xu-“Lord Byron”)

Likewise in (3) Lord Mauleverer (192)

摩勒维贵族(Woo- “Mo-le-wei the nobleman”)/马公爵(Zh- “the Duke of Ma”)/莫尔凡勒公爵(Xu- “the Duch of Mo-er-fan-le”)

## 5. The translation of idioms

According to the Oxford English Dictionary<sup>10</sup>, idioms are “a form of expression, grammatical construction, phrase, etc., used in a distinctive way in a particular language or dialect”. In the three versions of Cranford, many interesting phenomena can be observed in the translation of idiom, and the following six examples are representative:

(1) “a sort of sour-grapeism” (167)

This idiom literally means “to devalue something one cannot have due to jealousy”; while Woo and Xu use the word “sour-grape”, Zhu adopts its literal meaning. The idiom appears when the narrator explains what “elegant economy” is, and that the people of Cranford think spending money is “vulgar and ostentatious”, implying that they pretend to be

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<sup>10</sup> ee I. Senses relating to language. 2.b. in “idiom”, Oxford English Dictionary, [https://www.oed.com/dictionary/idiom\\_n?tab=meaning\\_and\\_use#909611](https://www.oed.com/dictionary/idiom_n?tab=meaning_and_use#909611)



graceful whereas they do not in fact have much money. Woo’s translation—“A fox does not eat sour-grapes” (6), however, is confusing to readers unfamiliar with the original fable by Aesop, in which it is a fox that declares the grapes that it cannot in any case reach are sour; and Xu’s is a combination of figurative and literal meanings. This is also seen in *Cousin Phillis* when Paul Manning explains why he cannot love Phillis: she is “half a head taller than” him, reading books that he “had never heard of”, and “talking about them” as the books are more interesting “than any mere personal subjects”. Maybe out of jealousy, Paul thinks his cousin Phillis is not “the possible mistress” of his “heart and life” (392).

Woo’s translation: P六(6)这种见解原是狐狸不吃酸葡萄的意思

Zhu’s translation: P五(5)以力不能致而遂不屑改的一种主义

Xu’s translation: P6 这样一种吃不着葡萄说葡萄酸的心理倒也使大家心安理得

(2) the great Christian principle of “forgive and forget” (228)

This idiom is used by Gaskell when Miss Pole urges Miss Matty to go to Mrs. Jamieson’s party. They are firstly annoyed since Mrs. Jamieson does not want them to see her relative – the noble Lady Glenmire. But when the invitation later arrives, Miss Pole desires to go and to show off her new hat, so she persuades Matty to let go of the past and to join the party. In translating the principle, only Woo mentions that this is Christian in origin, with both Zhu and Xu replacing the original principle with Chinese idioms that carry similar meanings.

Woo’s translation: P一百二十一(121)基督教很重要的饶恕仇人忘记仇人的主义

Zhu’s translation: P七六(76)不计较不念旧= don’t bother about the past

Xu’s translation: P131 宽以待人既往不咎= Treat others with a magnanimous attitude; and let bygones be bygones.

(3) “everybody has a bug-bear fault... a pièce de résistance for their friends to cut at” (127)

The narrator Mary has “a bug-bear fault” – in discretion, which is her “standing characteristic”, and her family often blame her for this. So, Mary calls a bug-bear fault “a pièce de résistance for one’s friends to cut at”. Woo translates with respect to the English text and informs the reader that a person’s defect is like “a kind of meat, even cut, that will grow again” (181). But Zhu and Xu prefer to call the defect a “(meat) dish”, “a delicious dish that people wish to eat more of after just eating it”.

Woo’s translation: P一百八十一(181)是一种肉割去了还要长的

Zhu’s translation: P一一四(114)丰盛的肉人们…佳肴

Xu’s translation: P196而我的家人数落我的劲头,就象人们品尝美味的佳肴一样吃了还想吃

(4) how Peter was “surveying mankind from China to Peru” ... (262)

note: from the opening lines of Samuel Johnson’s poem, *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749): “Let observation with extensive view/Survey mankind, from China to Peru” (356)

From Shattock’s note in the original English version, we know this idiom means “all over the world”, Woo translating it into “to look at mankind from a vantage point, from China to Peru”, while Zhu and Xu uses “every live man from China to Peru”, with Xu adding an explanatory note.

Woo’s translation: P一百八十三(183)怎样的居高临下看尽东起中国西至秘鲁其间的世人

Zhu’s translation: P一五五(155)从中国到秘鲁一个活着的人类

Xu’s translation: P199 “瞻望人类, 从中国一直到秘鲁”

note: 这是引用约翰逊博士的一首诗《人类希望之空幻》中的前两句，原诗句为“要用远大的眼光来瞻望人类，从中国一直到秘鲁”。“从中国到秘鲁现已成为英文习语，意为举世、到处”

(5) ...to the second place of honor - a seat arranged something like Prince Albert's near the Queen's - good, but not so good (221).

Woo and Zhu delete the author's explanation for the seat – “something like Prince Albert's near the Queen's”, maybe assuming that the subtlety of the relationship between the monarch and her husband might be incomprehensible to the reader; but Xu keeps the reference.

Woo's translation: P六八(68)好是好的,还没有那么的好呀=Zhu's: P一百八 (108)

Xu's translation: P116阿伯特的位子

(6) ... “it would be better to consider the engagement in the same light as the Queen of Spain's legs” (266)

note: ...from a story in Madame D'Aulnoy's memoirs de la cour D'Espagne (1690) in which a young Austrian princess having been offered a present of silk stockings, her major-domo returns them with the words “the Queen of Spain has no legs” (Watson, Mitchell) (356)

“Queen of Spain's legs” is an idiom, meaning “the less said the better.” Woo translates it and offers an explanation in his text; Zhu deletes the idiom and leaves its meaning. Xu does both: he translates it in the text and adds an explanation as a note.

Woo's translation: P一百九十一(191)如同对待西班牙王后的脚一样。王后的确是有两只脚。但是说不得的。越少说那两只脚越好。

Zhu's translation: P一二〇(120)说的越少越好

Xu's translation: P207 我们觉得最好以看待西班牙女王的双腿一样对待这一婚姻

note: 此处说法出自多勒诺娃夫人所著的《西班牙王宫回忆录》一书

## 6. Rhotic accent (modal adverbs) and dialect

Generally, modal adverbs are words which describe the modality of the verb in a sentence. In the Chinese language, they are often used in declarative sentences, interrogative sentences, and exclamatory sentences and perform the roles of explanation, evaluation, and emphasis respectively. By counting the use of modal adverbs in the translation, Zhang Qi shows us that the translators express or emphasize their attitudes and mood in the translation, which reflects the translator's understanding of the book and is a clear tendency for readers<sup>11</sup>. In particular, the use of some rhotic accent and dialect in Chinese modal adverbs can clearly express the implied mood in the source language text, which is easier for the target language readers to understand. For example, when Miss Matty goes bankrupt, the narrator asks, “[W]ould Miss Matty sell, for filthy lucre, the knack and the skill with which she made trifles of value to those who loved her?” (278). The word “filthy lucre” means “dirty money” in Chinese, Zhu using this meaning in his translation and Woo omitting it; but Xu changes it into a mood adverb in a dialect used in Beijing and the northern provinces near the capital, which can also be seen in Zhu Shenghao's Chinese translation of *The Merchant of Venice* (1936). So, Xu's treatment is closer to life.

Woo's translation: P二百十四(214)他肯拿这种本事来卖钱吗

Zhu's translation: P—三四(134)腥臭的钱

Xu's translation: P231 腌臢钱

## 7. Excessive westernization and modern Chinese

The last point I would like to mention in this discussion of styles regards the idea of westernization. At times, Woo and Zhu's translations are hard for modern Chinese readers to understand because of their reliance on westernization; but considered from a different perspective, we can regard this as a cultural feature of the era in which those readers lived. These features indicate the development of modern Chinese language. For example:

(1) “my dear” (166)

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<sup>11</sup> Zhang, “Translation Clarity Trend of Four *Cranford* Chinese Versions,” 34.

Woo's translation: P三(3)我的宝贝= my sweetheart

Zhu's translation: P三(3)我爱你= I love you

Xu's translation: P3 亲爱的= my dear

(2) “of course no absorbing subject was ever spoken out” (165)

A social call in Cranford never lasts longer than a quarter of an hour, so “no absorbing subject was ever spoken out”. For this expression, Woo says “there are not any important matters” (3), Zhu replacing it with “to say something irrelevant, a short remark in a few words” (4), and Xu treating it as “no attractive” talk (4).

Woo's translation: P三(3)大题目的话

Zhu's translation: P四(4)说些不相干的话都是三言两语的短话

Xu's translation: P4 兴趣盎然的话

(3) “elegant economy” (167) and “individual small economies” (200)

Woo's translation: P六(6)清雅的节俭= frugality—not vulgarism

Zhu's translation: P七(7)优美的经济=graceful economy... P四三(43)小经济=small economies

Xu's translation: P4 堂皇的节俭=grandiose frugality...P71 从小处着眼的节省方法= to save from small expenses

(4) “dear good King William the Fourth” (220)/ William No. 4

Zhu's translation: P六六(66)亲爱的威廉第四的儿女

## 8. Conclusion

To summarize, this paper examines the translation history of Gaskell in China on the basis of three versions of *Cranford*: the five aspects in language styles and translation effects in the Chinese language reveal what kind of cultural mobility the translators have reflected of their different historical backgrounds in China. While trying their utmost to maintain the

elegant charm of classical Chinese in the translated texts, the translators also combine domestic cultures in their treatments of the idioms and appellation in *Cranford*, along with occasional use of regional rhotic accents and dialects. There is excessive westernization in Woo and Zhu's versions, yet such small defects cannot obscure the great virtues of the translation. Moreover, the successful domestication of Gaskell in China has helped its people to identify themselves, as seen by her growing popularity, including later during the twentieth century in television adaptations and discussion of her works on internet forums. The translation of Gaskell's work also bridges the gap between Western culture and the Chinese audience by domesticating cultural imagery. This promises a new contribution to Victorian studies in English, and paves the way for interdisciplinary, international work.

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### Abstract

With the differences between westernized vernacular Chinese and mature modern Chinese, the three versions of *Cranford* show the development of the modern Chinese language: Woo Kwang Kien's *Cranf* in 1927, Zhu Manhua's *The Forbidden City for Women* in 1937, and Xu Xin and Gu Mingdong's 1985 version published with the original title *Cranford*. As viewed from the overall result, Woo's and Zhu's translations are rich both in classical Chinese elegance and western style, embracing deep personal emotions, while Xu's shows the well-developed quality of the Chinese language. As to the representation of the original linguistic features, Woo's and Zhu's translations partly present the original text, as the early modern Chinese that they employ is full of expressions with western characteristics. On the other hand, Xu's version with its authentic modern Chinese and flexible approaches, represents Gaskell's linguistic features in a more perfect way. This paper discusses the styles and effects in these versions from the following aspects: (1) beauty in classical Chinese; (2) the charm of appellation; (3) the translation of idiom; (4) rhotic accent and dialect; and (5) excessive westernization and modern Chinese.

**Keywords:** Elizabeth Gaskell; domestication; *Cranford*; translation styles; comparative analysis

**Słowa kluczowe:** Elizabeth Gaskell, udomowienie, *Cranford*, style tłumaczenia, analiza porównawcza