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Translating Political Allusions in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*

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Abstract

Historically, in China, Jane Austen's works have been long undervalued due to perceptions of limited political relevance. Despite a wide recognition in Anglophone scholarship of their political commentary and social critique, this acknowledgment remains limited within Chinese contexts. This study focuses on *Mansfield Park*, a work known for its heightened political awareness. By integrating House's TQA framework with diachronic comparative analysis, this study stands as a pioneering effort to assess how Austen's political allusions in the novel have been translated and perceived within Chinese contexts over an extended period of time across different points in Chinese history. Originally published in 1814, *Mansfield Park* was the last of Austen's novels to be introduced into China, with its first translation published in 1984. To carry out this research, we have compiled a diachronic translation corpus of *Mansfield Park*, encompassing all available Chinese renditions from 1984 onward. Through an exploration of three facets of political themes—luxury, imperialism, and colonialism—this study uncovers translation challenges, choices, and strategies adopted by different translators over time, as well as recurring weaknesses. It reveals a chronological progression in translating political allusions, particularly reflected in evolving footnotes, which indicates a growing commitment to contextual accuracy. Chinese translators display a preference for overt translation strategies when addressing historical events or figures, while covert translations prevail for allusions with French connotations like "menus plaisirs." This research emphasizes how translators have endeavored to bridge the temporal and cultural divide between Regency England and modern China, shedding light on how Austen's political nuances are reimagined for new audiences over time.

Plain language summary

Translating political allusions in Jane Austen's Mansfield Park

In China, Jane Austen's works have been historically undervalued due to their perceived lack of political relevance, despite their reputation for social and political commentary in Anglophone scholarship. This study focuses on "Mansfield Park," known for its political awareness and sensitivity. Employing House's TQA framework and diachronic comparative analysis, it examines how Austen's political allusions have been translated and perceived in Chinese contexts over time. "Mansfield Park," published in 1814, was introduced to China only in 1984. We have compiled a diachronic translation corpus spanning Chinese renditions from 1984 onward. The study explores three socio-political facets in the novel—luxury, imperialism, and colonialism—and uncovers various translation challenges and strategies, as well as recurring weaknesses. Translators show a chronological progression toward contextual accuracy, using overt strategies for historical allusions and covert ones for French references like "menus plaisirs." This research outlines how translators have bridged the cultural and temporal gap between Regency England and modern China, reimagining Austen's political nuances. It reveals evolving footnotes, reflecting a commitment to preserving context. This study

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highlights the evolving reception of Austen's political content in China, shedding light on the adaptation of her work for a new audience.

Keywords
political allusions, diachronic translation corpus, Chinese translations, Jane Austen

Introduction

Mansfield Park, published in 1814, is an "ambitious" and "difficult" novel (Johnson, 1988, p. xi) that encompasses a wider range of themes than the other novels by Jane Austen. As the first novel that Austen composed and published exclusively during her adulthood, it marks a shift in her writing style and thematic content. Radically distinct from the "light & bright & sparkling" *Pride and Prejudice*, published one year earlier (Austen, 1908), *Mansfield Park* is "the most visibly ideological of Jane Austen's novels, and as such has a central position in any examination of Jane Austen's philosophy as expressed in her art" (Butler, 1988, p. 219). A similar statement is echoed by Johnson (1988, p. xiii) that "*Mansfield Park* is noticeably more allusive than Austen's other novels." While the first edition of *Mansfield Park* was well received by Austen's contemporaries, gaining her a profit of over £310, more than she had received during her lifetime for any other novel (Fergus, 1997 , p. 24), its appeal for modern-day general readers has waned compared with her other works. Nevertheless, among Austen scholars, particularly those within the fields of postcolonial and cultural studies (Folsom, 2012; Fowler, 2016), the novel has gained recognition for its insightful exploration of the political and moral issues that were prevalent during Austen's time (Dow, 2012, 2014; Herrero López, 2019).

The author herself was extremely proud of this novel,[1] and although the reception of *Mansfield Park* among English-speaking readerships of different eras has been positive, the novel's translations in non-Anglophone countries have had mixed receptions. For example, in China, the novel's reception by Chinese readers has been tepid, historically speaking. It should be noted that *Mansfield Park* was the last of Austen's major novels to be translated into Chinese (S. Sun, 2020), and it has had significantly fewer editions and translations than her more popular works such as *Pride and Prejudice*. Over a span of nearly four decades, from its initial translation in 1984 to the present day, only nine distinct versions by different translators of *Mansfield Park* are available in comparison to over 70 distinct versions of *Pride and Prejudice* that have been made available to Chinese readers. According to Ye Xin's study of the publishing of Jane Austen's novels in mainland China (Ye, 2020, p. 215), *Mansfield Park* has 15 editions and 26,702 copies on sale, compared with 255 editions and 1,394,604 copies of *Pride and Prejudice*, and 63 editions and 205,537 copies of *Sense and Sensibility*. As opposed to the limited popularity of *Mansfield Park* among general Chinese readers, the scholarship surrounding the novel is relatively extensive in mainland China, with a total of 222 academic publications on CNKI and Web of Science, primarily addressing themes such as feminism, female growth, the Cinderella plot, and new historicism. However, very few studies center on translation-based analyses. Specifically, there are only eight studies focusing on the translation of *Mansfield Park*. Among these studies, seven were master's theses, while the other study is a journal article based on one of the aforementioned studies. This article, Yu and Yang's (2016) feminist analysis of two Chinese versions of *Mansfield Park*, is the only published study to date.

A Chinese Austen scholar, S. Sun (2021), has pointed out that Chinese readers and scholars generally lack familiarity with the historical context of Austen's writing (p. 16), which is crucial to understanding *Mansfield Park's* engagement with contemporary political issues. As such, there remains a significant opportunity for translation-based studies to further expand on the existing scholarship surrounding Austen's work beyond Anglophone countries to non-Anglophone regions.

As yet, no research has specifically investigated the socio-political references in *Mansfield Park* and their translations within Chinese contexts. In the light of this gap, this study, by using comparative analysis and House's Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) framework, aims to explore how Chinese translators negotiate the cultural and temporal disparities in their translations of the socio-political references in *Mansfield Park*. This study's primary objective is to investigate the ways in which the translators have sought to convey the political resonances of the novel to enhance their comprehensibility to Chinese readers while simultaneously preserving the intended message(s) and meaning(s) of Austen's writing.

House's TQA Framework

House's TQA framework, inspired by Hallidayan systemic-functional linguistics, is rooted in the idea that assessing translation quality requires a comprehensive textual and contextual approach, including comparative

analysis. This approach goes beyond mere linguistic accuracy and considers a range of factors that impact the effectiveness of a translation as a communicative act. House's concept of "overt" and "covert" translation is a fundamental framework in translation studies that categorizes translations based on their degree of adherence to the source text's cultural and linguistic context and their visibility as translations.

Several scholars have used House's TQA framework, particularly the overt-and-covert approach, to assess translation quality within Chinese contexts (Li et al., 2022; Tang & Wang, 2011). This increasingly widespread use indicates the framework's effectiveness in capturing the intricacies of translation and its ability to provide valuable insights into the translation process and its outcomes.

Overt translations, as outlined by House (2015), prioritize preserving the source culture and language. Such translations are appropriate when it is essential to maintain the cultural and linguistic distinctiveness of the source text. Overt translations may be chosen when the source text is historically or culturally significant, and the translation aims to convey this significance to the target audience. Covert translations, on the other hand, prioritize the integration of the translated text into the target culture; these translations are appropriate when the goal is to provide target readers with texts that feel native and familiar.

A covert translation "enjoys the status of an original source text in the target culture. The translation is covert because it is not marked pragmatically as a translation text of a source text but may, conceivably, have been created in its own right" (House, 2015, p. 56). Thus, overt translation reads as visible, surface-level changes made to adapt a text to the target culture, while covert translation pertains to deeper, less obvious alterations that affect the text's overall impact. Covert translations are often chosen when the source text's cultural and linguistic elements would be foreign or distracting to the target audience. The decision whether to translate overtly depends on the features of the source text. If the situational or cultural context of the text is particularly significant, an overt translation may be necessary to preserve the original features. Additionally, if the source text is closely tied to a specific time and place, it may be impossible to translate it without transporting the temporal and spatial aspects as well. "Thus any text may, for specific purposes, require an overt translation, i.e. it may be viewed as a document which 'has independent status' and exists in its own right:…its author may, in the course of time, have become a distinguished political or literary figure" (House, 2015, p. 59). The overt-and-covert translation typology enables us to assess translation challenges, choices, and strategies made by different translators over time in translating Austen's works. Significantly, this framework also enables us to identify inherent problems within the translation process, notably when attempts at overt translation fail to convey, or misconstrue, the full politico-cultural resonance of terms, and when covert translations neutralize these resonances in the quest to create an "unchallenging" text that is readily comprehensible to target readers from other cultures.

Dataset: A Specialised Diachronic Translation Corpus of Mansfield Park

Comparative analysis in translation studies involves the examination of multiple translations of the same source text, either within a single language or across different languages. In the context of Chinese translations of Austen, we combine TQA and comparative analysis to examine the diachronic translation corpus over time. This approach allows for the identification of similarities and differences among translations, shedding light on the strategies employed by translators and the impact of various linguistic and cultural factors. This is the reason for our compilation of a specialized diachronic translation corpus of *Mansfield Park*.

Mansfield Park was the last of Austen's works to be translated into Chinese, published in 1984. As mentioned above, there are only nine distinct versions available now, among which only Sun Zhili's and Zi Pei's versions have multiple editions. Zi Pei's editions have been reprinted rather than retranslated. The lack of editorial revision of existing translations and the scarcity of new versions of the novel is significant, as our subsequent case studies show. Revised versions of *Mansfield* Park and new Chinese translations of the novel would benefit from the vast improvements in terminology management, translation quality assessment, and the globalization of expertise in most industries (including publishing) seen in recent decades. Nevertheless, although limited in number, all available versions have been selected in the corpus, covering five decades from the 1980s to the 2020s, and including the most recently revised version by Sun Zhili in 2017. Table 1 provides a summary of Chinese versions of *Mansfield Park* included in this study.

The first period studied is the 1980s, with the first version translated by Zi Pei and published by Hunan People Publishing House in (1984). Although Zheng Zhenduo (Zheng, 1927, p. 632) translated the novel's title *Mansfield Park* as Mansifei'er Gongyuan (曼斯菲尔公园) in 1927, the novel saw its first complete Chinese translation much later, in 1984. The 1980s was a special period in Chinese history, marked by a discernible lessening of ideological control. The political upheaval of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) had made "the Chinese people, who had been closed off for a long time,

Table 1. All Nine Chinese Versions of *Mansfield Park*.

Translated versions	Translator(s)	Version names	Date of publication	Publisher
T1	Zi Pei	曼斯菲尔德庄园	1984	Hunan People Publishing House
T2	Li Yeyi	曼斯菲尔德庄园	1997	Nanhai Publishing Company
T3	Xiang Xingyao	曼斯菲尔德庄园	1998	Shanghai Translation Publishing House
T4	Sun Zhili	曼斯菲尔德庄园	2004	Yilin Press
T5	Su Dan	曼斯菲尔德庄园	2009	Shaanxi Normal University Publishing House
T6	Xi Yuqing	曼斯菲尔德庄园	2009	Huayi Press
T7	Ding Kaite	曼斯菲尔德庄园	2014	Time Literature & Art Publishing House
T8	Sun Zhili	曼斯菲尔德庄园	2017	Yilin Press
T9	Mei Hai	曼斯菲尔德庄园	2022	People's Literature Publishing House

[…] anxious to understand the outside world, with an urgent and pent-up desire" (Ji, 2002, p. 171). In the 1980s, a notable shift took place in the translation of literary works, including those of Jane Austen, where the previously dominant ideological and political undertones began to wane. Translators shifted their focus toward capturing the esthetic essence and faithfully representing the artistic style of the original works. This breakthrough period was linked to the political and cultural transformation unfolding in mainland China during the 1980s (Liu, 2020, p. 100).

The second period studied is the 1990s, with only one version available. Li Yeyi was the second translator of *Mansfield Park* in mainland China and his translation was published in 1997 by Nanhai Publishing House.

The third period studied is the 2000s, with three versions available, translated respectively by Sun (2004), Sun (2009), and Xi (2009). The 2000s marked a fruitful period for the translations of Austen's works in mainland China, partly because China joined the World Copyright Treaty in 1996. As the works from classic writers like Austen have entered the public domain, Chinese publishers have had increased opportunities to retranslate their classics. Sun Zhili, a renowned Austen translator, expressed his delight upon completing the translation of *Mansfield Park*, which fulfilled a dream of translating all of Austen's novels. This sentiment is evident in his translator's preface, where he states, "I started translating Jane Austen's novels in 1983, and subsequently published translations of *Sense and Sensibility* (1984), *Persuasion* (1986), *Northanger Abbey* (1986), *Pride and Prejudice* (1990), and *Emma* (2000). In mid-December 2003, I submitted the translation of *Mansfield Park*, finally realizing a dream conceived during my school years—translating all the six masterpieces of 'unparalleled' Jane Austen" (Sun, 2004, Translator's Preface, our translation). In a similar vein, Su Dan has completed translations of five Austen novels, the only exception being *Northanger Abbey*. Xi Yuqing is among the most frequently referenced female translators in studies examining gender-based translation of *Mansfield Park* in Chinese contexts, as noted in the work of Yu and Yang (2016), Q. Li (2019), and Xiao (2021).

The fourth period is the 2010s, with two versions available. One is Ding Kaite's version published by Time Literature & Art Publishing House in (2014), and the other is Sun Zhili's most recent revised version, published by People's Literature Publishing House. As noted by Z. Sun (2017), *Mansfield Park* has undergone the least amount of revision compared to his revised translations of Austen's other works, with only three revisions to date, and the 2017 version is apparently "his most effective translation" thus far (p. 9).

The fifth period is the 2020s with only one version available so far. It was translated by Mei Hai and published by People's Literature Publishing House in 2022.

Translating Jane Austen's Politics Across Time and Space in Mainland China

The elements of political commentary and social critique in Jane Austen's novels have attracted an increasing degree of scholarly attention in recent decades[2] (Johnson, 1988). Of the novels, *Mansfield Park* emerges as a notable work characterized by its heightened socio-political consciousness. It explores subjects such as social class, power dynamics, colonialism, and imperialism, showing Austen's astute awareness of the political landscape of her time. Various political allusions, such as references to the slave and sugar trade, the government of the day, and the problem of pluralism, run throughout the novel. However, these allusions in *Mansfield Park* pose challenges to Chinese translators and readers who may not be familiar with the historical and cultural contexts of Regency England. The temporal and cultural discrepancies between the two countries present obstacles to understanding the novel's political references, resulting in difficulties in translating the text. Consequently, the role of translators in bridging this gap becomes crucial, as

Table 2. Different Translated Versions of Window-Tax.

Window-tax	
T1 Zi (1984)	窗子 (window)
T2 Li (1997)	窗子 (window)
T3 Xiang (1998)	窗户税 (window-tax) Footnote: 英国为增加财政收入，从十七世纪起按窗户数征收的一种税,十九世纪中叶起取消。 In order to increase fiscal revenue, the United Kingdom has levied a tax based on the number of windows since the 17th century, and it was abolished in the middle of the 19th century (our translation).
T4 Sun (2004)	窗户税 (window-tax) Footnote: 英国在1851年以前，曾对城镇房屋的窗户或透光孔征过税。 Before 1851, Britain imposed a tax on windows or light holes in town houses (our translation).
T5 Z. Sun (2017)	窗户税 (window-tax) Footnote: 英国从1696年起，曾对城镇房屋的窗户或透光孔征过税,1851年废除。 Since 1696, Britain has taxed the windows or light holes of town houses, and it was abolished in 1851 (our translation).
T6 Sun (2009)	窗户税 (window-tax)
T7 Xi (2009)	窗户税 (英国在一八五一年以前，曾对城镇房屋的窗户或透光孔征过税) Window-tax (England had a tax on windows, or light-holes, in town houses before 1851.; our translation)
T8 Ding (2014)	窗户税 (window-tax)
T9 Mei (2022)	窗户税 (window-tax) Footnote: 一种根据房屋窗户的数目征收的财产税，在英国始于1696年，后于1851年废止。 A property tax based on the number of windows in a house, started in England in 1696 and was abolished in 1851. (our translation)

they should enable Chinese readers to grasp the novel's political commentary.

This following section explores three facets of these translation challenges as case studies featured in *Mansfield Park*, with a focus on the novel's socio-political allusions. These allusions, rooted in the Regency period, influence the choice of translation strategies, the interpretation of political references, and the important role played by translator's notes and commentaries in conveying the novel's political messages to the Chinese target audience. As the case studies indicate, the effectiveness of these translation approaches is variable.

Case Study 1: Translating Politics and Luxury

In *Mansfield Park*, Austen intertwines luxury items with politics to reflect the novel's broader themes of social class and inequality. Through this interconnection, she affords a glimpse into the economic and political realities of the era in which the story unfolds. The window-tax is a prime example of a significant socio-political issue during that period. As mentioned in Example 1 (below), the window-tax, initially introduced in the late 17th century in England, was designed to generate revenue for the government by imposing a tax based on the number of windows in a property. During the 18th and early 19th centuries, it became a contentious issue, criticized for its adverse impact on the poor and its promotion of dark and poorly ventilated living conditions. It also disproportionately affected the owners of large estates, who had to pay a substantial amount of money based on the number of windows they had. According to the British national archives,[3] window-tax was seen as "'a way to tax wealth" since wealthier individuals typically had larger houses with more windows. Saglia's (2009) study identifies the significance of this phenomenon, highlighting that "Austen's novels feature several references to windows which, as incarnated signs and 'eloquent' luxuries," reinforcing her portrayal of socioeconomic distinction (p. 362). Austen's pointed references to the tax thereby highlight a class consciousness, and a sharp awareness of the socioeconomic divide between the rich and poor, that are ever-present in the value system of people from the British Isles. Recreating the same socioeconomic resonance for Chinese readers, however, is far from straightforward.

Example 1: Window-Tax

> Having visited many more rooms than could be supposed to be of any other use than to contribute to the **window-tax**, and find employment for housemaids, "Now," said Mrs. Rushworth, "we are coming to the chapel, which properly we ought to enter from above, and look down upon; but as we are quite among friends, I will take you in this way, if you will excuse me." (*Mansfield Park*, p. 100)

Table 2 below reveals that the term "window-tax" has been translated variously, and sometimes incorrectly, over time. The first translator, Zi (1984), mistranslated it as "window" in Chinese, omitting the reference to "tax" in the original English text. This mistake was repeated

Table 3. Different Translated Versions of Menus Plaisirs.

Translated versions	Menus plaisirs (Henry)	Menus plaisirs (Mary)
T1 Zi (1984)	个人花销 (personal expenses)	娱乐花销 (entertainment expenses)
T2 Li (1997)	自己花销 (personal expenses)	娱乐上的花销 (entertainment expenses)
T3 Xiang (1998)	娱乐消遣 (entertainment)	娱乐消遣 (entertainment)
T4 Sun (2004)	个人花销 (personal expenses)	个人花销 (personal expenses)
T5 Z. Sun (2017)	零花钱 (pocket money)	个人花销 (personal expenses)
T6 Su (2009)	个人花销 (personal expenses)	个人花销 (personal expenses)
T7 Xi (2009)	一个人使用 (for one's own use)	个人开销 (personal expenses)
T8 Ding (2014)	私人开销 (personal expenses)	花 (to spend)
T9 Mei (2022)	全部揣入口袋，供自己花销了 (Put it all in your pocket and spend it yourself)	花销 (expenses)

by the second translator, Li (1997) , possibly due to their lack of knowledge about the history of British taxation. It is also worth noting that window taxation has never been practiced in China, which could also have contributed to the translation errors. However, subsequent Chinese translations rectified this error by accurately recontextualizing the term, with most versions including a footnote to explain the historical background of window-tax in England. This positive development enhanced the translation's accuracy and helped readers better understand the text's nuances. However, it should be noted that the property referred to in Example 1 is a large country estate in Sotherton, rather than a town house. Sun (2004), Z. Sun (2017), and Xi (2009) have inaccurately suggested that the window-tax only applied to town houses, therefore implicitly excluding country estates from its purview. This is an oversight that may stem from a limited understanding of the socio-economic backdrop within which the window-tax was enforced. The most recent translated version published in 2022 (T9) represents a significant improvement by rectifying previous misleading information. T9 provides an accurate economic overview of the window-tax in Britain, referencing the specific period when it was launched (chronological input also provided by Sun between 2004 and 2017), but also removing the misleading notion that the tax exclusively targeted town houses. Therefore, although the footnote does not capture the tax's full impact on Britain's spectrum of social classes, reliable information in basic historic-economic terms has eventually—and belatedly—been relayed to Chinese readerships. It is surprising that it has taken decades to achieve this level of accuracy, and this raises important questions about the approaches taken toward translating international literature in China.

Austen's use of the French term "menus plaisirs" is another example of her connection of luxury with politics. An occasional use of French language and influence in Austen's novels has been noted by scholars such as Roberts (1995, p. 33) who suggests that "some [of Austen's] characters bear the imprint of French culture." Menus plaisirs, as shown in Example 2 below, was originally a department of the Maison du Roi responsible for all preparations for ceremonies, events, and festivities under the Ancien Régime. In the novel, Henry refers to Edmund's yearly income of 700 pounds as menus plaisirs, a phrase later echoed by Mary. In Austen's time, 700 pounds was a significant income, particularly for someone still living at home. To put it in perspective, Austen herself lived on a more modest 460 pounds per year with her mother, sister, and a servant (Johnson, 1988, p. xv). This provides an insight into the social context of the novel, where "[t]he Crawfords, with their French phrases and salon morality, are seen by Roberts as representing the threat that is posed to the political house by a decadent ruling class" (Sales, 1996, p. 91). Therefore, Austen's use of "menus plaisirs" exemplifies how linguistic choices can reveal broader socio-political allusions in literature.

Example 2: Menus Plaisirs

> 【Henry Crawford】 "Seven hundred a year is a fine thing for a younger brother; and as of course he will still live at home, it will be all for his **menus plaisirs…**"
>
> 【Mary Crawford】 His sister tried to laugh off her feelings by saying, "Nothing amuses me more than the easy manner with which everybody settles the abundance of those who have a great deal less than themselves. You would look rather blank, Henry, if your **menus plaisirs** were to be limited to seven hundred a year." (*Mansfield Park*, p. 264)

From Table 3 below, we can observe that the translations of Henry's and Mary's references to "menus plaisirs" have been inconsistent, even from the same translator. Henry's reference to menus plaisirs has been translated as 个人花销/自己花销/私人开销 (personal expenses), 娱乐消遣 (entertainment), 零花钱 (pocket money), 一个人使用 (for one's own use), and 全部揣入口袋，供自己花

销了 (put it all in your pocket and spend it yourself). On the other hand, Mary's comment regarding menus plaisirs has been translated as 娱乐花销 (entertainment expenses), 娱乐消遣 (entertainment), 个人花销 (personal expenses), 花销 (expenses), and 花 (to spend).

It is important to note that Austen's pointed use of the French term "menus plaisirs" was intended to convey a sense of French extravagance familiar to her contemporary readers. However, it poses a challenge for Chinese translators in terms of accurately conveying the tone and the intended use of the term, resulting in several deviations from the original text. While the term个人花销 (personal expenses) captures the essence of "menus plaisirs," it fails to convey the French cultural connotations inherent in the phrase and Austen's use of the term to reveal deeper themes of social class and political inequality in the novel. The acerbic resonance of the term in the source text is also lost.

Case Study 2: Translating Politics and Imperialism

Different aspects of Austen's interest in the politics of empire (Halsey, 2013, p. 18) were identified in Said's seminal essay "Jane Austen and Empire," an important piece of scholarship for researchers engaged in imperialist readings of Austen's texts. Said's innovative concept of contrapuntal reading, as well as the fundamental principle of linking literary works with cultural imperialism, have charted a new path in Austen studies (Fowler, 2017, p. 364). Consequently, critics argue that *Mansfield Park* can be regarded as an imperial text due to its references to themes associated with imperialist expansionism, as exemplified by the portrayal of Lord Macartney's trip to China (Buck, 2019).

The reference to the Macartney Embassy, an unsuccessful attempt by Britain to establish trade relations with China, is a political allusion to a larger historical context of British imperialism, shedding light on the British Empire's expansionist policies. A crucial aspect of this allusion is Macartney's refusal to perform the kowtow ritual, a ceremonial bow, before the Chinese Emperor. This act signifies Britain's emergence as a leading political force, reflecting a broader relationship between Britain and the rest of the world. This political allusion[4] resonates with Austen's readers and contemporary British audiences as a symbol of Britain's assertion of its influence over other global powers. It demonstrates how Austen could rely on, and contribute to, a global perspective among her audience, as well as how she incorporates a complex worldview into the character of Fanny, thereby shaping the thematic fabric of *Mansfield Park*. Through her use of the nuanced irony inherent in Britain's "imperial project"—Lord Macartney—Austen invites her readers to consider the complex web of power dynamics, cultural encounters, and global entanglements that shape the narrative (Ford, 2008).

This irony, as exemplified in Example 3 below, permeates Edmund's light-hearted comment to ease the previous tension and amuse Fanny. Edmund assures Fanny that his participation in the play does not mean he would give up his principles, while simultaneously encouraging her to continue reading. Through his casual reference to Lord Macartney and China, Edmund humorously implies that Fanny is so engrossed in her books that she might as well be on a diplomatic mission of her own.

Example 3: Lord Macartney

> You, in the meanwhile, will be taking a trip into China, I suppose. How does Lord **Macartney** go on? (*Mansfield Park*, p. 183)

As demonstrated in Table 4, the allusion to Lord Macartney in the passage has been translated differently over time. While most translators provide a footnote introducing who Lord Macartney is, the first translator, Zi (1984), goes beyond that and provides a brief explanation of the whole sentence. However, the footnote provided by T1 fails to capture Austen's intended meaning by simply referencing Macartney as a historical figure without any further explanation. Likewise, T2 and T8 even neglect the important political allusion to Lord Macartney, which may cause the significant imperialist reference to elude Chinese readers.

In the context of the novel, Edmund playfully asks Fanny "How does Lord Macartney go on?." This is not to inquire about Lord Macartney's well-being, but is a way of teasing Fanny for being absorbed in her books and not participating in the family's activities. Among all the examined versions, T7 is the only version to include in-text explanations rather than footnotes, a signature translation style of T7. While T7 does include the years of Macartney's life in brackets, the statement that "He wrote *The Envoy's Travels to China*, which was published in folio in 1796" is in the main body. This may mislead Chinese readers into thinking that this is part of Austen's original text instead of the translator's effort to aid reader comprehension.

In examining the translations of Macartney's name, it is apparent that his surname has been rendered in various ways over time, including 麦克阿特奈 (mài kè a tè nài), 麦卡特尼 (mài kǎ tè ní), and 马嘎尔尼/玛嘎尔尼 (mǎ ga ěr ní). 马嘎尔尼and 玛嘎尔尼have the same phonetic pronunciation but differ in the first Chinese character: 马 (mǎ) or 玛 (mǎ). This inconsistency in translation suggests that he is not a well-known figure in China, despite his significance in Sino-British relations, unlike

Table 4. Different Translated Versions of Macartney.

How does Lord **Macartney** go on?	
T1 Zi (1984)	麦克阿特奈勋爵旅途顺利吗?① Is Lord (**mài kè ā tè nài**)'s journey going smoothly?① Footnote: 范妮大概正在读麦克阿特奈勋爵(1737—1806)所著《使华旅行记》(1807年出版)。 Fanny was perhaps reading *The Travels of the Ambassador to China* (published in 1807) by Lord (**mài kè ā tè nài**; 1737-1806).
T2 Li (1997)	麦克阿特奈勋爵旅途顺利吗? Is Lord (**mài kè ā tè nài**)'s journey going smoothly?
T3 Xiang (1998)	马嘎尔尼勋爵①在干什么？ What is Lord (**mǎ gā ěr ní**) ① up to? Footnote: 乔治·马嘎尔尼(1737—1806),英国外交官,英国派驻中国的第一个使节(1792—1794), 写有《出使日志》等书。 [George (**mǎ gā ěr ní**; 1737–1806), a British diplomat, the first British envoy to China (1792-1794), wrote *Diary of Missions* and other books.]
T4 Sun (2004)	麦卡特尼勋爵①旅途顺利吗? Is Lord (**mài kǎ tè ní**)'s① journey going smoothly? Footnote: 麦卡特尼勋爵(1737-1806)系英国首任驻华使节,著有《使华旅行记》,对开本于1796年出版。此处想必是指范妮正在阅读这本书。 [Lord (**mài kǎ tè ní**; 1737–1806) was the first British envoy to China. He wrote *The Envoy's Travels to China*, which was published in folio in 1796. This probably means that Fanny is reading the book.]
T5 Z. Sun (2017)	Same as Sun (2004)
T6 Su (2009)	麦卡特尼勋爵①的旅行怎么样了？ How is Lord (**mài kǎ tè ní**)'s① trip going? Footnote: ①麦卡特尼勋爵(1737-1806),英国首任驻华大使,著有《使华旅行记》。此处必指范妮正在读此书。 [Lord (**mài kǎ tè ní**; 1737–1806), the first British ambassador to China, author of *The Envoy's Travels to China*. It must mean that Fanny is reading this book.]
T7 Xi (2009)	麦卡特尼勋爵 (一七三七——一八一六)是英国首任驻华使节，著有《使华旅行记》，对开本于一七九六年出版。芬妮可能正在阅读这本书。旅途顺利吗？ [Lord (**mài kǎ tè ní**; 1737–1816) was the first British envoy to China. He wrote *The Envoy's Travels to China*, which was published in folio in 1796. Fanny may be reading this book. Did the trip go well?]
T8 Ding (2014)	麦卡特尼勋爵,旅途顺利吗？ Lord (**mài kǎ tè ní**), is the journey going smoothly?
T9 Mei (2022)	玛嘎尔尼勋爵①遭遇到什么情况啦？ What happened to Lord (**mǎ gā ěr ní**)①? Footnote： ①乔治玛嘎尔尼(1737-1806)，英国政治家、殖民地行政官员和外交家。是英国派往中国的第一个使节(1792-1794)，著有《使华日志》 [George (**mǎ gā ěr ní**; 1737–1806), British statesman, colonial administrator and diplomat. He was the first envoy sent to China by Britain (1792-1794), author of *Diary of Envoys to China.]*

other prominent Western figures who typically have a consistently spelled name in the Chinese language, such as Winston Churchill.

Likewise, the book written by Lord Macartney, *An Embassy to China*, has also seen its title translated variously over time. It has been translated as《使华旅行记》 (China Mission Travelog) in the 1980s, 2000s, and 2010s, 《出使日志》(Travel Diaries) in the 1990s, and《使华日志》(China Mission Diaries) in the 2020s. The book, in fact, was not translated into Chinese until the Commercial Press published its translated version under the title 马戛尔尼使团使华观感 (Macartney Embassy to China Observation) in 2013. But despite the negligible status of Macartney and his writings in China, the inconsistencies in spelling and the uneven nature of the biographical footnotes raise questions about terminology management and translation quality assurance when international literature is translated into Chinese. Technology to produce terminology databases has been available for some time now in China, and cultural references should not be vulnerable to translation loss in a globalized translation industry that facilitates the hiring of multinational expertise by publishers

This phenomenon highlights the challenges that arise when translating historical elements that are not well-known in the target language, especially when they pertain to historical events or figures that are not part of the target culture's shared history or consciousness. Furthermore, it is discernible that Sun Zhili's translation (T4 & T5) has a notable influence within mainland China. Among all the translations released after 2004, when Sun's initial rendition of *Mansfield Park* was published, three out of four versions have adopted Sun's translation of Macartney as 麦卡特尼 (mài kǎ tè ní),

namely Su (2009), Xi (2009), and Ding (2014). The year 2013 witnessed the publication of the translated work *An Embassy to China*, wherein the rendition of Macartney appeared as 玛嘎尔尼 (mǎ ga ěr ní). Consequently, Mei (2022) adopted the translation 马戛尔尼 (mǎ ga ěr ní), featuring a minor modification in the initial two Chinese characters while retaining the same phonetic pronunciation.

These disparities in the examined Chinese translations underscore the difficulties inherent in conveying political allusions tied to historical figures across temporal and cultural boundaries. As with the previous examples regarding "window-tax" and "menus plaisirs," *Mansfield Park* has been retranslated into Chinese over several decades but without its various translators reaching a convincing level of accuracy and consistency in their translation of nuanced terminology and references.

Case Study 3: Translating Politics and Colonialism

Mansfield Park features an "anomalous explicitness" of colonial politics, exploring issues such as slavery and plantation economy, which have long been subjects of debate (Plasa, 2000, p. 34). Written during a critical period in colonial history, the novel portrays the wealth and privilege of plantation owners, a social class to which the Bertram family belongs. As shown in Example 4 below, the inclusion of both the terms "Antigua estate" and "West India estate," which cannot be found in Austen's other novels simultaneously, leads toward a disclosure of Sir Thomas Bertram's financial predicament, and also reflects the importance of colonial profiteering for the British economy. As Ferguson (1991) aptly points out, "colonialism underwrites his [Sir Thomas] social and cultural position" (p. 120). To modern Anglophone readerships, these colonial allusions imply the darker aspects of plantation life, such as the treatment of enslaved individuals and the exploitation of their labor. These connotations, however, are less prominent in the recent Chinese translations of the novel.

Example 4: West India Estate; Antigua Estate

> "…and as his own circumstances were rendered less fair than heretofore, by some recent losses on his **West India estate**, in addition to his eldest son's extravagance […]." (*Mansfield Park*, p. 27)

> "Why, you know, Sir Thomas's means will be rather straitened if the **Antigua estate** is to make such poor returns." (*Mansfield Park*, p. 34)

Table 5 below reveals an interesting phenomenon in the Chinese translation of "estate" in "West India estate" and "Antigua estate." The Chinese rendering of "estate" manifests itself in two distinct phrases, 种植场 / 种植园 (zhòng zhí chǎng / zhòng zhí yuán) and 产业 (chǎn yè), each carrying different connotations and nuances. 种植场 (zhòng zhí chǎng / zhòng zhí yuán, plantation) refers specifically to a plantation or farm in the West Indies/ Antigua that produces agricultural goods such as sugar, coffee, or tobacco. It emphasizes the production process and the physical location of the plantation. In contrast, 产业 (chǎn yè, estate) refers to broader economic activities and industries beyond the scope of agriculture, including manufacturing, mining, and services. Although the translations and footnotes in Table 5 reflect the different cultural associations attached to the terms "plantation" and "estate" in Chinese, and imply certain industrial and geographical elements of the colonial context, there is no reference in these modern day Chinese translations and footnotes to the social and ethical implications of colonialism. The details that are conveyed to the contemporary Chinese reader essentially take the form of neutral, sanitized economic-geographical information.

In order to ensure the inclusion of previously provided footnotes that offer historical background information on "West India" and "Antigua," we have examined all the translated versions and found that the first West Indian reference occurs in the first translated version, specifically in the line, "Was there any chance of his being hereafter useful to Sir Thomas in the concerns of his West Indian property?" (*Mansfield Park*, p. 5). However, none of the translations included a footnote to explain the concept of "West Indian property." On the other hand, the initial reference to Antigua appears in Case Study 3, as exemplified in Example 4.

The translations shed light on the divergent interpretations of the "Antigua" and "West India" references among Chinese translators. Among the surveyed translations, only two translators took the initiative to provide the historical context for these colonial allusions, but their choices differ. T3 focuses on the Antigua estate, while T5 emphasizes the West India estate. A chronological evolution is identified through Sun's translation from T4 to T5, in which Sun incorporated a footnote to offer additional historical background information on West India in his revised translation (T5). However, the primary focus of his footnote is directed toward explaining the significance of Antigua. In contrast, T3 stands out as the only version accompanied by a footnote that provides further specification regarding the historical context of the Antigua estate.

Moreover, all Chinese translations of "Antigua" adopt a transliteration strategy, using the characters 安

Table 5. Different Translated Versions of West India Estate and Antigua Estate.

Translated versions	West India estate	Antigua estate
T1 Zi (1984)	西印度种植场 (West India plantation)	安第瓜种植场 (Antigua plantation)
T2 Li (1997)	西印度种植场 (West India plantation)	安底拉种植场 (Antigua plantation)
T3 Xiang (1998)	西印度的产业 (West India estate)	安提瓜①的产业 (Antigua's estate) Footnote: 西印度的一个岛屿,英国最早的殖民地之一。 An island in the West Indies, one of the earliest British colonies.
T4 Sun (2004)	西印度种植杨 (West India plantation)	安提瓜种植园 (Antigua plantation)
T5 Z. Sun (2017)	西印度种植杨 (West India plantation) Footnote: 安提瓜是英国于1632年在西印度群岛建立的殖民地,到18世纪殖民地种植园的收益每况愈下，1807年种植园即已亏本生产。 Antigua was a colony established by the British in the West Indies in 1632. By the 18th century, the income of the colonial plantations was deteriorating. In 1807, the plantations were already producing at a loss.	Same as Sun (2004)
T6 Su (2009)	西印度的种植园 (West India plantation)	安提瓜的种植园 (Antigua's plantation)
T7 Xi (2009)	西印度的种植场 (West India plantation)	安提瓜种植园 (Antigua plantation)
T8 Ding (2014)	西印度的种植园 (West India plantation)	安提瓜的种植园 (Antigua's plantation)
T9 Mei (2022)	西印度的产业 (West India estate)	安提瓜的产业 (Antigua's estate)

第瓜 (an dì gua) in T1 and 安提瓜 (an tí gua) in T3-T9. However, T2's rendition of 安底拉 (an dǐ la) is potentially a mistranslation, as "gua" does not correspond to "la" in the Chinese phonological system. As occurred with the different Chinese renditions of Lord Macartney in Table 4, this is another example of terminological inconsistency.

The most explicit reference to the abhorrent practice of the "slave trade" in Austen's literary repertoire is poignantly exemplified in Example 5, and the ensuing "dead silence" has attracted substantial scholarly attention, as evidenced by Ellwood (2003), Boulukos (2006), Mukai (2006), White (2006), among others. However, the Chinese translations of the allusion to the "slave trade" and the evocative "dead silence" scene have displayed significant variations over time, with undertranslation a recurring factor.

Example 5: Slave-Trade and Dead Silence

> "But I do talk to him more than I used. I am sure I do. Did not you hear me ask him about the **slave-trade** last night?"
>
> "I did—and was in hopes the question would be followed up by others. It would have pleased your uncle to be inquired of farther."
>
> "And I longed to do it—but there was such a **dead silence**!" (*Mansfield Park*, p. 231)

As indicated in Table 6, two Chinese phrases have been used to translate "slave-trade," namely 贩卖奴隶 (fàn mài nú lì, selling slaves) and 奴隶买卖 (nú lì mǎi mài, slaves buying and selling). While both phrases refer to the slave trade, they only differ in their syntactic structures (the first one being a verb + noun, i.e., V + Obj, and the second one being a noun + verb, i.e., Subj + V). The former, 贩卖奴隶 (fàn mài nú lì), highlights the selling of slaves as a commodity. The phrase 贩卖 (fàn mài) means "to traffic in" or "to sell," while 奴隶 (nú lì) means "slave." The latter phrase, 奴隶买卖 (nú lì mǎi mài), emphasizes the transactional exchange of slaves. Here, 奴隶 (nú lì) also means "slave," while 买卖 (mǎi mài) means "to buy and sell." In the context of the British Empire's involvement in the slave trade, the use of 奴隶买卖 may be more accurate, as it acknowledges the fact that Britain not only sold slaves but also purchased them as labor for their colonies. Translator Sun's revision from 贩卖奴隶 (selling slaves; T4) in 2004 to 奴隶买卖 (slaves buying and selling; T5) in 2017 demonstrates a sensitivity to linguistic nuance. This change reflects the translator's effort to improve the accuracy of the translation. However, among the nine versions of the translation, only three of

Table 6. Different Translated Versions of "Slave-Trade" and "There Was Such a Dead Silence!".

Translated versions	Slave-trade	There was such a dead silence!
T1 Zi (1984)	贩卖奴隶 (selling slaves)	大家都一声不吭。 (No one uttered a word.)
T2 Li (1997)	贩卖奴隶 (selling slaves)	大家都不说话。 (Everyone was silent.)
T3 Xiang (1998)	奴隶买卖 (slaves buying and selling)	当时是一片死一般的沉寂! (There was a dead silence!)
T4 Sun (2004)	贩卖奴隶 (selling slaves)	大家都默不作声啊! (Everyone remained silent!)
T5 Z. Sun (2017)	奴隶买卖 (slaves buying and selling)	Same as Sun (2004)
T6 Su (2009)	贩卖奴隶 (selling slaves)	大家都沉默不语啊！ (Everyone stayed silent!)
T7 Xi (2009)	贩卖奴隶 (selling slaves)	大家都不说话嘛！ (Everyone was silent!)
T8 Ding (2014)	贩卖奴隶 (selling slaves)	大家都不说话。 (Everyone was silent.)
T9 Mei (2022)	奴隶买卖 (slaves buying and selling)	当时鸦雀无声的！ (Not even the sounds of crows and sparrows can be heard!)

them have translated "slave trade" as 奴隶买卖 (slaves buying and selling). It is possible that the first translation's influence has led to the majority of translations rendering it as 贩卖奴隶 (selling slaves).

The translation of the expression "there was such a dead silence!" into Chinese presents a notable degree of variation among different translators, as depicted in Table 6. A striking feature of this variation is the use of punctuation, as the original text employs an exclamation mark (!) to convey the awkwardness of the situation. However, the first translator rendered it as a full stop (.), resulting in a loss of intensity. The climactic scene in *Mansfield Park*, rendered by T1 as 大家都一声不吭 (No one uttered a word.), feels insipid compared with the original. T2 follows T1's approach, translating the expression as a declarative sentence instead of an exclamatory one. In contrast, T3, published the following year, successfully conveys the intensity of "dead silence!" by recontextualizing the phrase as 当时是一片死一般的沉寂! (There was a dead silence!). While T4 to T7 maintain the exclamatory sentence form, they substitute the phrase with verb phrases such as 默不作声/沉默不语 (to remain/stay silent), and 不说话 (to be silent). Although these phrases are in line with the norms of Chinese expression, they arguably fail to capture the original flavor and impact of the phrase. Interestingly, T8, published more recently in 2014, still misses the mark by putting the expression as a declarative sentence.

In contrast, T9 adopts a Chinese idiom 鸦雀无声, meaning "not even the sounds of crows and sparrows can be heard," to describe a profound sense of tranquility and stillness. The idiom comes from the fourth volume of 景德传灯录, a collection of Zen Buddhist stories written during the Song Dynasty (AD 960–1279). However, by employing this idiom, there is a risk of overlooking the political resonance that exists within the original context. If the allusion here is to evoke a sense of Buddhist tranquility, it misconstrues the awkward nature of Austen's "dead silence." Overall, the various approaches to translating "there was such a dead silence!" in Chinese highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of the socio-political dynamics within Austen's narrative, rather than reducing the situation to a simplistic portrayal of tranquility.

Assessing the Translations of Austen's Political References: Challenges in Representing 19th Century British Politics in Chinese

In translating *Mansfield Park* into Chinese, the use of overt and/or covert translation strategies varies across translators, and the use of these strategies has been influenced by the translator's personal, academic, and sociopolitical contexts over time.

Covert Translation Assessment

Covert translation is a translation that attains the status of an original text within the target culture (House, 2015, p. 57). Covert translations are created with the target culture in mind, aiming to seamlessly integrate into the literary or cultural landscape of that target audience, here the Chinese audience in particular. As China evolved socially and politically, approaches toward translating culturally specific terms also adapted. In

Case Study 1, Example 2, we encounter the diverse translations of Henry's and Mary's *menus plaisirs*. The usage of the French phrase *menus plaisirs* poses a challenge for Chinese translators, as they strive for accuracy in conveying the author's original meaning and tone. Consequently, all the Chinese translations of this phrase invariably fall into the covert category; these translations fall short in conveying the French cultural connotations embedded within the phrase and the author's acerbic tone. During the 1980s and 1990s, a period following the Cultural Revolution when China was reopening to the West, there seems to be an emphasis on providing unadorned, faithful translations that clearly explain the meaning of foreign terms. Translators in this era often relied on descriptive phrases, such as 个人花销/自己花销/私人开销 (personal expenses) in T1 (1984) and T2 (1997), and 娱乐花销/娱乐上的花销 (entertainment expenses) in T1 (1984) and T2 (1997). These translations prioritize clarity and directness, perhaps reflecting a desire to ensure that foreign concepts were understandable to Chinese readers. In the 2000s, the pattern of using descriptive and straightforward financial terminology continues. M*enus plaisirs* were translated as 个人花销/私人开销 (personal expenses) in T4 (2004) and T5 (2009), and 花销 (expenses) in T5 (2009). The focus remains on conveying the practical meaning of *menus plaisirs* rather than capturing its cultural nuance. This period was marked by China's increasing integration into the global economy, and the translations reflect a pragmatic approach, aligning with the broader trend of globalization and consumerism. In the 2010s, there is a noticeable tendency toward more generalized and simplified translations; thus, translations like 一个人使用 (for one's own use) in T7 (2014) and 花 (to spend) in T8 (2017) reflect a move away from detailed descriptions to more general interpretations. This could suggest a shift in focus toward brevity and ease of understanding, possibly influenced by the fast-paced nature of modern communication and a more relaxed political and cultural atmosphere. By the 2020s, the translations show a mix of approaches. T9 (2022) includes the phrase 全部揣入口袋，供自己花销了 (put it all in your pocket and spend it yourself), which combines a generalized understanding with a more descriptive explanation. This indicates an ongoing balance between the desire for clarity and the need to capture some of the original phrase's meaning, reflecting contemporary trends in translation that seek to be both accessible and culturally aware. These patterns suggest that as China has evolved socially and politically, the approach to translating culturally specific terms like *menus plaisirs* has also adapted, moving from a focus on faithful and clear explanations to a more varied approach that balances simplicity with some cultural awareness. Nevertheless, given China's increased engagement with the West, the point should be made that the novel's post-millenium translations, and their socio-cultural references, would benefit from greater input from Anglophone collaborators and editors, something that is still relatively rare in the Chinese publishing industry.

In Case Study 3, the term "estate" in the expressions "Antigua estate" and "West India Estate" poses a challenge for Chinese translators due to its colonial connotations in Britain. Our study shows that most Chinese translators opt for a covert approach for culturally or politically sensitive terms in 1980s and 1990s. The term "estate" in the expressions "Antigua estate" and "West India Estate" is almost unanimously translated as 种植场/种植园 (plantation) in T1 (1984) and T2 (1997). This reflects an emphasis on conveying the original meaning in a way that resonates with Chinese readers' existing cognitive frameworks, particularly relating to colonialism. Similarly, the phrase "slave-trade" in Example 5 is consistently translated as 贩卖奴隶 (selling slaves) in T1 (1984) and T2 (1997), which aligns with the historical understanding of slavery in China. In the 2000s, the covert translation approach persists, with a continued emphasis on using terms familiar to Chinese readers. For instance, the translation of "estate" as 种植场/种植园 (plantation) continues in T4 (2004) and T5 (2009). The phrase "slave-trade" is also translated similarly across these years, with minor variations such as 奴隶买卖 (slaves buying and selling) appearing alongside 贩卖奴隶 (selling slaves). This indicates a slight diversification in terminology while maintaining the core concept. Similarly, the translation of the "dead silence" scene in Example 5 also maintains a covert approach, with phrases like "Everyone was silent" (大家都不说话) and "Everyone remained silent" (大家都默不作声啊) appearing in T4 (2004) and T5 (2009). In the 2010s, while the covert translation approach continues, there is a noticeable increase in stylistic variation. The term "estate" remains consistently translated as 种植场/种植园 (plantation) in T6 (2009), T7 (2014), and T8 (2017), maintaining the colonial association. The phrase "slave-trade" continues to be translated as 贩卖奴隶 (selling slaves) and 奴隶买卖 (slaves buying and selling), demonstrating consistency across decades. For "dead silence," stylistic variation is more evident. For example, T7 (2014) and T8 (2017) use "Everyone was silent" (大家都不说话), while T6 (2009) uses "Everyone stayed silent" (大家都沉默不语啊). This indicates a broader range of expression within the same covert translation strategy. By the 2020s, translations begin to incorporate idiomatic expressions alongside traditional covert strategies. For instance, the phrase "slave-trade" is translated as 奴隶买卖 (slaves buying and selling) in T9 (2022), maintaining the covert translation approach. The translation of

"dead silence" in T9 (2022) introduces an idiomatic expression, "Not even the sounds of crows and sparrows can be heard" (当时鸦雀无声的), indicating a tendency to blend cultural appropriateness with more stylistically rich and idiomatic language. Our study, in terms of covert translation assessment, suggests that the translators have tried to integrate foreign concepts into the target culture, with a growing embrace of stylistic variation and idiomatic expressions over time. However, the covert translation approach, without Anglophone expertise and input, results in a degree of translation loss and tends to smooth down some of the source text's socio-political resonances.

Overt Translation Assessment

Overt translations are more "straightforward" since they are simply transplanted into a new context without taking into account the potentially different expectations and norms of the target audience (House, 2015, p. 61).

During the 1980s and 1990s, overt translations were less common, often resulting in versions that did not fully capture the cultural or contextual nuances of the original terms. For instance, early translations of "window-tax" (Example 1) in T1 (1984) omitted the crucial element of "tax," reflecting a tendency to prioritize straightforward or literal renditions without fully conveying the specific implications of the term in the target context. Similarly, the transliterations of "Macartney" (Example 3) during this period focused primarily on phonetic transfer, with less emphasis on providing contextual background. By the 2000s, there is a noticeable shift toward more overt translation strategies. Translators began to recognize the importance of including culturally and contextually significant elements in their translations. This is evident in the translations of "window-tax," where subsequent versions from T3 (1998) onward consistently included the term 税 (shuì, "tax") and added informative footnotes to explain the historical and cultural context to Chinese readers. Similarly, the transliterations of "Macartney" became more refined, with the addition of explanatory footnotes that provided context about his role as the first British envoy to China. The translation of "dead silence" in T3 (1998) as 当时是一片死一般的沉寂 (There was a dead silence) exemplifies a deliberate use of overt translation to capture the evocative nature of the original text, but many of the other renderings of this term did not convey it fully. During the 2010s, overt translation strategies became more prominent, especially in contexts where cultural or historical accuracy was important. For example, in the translation of "West India estate" and "Antigua estate" (Example 4), most translations continued to opt for covert recontextualization as 种植场/种植园 (plantation). In the 2020s, overt translation strategies have been employed more thoughtfully, often accompanied by explanatory notes or additional context to enhance the reader's understanding. For example, the use of 产业 (chǎn yè, estate) in T9 (2022) indicates a broader spectrum of economic activities beyond agricultural pursuits, reflecting a nuanced approach that balances the original meaning with the target audience's familiarity.

Over the decades, the tendencies in covert and overt translation have evolved significantly in our study. In the 1980s, covert translations were largely literal and descriptive, aiming for clarity and accessibility, while overt translations were rare and often lacked cultural depth. The 1990s marked a shift toward greater cultural adaptation in covert translations, with more use of contextual explanations, while overt translations attempted to preserve the original text's context but without always conveying the full significance of terms. By the 2000s, 2010s, and 2020s, covert translations had become more sophisticated, making the target text culturally relevant to readers and incorporating idiomatic expressions, but still sometimes missing the terminological nuance and tone of the source text. Meanwhile, overt translations attempted to become more meticulous, including explanatory notes to ensure that the original cultural and contextual nuances were accessible to the target audience. This progression suggests an increasing emphasis on both cultural sensitivity and maintaining the integrity of the original text in translating political allusions in *Mansfield Park*.

Conclusion

In *Mansfield Park*, Jane Austen incorporates recurring political allusions, albeit sparingly, to highlight the socio-political landscape during her era, this perspective continuing in *Emma*, where she makes a pointed critique of slavery and the dehumanizing trade in "human flesh" (*Emma*, p. 325). This study, though, has limited itself to an examination of the Chinese translations of political allusions in *Mansfield Park*, discovering that both covert and overt translation strategies have been employed by Chinese translators. It has been identified that Chinese translators tend to favor an overt translation strategy when dealing with political allusions related to historical figures or events rooted in Regency England. In certain instances, footnotes are included to offer further explanations of the historical background. A chronological progression can be discerned in the efforts of Chinese translators, particularly evident in their footnotes. Nevertheless, despite discernible progress toward translations that capture the tone and meaning of the source text and which convey a reading experience closer to that of Anglophone readers, it is significant that the evolution within these nine translations has been slow, uneven, and

characterized by errors handed down from one translator to another. The inconsistency of terminology usage, such as in the renderings of names, reflects the problems outlined by Wang and Li (2021) regarding the lack of standardization of terminology management in China and the inadequate investment in the country's language service sector. Many of the examples of translation loss cited in this article would have been avoided with Anglophone input at different stages of the publication process; multilingual teamwork is a long overdue consideration for China's publishing houses.

In this study, we have only investigated a selection of political allusions present in *Mansfield Park*, and it should be acknowledged that there exist several other casual allusions to colonial commodities and the symbolic names of characters and objects throughout the novel. For instance, Mrs. Norris's surname may allude to John Norris (a retailer of country sports equipment, clothing, and accessories) and the name "Mansfield" itself may allude to Lord Chief Justice Mansfield (Ferguson, 1991, pp. 121 and 130), constituting another form of textual challenge for translators. Being such a multi-layered novel, this study has focused on a selected range of the most intriguing lexical challenges posed to Chinese translators. Future research could investigate how readers in different cultural contexts interpret the political allusions in Austen's works when presented through the prevalent translation strategies used in those cultures. It could also explore the extent to which, over time, translators' footnotes and other paratextual elements have increasingly conveyed the significance of Austen's source texts, adding value to the translations, or whether cultural isolationism and other factors continue to affect the quality of certain translations. Nonetheless, our study has sought to refocus critical attention within the field of translation studies on the translations of political references in Austen's novels. We hope that the insights offered herein can serve to inspire future studies in translating political allusions in Jane Austen's works, both within Chinese contexts and beyond.

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Notes

1. Austen's letters in 1816 provide insight into her pride in *Mansfield Park*. She expressed her disappointment at the "total omission of *Mansfield Park*" when she received Sir Walter Scott's favorable (anonymous) review of *Emma* in the reputable *Quarterly Review* from the publisher Murray, adding that "I cannot but be sorry that so clever a Man as the Reviewer of *Emma*, should consider it as unworthy of being noticed" (*Letters*, April 1, 1816).
2. Initially, early critics and readers often overlooked the socio-political dimensions present in Austen's works, perhaps influenced by the family biography that claimed she had no interest in politics. However, 20th-century re-evaluations of Austen's novels have revealed numerous political allusions within her narratives. Marilyn Butler's seminal work, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, stands as an early publication that consistently examines the political aspects of Austen's novels within historical contexts, paving the way for a deeper understanding of her engagement with political themes.
3. https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/georgian-britain-age-modernity/window-tax/
4. This political allusion also has a structural importance in the novel. One notable aspect of Macartney's Embassy was the scene where he refuses to kowtow (bow) to the Chinese Emperor. Some critics, such as Knox-Shaw, have seen in this allusion a structural parallel to Fanny's refusal to kowtow to her uncle, Sir Thomas.

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