ARTICLE | Article in Press

A corpus-assisted textual analysis of the framing of domestic violence in the Chinese translations of W.S. Maugham's Liza of Lambeth

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Received: 17 March 2025 / Accepted: 30 September 2026
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Abstract

Research on the translation of gendered violence has concentrated on texts in which gender politics and sexual violence are explicitly foregrounded, and much less is known about how such violence is reframed in literary works that advance no explicit feminist position. This study addresses this gap through a corpus-assisted comparative analysis, drawing on Baker's narrative framing framework to examine domestic violence (DV) in Xian Yangyang's 2013 and Yu Kangyong's 1995 Chinese translations (the latter reprinted in 2016) of W. S. Maugham's *Liza of Lambeth*. Quantitative and qualitative analyses examine four narrative framing strategies — selective appropriation, repositioning of participants, framing by labelling, and temporal-spatial framing — and compare representations of physical violence, psychological abuse, and sexual assault. The findings reveal systematic differences in the textual prominence and framing of DV. Xian's translation devotes proportionally greater textual space to DV, particularly psychological abuse, and more frequently repositions participants in representations of physical violence, while Yu's allocation of textual space to DV remains broadly proportional to the overall expansion of the translation. Close analysis reveals a more complex pattern: both translations alternately foreground, mitigate, or redistribute perpetrator agency and the force of violence across different episodes. Paratextual analysis further shows that the two editions contextualise Liza's tragedy differently: TT1 foregrounds family deprivation, romantic desire, and fate, whereas TT2 places greater emphasis on moral categorisation, class, and socio-economic environment. These findings demonstrate that the reframing of gendered violence cannot be reduced to a simple opposition between amplification and mitigation but operates unevenly across textual strategies, episodes, and paratextual contexts. The study highlights the value of combining corpus-assisted, close textual, and paratextual analysis for examining how translation mediates representations of domestic violence, gender ideology, agency, and responsibility across cultures.

Introduction

Domestic violence (DV) remains a pervasive global issue, deeply entrenched in cultural norms, gender hierarchies, and systemic inequalities. Research on DV has grown considerably, including increasing attention to its representation in fiction; however, much less is known about how such representations are reframed as literary texts move across languages and cultures. W. S. Maugham's *Liza of Lambeth* (1897), drawing on his first-hand experiences as an obstetrical clerk in working-class London, offers a compelling depiction of DV in the late Victorian working class.

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Published online: 31 October 2026

The novel revolves around Liza Kemp, an eighteen-year-old factory worker. Her life takes a tragic turn when she becomes entangled in an affair with Jim Blakeston, a married middle-aged man with a large family. The story ends with Liza's death from a miscarriage after a fight with Jim's angered wife. Physical violence, psychological intimidation, verbal aggression, and sexual coercion recur throughout the novel and affect several female characters, presenting DV not simply as an isolated interpersonal act but as part of the social conditions of late Victorian working-class life. Although Maugham's representation inevitably reflects contemporary assumptions about class, morality, and female sexuality, the novel also exposes the unequal gender relations that constrain women's ability to resist or escape violence (Frost 1995; Anggraeni et al. 2014). This tension makes *Liza of Lambeth* a particularly productive case for examining how gendered violence is reframed across languages, cultures, and historical periods.

Throughout this article, DV is used as a contemporary analytical category rather than as a term presumed to have carried the same social, legal, or psychological meaning in late-Victorian Britain. Concepts such as domestic violence, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, victimhood, and trauma are historically situated and should not be projected uncritically onto nineteenth-century experience. The study therefore adopts a gender-informed analytical lens to examine forms of interpersonal and gendered violence represented in Maugham's novel while distinguishing this present-day conceptual framework from the categories available within the novel's original historical context (Frost, 1995; WHO, 2002). The purpose is not to retrospectively diagnose characters or to claim direct equivalence between Victorian and contemporary understandings of abuse, but to analyse how acts recognisable within contemporary DV scholarship are represented in the source text and subsequently reframed in two Chinese translations.

Maugham's popularity in China started during the Republic of China (1912–1949). He is a writer whose vivid social realism has continued to attract the attention of contemporary scholars and readers, arguably more so than in his native country, where Maugham's contemporaries receive greater scholarly interest. Maugham's works have been extensively translated into Chinese and have influenced prominent authors such as Zhang Ailing and Wang Anyi (Song, 2015). Nobel laureate Mo Yan has also cited Maugham as a major literary influence (Mason, 2012). Beyond academia, Maugham's works are widely discussed in Chinese literary circles and online reading communities such as *Baidu Tieba* and *Douban*. Although *Liza of Lambeth* has received relatively limited scholarly and public attention in China compared with Maugham's later works, the availability of two complete Chinese translations provides a rare opportunity to examine how the same literary representation of DV has been reframed for Chinese readers at different historical moments.

Literature has long served as a critical medium for exposing the complexities of abusive relationships: it offers insights into both individual trauma and broader societal attitudes toward gender, power, and violence as it has the potential to accurately portray the nuances of relationships and character development and lead to a deeper understanding of both healthy and unhealthy relationships (Finley, 2017, p. 3). As such, novels can elicit emotional, sensory, and cognitive responses in readers, raising awareness of issues such as DV. Whilst there is no official library designation for a category known as DV literature or DV novels, there has been an increasing amount of research on DV depictions in novels in an attempt to increase public awareness of this toxic and complex issue (Abbas and Yaqoob, 2021; Banu and Shivshakti, 2020); to address diverse themes such as representation (Qi, 2022; Garrett, 2023; Merrill, 2022); to analyse gender dynamics (Shakila, 2020; Zabihzadeh, 2020); to explore empathy and awareness (Vijay and Vijayakumar, 2022), and to highlight activism and feminism (Bissessar and Huggins 2021; Chen 2019).

More recently, translation scholarship has examined how culturally sensitive representations of women's bodies, sexuality, and gendered violence are mediated across languages and cultures. Studies of *The Vagina Monologues* (Yu, 2015; Wang and Hu, 2024), for example, show how translation and adaptation can reshape the cultural legibility and ideological framing of sexual violence, female embodiment, and victim-blaming in China. Although *The Vagina Monologues* addresses a broader range of women's embodied experiences than DV specifically, this work is relevant because it demonstrates how translation mediates culturally and ideologically sensitive representations of bodily autonomy and gendered violence. Tang (2024) extends this concern directly to marital sexual violence in three Chinese translations of Amy Tan's *The Kitchen God's Wife*, highlighting the relationship between gender ideology and the representation of violence against women.

This emerging body of scholarship demonstrates the importance of translation in mediating gendered and sexual violence. Existing studies, however, have largely concentrated on works in which gender politics, female sexuality, and violence against women are explicitly foregrounded and therefore become visible sites of translational negotiation. Much less attention has been paid to how gendered violence is reframed in literary works that do not explicitly articulate a feminist position. *Liza of Lambeth* presents a particularly revealing case because DV is embedded within a broader naturalist representation of working-class life rather than presented as an explicitly feminist intervention. Examining its Chinese translations therefore provides an opportunity to investigate how physical violence, psychological abuse, and sexual assault are textually reframed when this late Victorian narrative moves into a different linguistic, cultural, and historical context.

Translation is not a neutral act. Translation can involve processes of selection, repositioning, and reframing that affect how participants, events, and evaluative meanings are represented in the target text (Baker, 2006; Hermans, 1998). This is particularly relevant to the present study because the two Chinese translations of *Liza of Lambeth* emerged in different socio-historical contexts. Yu Kangyong's translation was first published in 1995, during a period when DV had yet to receive the level of public and legislative recognition it would acquire in subsequent decades. Xian Yangyang's translation appeared in 2013, shortly before the enactment of China's Anti-Domestic Violence Law in 2016, during a period of increasing public attention to gender-based violence, women's rights, and legal protection (Hu et al., 2021). These changing social and legal discourses provide an important backdrop against which differences between the two translations can be considered.

While the present study focuses primarily on observable textual patterns rather than establishing causal relationships, it recognises that translation is shaped not only by individual translators but also by broader historical, cultural, and institutional contexts.

Against this background, this study examines how DV narratives are reframed in Yu Kangyong's translation (first published 1995; 2016 reprint used in this study, which is textually unrevised) and Xian Yangyang's 2013 translation of *Liza of Lambeth*. Using a corpus-assisted comparative approach informed by Baker's (2006, 2014) narrative framing framework, this study combines quantitative analysis with qualitative close reading to examine representations of physical violence, psychological abuse, and sexual assault. It focuses on four key narrative framing translation strategies — selective appropriation, repositioning of participants, framing by labelling, and temporal-spatial framing — to identify textual and contextual shifts in translation. The study addresses the following research questions:

(1) How is domestic violence depicted in the source text (ST), and how is it reframed in the two Chinese translations of *Liza of Lambeth*?
(2) What framing strategies are used to represent physical, psychological, and sexual violence in Chinese? How do these strategies affect the portrayal of victims, perpetrators, agency, and power dynamics?
(3) In what ways do the textual patterns identified in the translations reinforce, mitigate, or challenge dominant gender ideologies in their portrayal of domestic violence?

Theoretical framework: Translational (Re)framing of DV narratives

Translation is not merely a process of linguistic transfer but can also involve the (re)framing of narratives across cultural and ideological contexts. Mona Baker's Narrative (Re)Framing Theory (2006, 2014) conceptualises translation as a form of (re)narration, through which representations of events, participants, and relationships may be reconstructed and reframed differently in the TT. The degree and consequences of narrative reframing vary across genres and communicative contexts; the present study is concerned specifically with its operation in literary translation, where narrative voice, characterisation, agency, and evaluative meaning are central to textual interpretation.

Extending Somers and Gibson's (1994) sociological approach to narratology, Baker (2014, p. 159) contends that translation 'constructs rather than represents events and characters in another language,' emphasising the role of social, historical, and ideological factors in shaping the TT. This (re)framing process marks a departure from

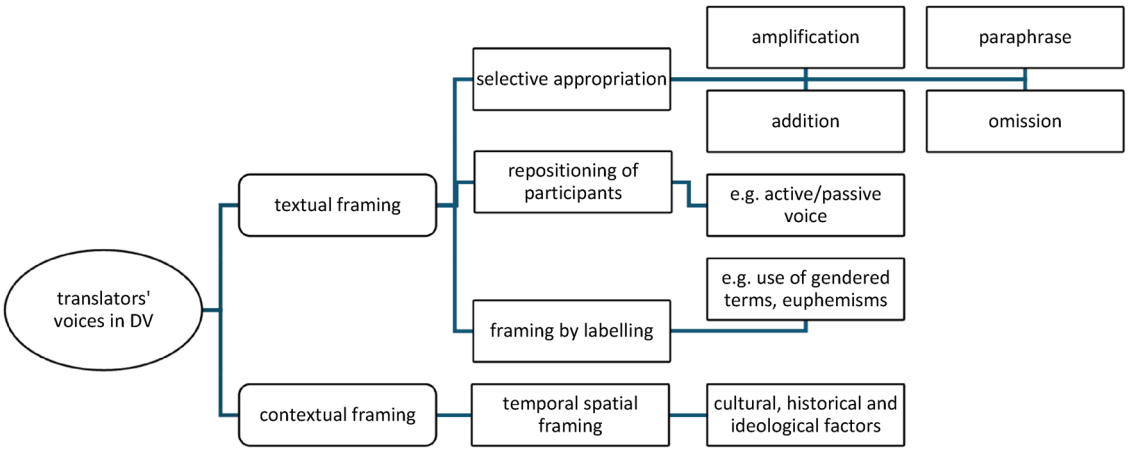

Fig. 1 Theoretical framework of this study.

traditional fidelity-driven approaches, acknowledging the active role of translators in shaping and reframing narratives for their target audiences (Baker 2006). By manipulating textual and contextual elements, translators can present events through a particular ideological lens, reinforcing or reinterpreting specific aspects of the source narrative.

This notion of translators' voices extends beyond linguistic mediation to encompass their active role in shaping meaning, ideology, and narrative structure. In the context of DV narratives, translators do not merely transfer textual and non-textual contents from one language to another; rather, they engage in a process of (re)framing that influences how abuse is depicted, perceived, and understood within the target culture. Baker's narrative framing framework is not confined to literary translation but provides a broader approach to examining how narratives are constructed and reframed across different translational contexts. In this study, the framework is adapted to literary translation to examine how the selection, positioning, labelling, and contextualisation of participants and events reshape representations of DV. It is particularly relevant to this study because such textual shifts may alter the visibility of perpetrators and victims, the attribution of agency and responsibility, and the representation of gendered power relations, without necessarily reflecting the translators' individual intentions.

To systematically examine how translators mediate DV narratives in *Liza of Lambeth*, this study draws on Baker's (2006) broader narrative framing framework and adapts four framing strategies. These strategies provide the theoretical framework for analysing textual and contextual shifts and their influence on the representation of gender-based violence (see Fig. 1).

Selective appropriation

Selective appropriation involves the translator's choices regarding which narrative elements to emphasise, omit, or paraphrase. Through addition, amplification, omission, or simplification, translators modulate the emotional intensity, ideological orientation, and overall visibility of DV in translated texts. The degree to which these elements are retained or altered significantly influences how DV is framed for the target audience. For instance, amplification and addition may make the brutality of physical abuse more textually salient, while omission can downplay or obscure certain aspects of gender-based violence, potentially altering the reader's perception of the narrative's core themes.

Repositioning of participants

This strategy concerns modifying agency, power relations, and narrative perspective within a translation. It is achieved by adjusting active/passive constructions, modifying character roles, or altering sentence structures to shift how agency is distributed. For example, through grammatical shifts, such as changes in pronouns, verb forms, or syntactic structures, translators can either reinforce accountability (explicitly marking perpetrators as responsible) or

Table 1 The Corpus Dataset of this study.

ST/TT	Author/ translator	Title	Corpus size (Word Count)	Publishing date	Publisher
ST	W.S. Maugham	*Liza of Lambeth*	36,297	1897	T. Fisher Unwin
TT1	Xian Yangyang 先洋洋	《兰贝斯的丽莎》	58,725	2013	Yilin Press
TT2	Yu Kangyong 俞亢咏	《兰贝斯的丽莎》	62,703	1995/2016	Shanghai Translation Publishing House

dilute agency, rendering abusers less culpable. In DV narratives, these shifts can alter the representation of power relations and contribute to the ethical and ideological positioning of the translation.

Framing by labelling (Labelling)

Framing by labelling pertains to the strategic use of key terms that describe abuse, gender roles, and victimisation. Through word choice and terminological shifts, translators reframe ideological interpretations of the text. The translation of abusive acts, victim-perpetrator relationships, and power hierarchies can either normalise, neutralise, or amplify the perceived severity of violence. For example, replacing explicit terms for DV with euphemistic expressions can downplay its gravity, while retaining strong terminology reinforces the text's condemnation of gender-based violence. This strategy is crucial in shaping how DV is categorised and understood within the target culture.

Temporal-spatial framing

Temporal-spatial framing highlights how time and location settings influence the reception of DV narratives. Translators can manipulate temporal frameworks to position DV as a historically specific, universalised, or contemporary phenomenon, influencing how readers relate the story to their socio-political realities. Additionally, spatial framing can emphasise location-specific aspects of abuse, reinforcing its connection to societal structures and gender norms. By situating DV within a particular cultural and historical discourse, translators shape the broader interpretative framework through which the narrative is presented.

The analytical framework for examining the translation of DV narratives is visually represented in Fig. 1. The first three strategies — selective appropriation, repositioning of participants, and framing by labelling — operate primarily at the textual level, influencing how DV is described, how the agency is distributed, and how gender roles are constructed through linguistic choices. Temporal-spatial Framing functions at a contextual level in this study, shaping the broader interpretative framework within which DV is situated. The interaction of these framing strategies is therefore central to examine how DV narratives may be mediated, potentially reinforcing, mitigating, or otherwise altered in translation. The following section outlines the datasets and methodological procedure used in the analysis.

Methodology: A corpus-assisted comparative analysis

This study is informed by a critical feminist perspective that examines how linguistic choices influence representations of gendered violence while treating the analytical categories used in that examination as historically situated rather than universal. Particular attention is therefore paid to the textual visibility of perpetrators and victims, the attribution of agency and responsibility, and the representation of unequal gender relations. At the same time, the study does not assume that individual textual choices provide direct evidence of translators' intentions or ideological positions. Translation outcomes may be shaped by multiple historical, cultural, editorial, and institutional factors; accordingly, the analysis focuses primarily on observable textual and paratextual patterns.

A corpus-assisted approach enables systematic comparison between source and target texts, combining quantitative identification of recurring linguistic patterns with qualitative examination of individual translation shifts (Calzada

Pérez, 2017; McEnery and Brezina, 2022). Corpus-based approaches have also been productively applied to Chinese–English translation research to identify recurrent translational patterns and examine them in their textual contexts (Li, 2019). To investigate how DV narratives are (re)framed in the two Chinese translations of *Liza of Lambeth*, a dataset comprising the English source text and the two Chinese translations was compiled. Quantitative analysis was used descriptively to identify broader patterns in the distribution of DV material and framing strategies, while close comparative reading was used to examine how particular linguistic choices reconstruct agency, responsibility, evaluation, and violence in individual passages.

As shown in Table 1, the corpus comprises the English source text and two Chinese translations. Corpus size was calculated using Sketch Engine and is reported in words: 36,297 words for the source text, 58,725 for TT1, and 62,703 for TT (Chinese segmentation by the Stanford segmenter as implemented in Sketch Engine's zh-simplified pipeline). Because English and Chinese word segmentation is not directly commensurable, raw ST–TT word-count differences are not treated as direct evidence of translational expansion. Instead, each translation's overall ST–TT word-count ratio (TT1 = 1.618; TT2 = 1.728) is used as an internal descriptive baseline against which the relative textual prominence of DV-related material is assessed. This normalisation allows the amount of DV-related material within each translation to be considered in relation to that translation's overall length rather than through direct comparison of English and Chinese word counts. Claims concerning specific instances of addition, amplification, omission, mitigation, or other forms of reframing are established through aligned comparison of corresponding ST and TT passages rather than through raw word counts alone.

To maintain comparability, the 9,767-word preface in Xian Yangyang's translation is excluded from all counts reported above, as Maugham's original 1897 edition of *Liza of Lambeth* did not include a preface. Both translators have used 《兰贝斯的丽莎》(Lanbeisi de Lisha) as the book title, a phonetic transference of the original English title into Chinese.

Yu Kangyong's translation was first published in 1995 and subsequently reprinted in 1997 and 2016 by Shanghai Translation Publishing House. The 2016 edition used in this study reproduces the earlier translation. Xian Yangyang's translation was published in 2013 by Yilin Press; Xian has also translated other works by Maugham, including The Merry-Go-Round and Ah King. The two translations therefore originated in different socio-historical contexts, including periods characterised by changing public and legislative attention to domestic violence in China.

The dataset was then imported into NVivo and examined through close reading using a two-stage coding procedure. In the first stage, episodes involving DV were identified in the source text and corresponding passages were located in the two translations. These episodes were classified into three operational categories adapted from the World Health Organization (WHO, 2002) and Kippert (2021):

- physical violence: acts involving the use of physical force or bodily harm, including hitting, kicking, pushing, and related physical assault;
- psychological abuse: verbal aggression, threats, intimidation, humiliation, emotional manipulation, coercive control, and public shaming
- sexual assault/coercion: non-consensual sexual touching, coercive sexual behaviour, or other unwanted sexual contact.

These three categories are operational analytical distinctions rather than mutually exclusive forms of lived experience. The WHO (2002) recognises that physical, sexual, and psychological forms of violence frequently co-occur and may operate together within interconnected patterns of power, domination, and control. Accordingly, the coding scheme permits overlapping DV codes when an episode contains more than one form of violence: distinct components of the same episode may be coded separately as physical violence, psychological abuse, and/or sexual assault/coercion. The categories are therefore used to organise systematic comparison rather than to imply that these forms of violence occur in isolation. The qualitative analysis subsequently considers how physical force, sexual coercion, verbal aggression, intimidation, and other forms of control intersect within particular relationships and narrative episodes.

Economic abuse was also considered during the initial coding. However, in *Liza of Lambeth*, economically related acts function primarily as threats, coercive control, and emotional manipulation rather than as sustained financial deprivation. Since their dominant narrative function is psychological rather than economic, these instances were coded under the category of psychological abuse.

Second, each domestic violence episode in the translated texts was coded according to four framing strategies adapted from Baker's (2006) narrative framing framework:

- selective appropriation: addition, omission, amplification, or paraphrase that changes the amount, prominence or presentation of narrative information;
- repositioning of participants: changes in grammatical or narrative relationships that affect the representation of participants, particularly agency, responsibility, victimhood, or perpetrator attribution;
- framing by labelling: changes in evaluative terminology or naming;
- temporal-spatial framing: changes that reposition an event through temporal, spatial, or contextual information and thereby modify the circumstances within which the violent act is represented.

The categories were distinguished according to the primary textual function of each translation shift. For example, the addition or amplification of narrative information was coded as selective appropriation, whereas a change in an evaluative term used to characterise a participant or violent act was coded as labelling. Repositioning was coded when a shift affected participant agency or responsibility, including relevant changes in grammatical voice or participant structure. Temporal-spatial framing was coded when additional or modified contextual information altered the temporal, spatial, or situational framing of the event.

For the quantitative analysis, an occurrence refers to an identifiable instance of a framing strategy within an aligned translation unit. A translation unit may consist of a word, phrase, clause, or sentence, depending on the textual shift under examination. Where one translation unit fulfils the operational criteria for more than one framing strategy, multiple coding is permitted and each strategy is recorded separately. Multiple instances of the same strategy within a passage are counted separately only where they constitute distinct textual shifts. The quantitative figures therefore represent coded framing occurrences rather than mutually exclusive linguistic units.

Because the three DV categories differ substantially in textual size, frequencies are compared between TT1 and TT2 within each DV category rather than across physical violence, psychological abuse and sexual assault. No inferential statistical tests are reported. The observations are derived from two complete translations of a single continuous literary text, and individual word tokens or coded shifts cannot be assumed to constitute statistically independent observations. The quantitative analysis is therefore descriptive and is used to identify recurrent tendencies and areas of divergence that are subsequently examined through qualitative close reading in Section 5.

Coding was iterative. The corpus was read repeatedly, and coding decisions and category boundaries were refined against the operational definitions until a stable coding framework was established. The same coding manual and decision criteria were then applied throughout the dataset. Ambiguous cases were reconsidered against the source text, corresponding target passages, and the operational criteria before a final coding decision was made. A detailed coding manual, including category definitions, inclusion and exclusion criteria, decision rules, and illustrative examples, is provided in Appendix A. This audit trail is intended to make the analytical procedure transparent and reproducible.

After compiling the corpus dataset, we imported the original text (ST) and both translations (TT1 & TT2) into NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software. This tool facilitates the systematic examination of DV narratives, allowing for the identification and comparison of linguistic and non-linguistic patterns, enabling detailed comparisons of DV-related narratives across the texts.

To analyse how DV is framed, specific phrases, sentences, and passages were identified as translational units and thematically categorised into three DV subcategories: 'physical violence,' 'psychological abuse', and 'sexual assault' across the texts. Verbal and economic abuse were classified under psychological abuse, as both categories typically have a profound impact on mental well-being. Additionally, we coded agency framing patterns based on Baker's four framing strategies: Selective Appropriation, Relationality, Temporality, and Labelling. These coding methods enable

Table 2 Distribution of DV Narratives in ST and TTs.

category	ST DV (Maugham, 1897)	TT1 DV (Xian, 2013)	TT2 DV (Yu, 2016)
Physical violence	4,481 (12.35%)	8,010 (13.64%)	7,614 (12.14%)
Psychological abuse	2,306 (6.35%)	4,309 (7.34%)	4,080 (6.51%)
Sexual assault	373 (1.03%)	658 (1.12%)	630 (1.00%)
Total word counts (DV)	7,160 (19.73%)	12,977 (22.10%)	12,324(19.65%)

a comparative analysis of DV narratives and episodes of gendered violence, examining how translators reshape these narratives through textual and contextual reframing strategies in their respective translations of *Liza of Lambeth*. The following analysis examines the framing of DV at both textual and paratextual levels. Quantitative corpus analysis first identifies recurring patterns in the translations, followed by qualitative close reading of physical, psychological, and sexual violence. The analysis then considers how publicity blurbs further reposition DV for target readers.

Quantitative analysis of framing strategies in translating DV narratives

Liza of Lambeth portrays DV as a distressingly common occurrence within many households of late Victorian England. These DV narratives manifest in different forms, including physical violence, psychological violence and sexual abuse, featuring various narrators such as victims, perpetrators, and witnesses. These differing viewpoints shape the representation of DV through interpretive linguistic choices. The distribution of these roles across many characters, rather than a single dyad, is what makes the novel tractable for a framing analysis: it supplies repeated instances of the same act type described from different narrative positions.

Table 2 compares the textual distribution of physical violence, psychological abuse, and sexual assault in the source text (ST) and the two target texts (TT1 and TT2). DV narratives account for 19.73% of the ST, 22.10% of TT1, and 19.65% of TT2. Read against each translation's own expansion ratio, TT1 contains 12.0% more DV material than proportional expansion would predict (12,977 words against an expected 11,584), whereas TT2 falls 0.4% below prediction (12,324 against 12,369). TT2 therefore reproduces the source text's allocation of textual space to DV almost exactly, while TT1 systematically enlarges it. The same asymmetry holds in all three categories: TT1 exceeds its baseline by 10.5% for physical violence, 15.5% for psychological abuse and 9.0% for sexual assault, while TT2 stays within ±2.5% throughout. Across all three texts, physical violence remains the most prominent category, followed by psychological abuse and sexual assault. These distributional patterns provide the basis for examining how different forms of violence are reframed through selective appropriation, repositioning of participants, framing by labelling, and temporal-spatial framing.

Quantitative patterns in framing physical violence

Physical violence is the most prominent form of DV across the corpus, accounting for 12.35% of the ST, 13.64% of TT1, and 12.14% of TT2. Figure 2 shows that selective appropriation is the most frequently coded framing strategy in both translations, with relatively similar frequencies (TT1: 3,251; TT2: 3,170). The most pronounced difference concerns participant repositioning, which occurs substantially more frequently in TT1 (2,871) than in TT2 (1,570). By contrast, labelling occurs more frequently in TT2 (204) than in TT1 (120), while temporal-spatial framing shows a smaller difference (TT1: 1,765; TT2: 1,625). These patterns point to differences in the textual representation of agency and violence, which are examined through close textual analysis in Section 5.1.

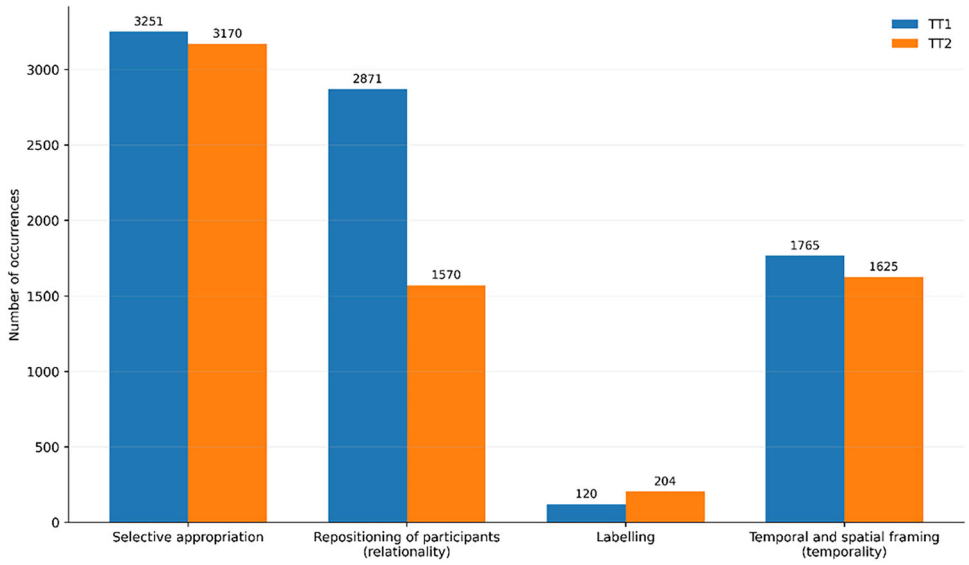

Fig. 2 Distribution of framing-strategy occurrences of physical violence.

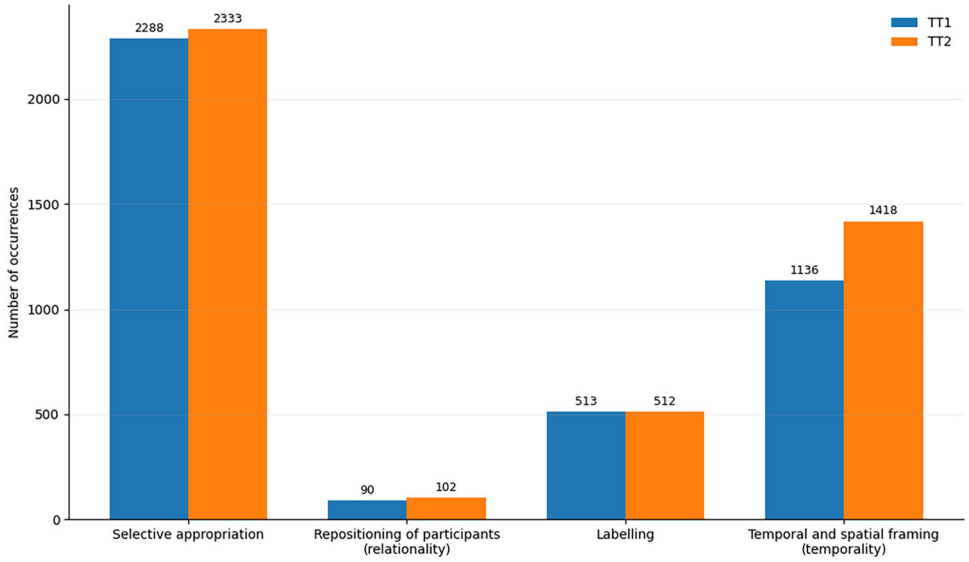

Fig. 3 Framing strategies in depicting psychological abuse.

Quantitative patterns in framing psychological abuse narratives

Psychological abuse accounts for 6.35% of the ST, 7.34% of TT1 and 6.51% of TT2. Relative to each translation's overall ST–TT ratio, TT1 shows the greatest proportional departure from its baseline in this category (+15.5%), whereas TT2 remains broadly consistent with its overall translation ratio.

Figure 3 reveals both convergence and divergence in the framing of psychological abuse. Selective appropriation is the dominant strategy in both translations, accounting for 2,288 occurrences (56.8% of framing-strategy occurrences) in TT1 and 2,333 (53.4%) in TT2, while labelling occurs at almost identical frequencies (513 and 512, respectively). Participant repositioning is considerably less frequent in both translations, with only a modest difference between TT1 and TT2. The most notable difference concerns temporal-spatial framing, which increases from 1,136 occurrences (28.2%) in TT1 to 1,418 (32.5%) in TT2. Overall, the two translations show broadly similar distributions of framing strategies for psychological abuse, with the principal difference lying in the greater use of temporal-spatial

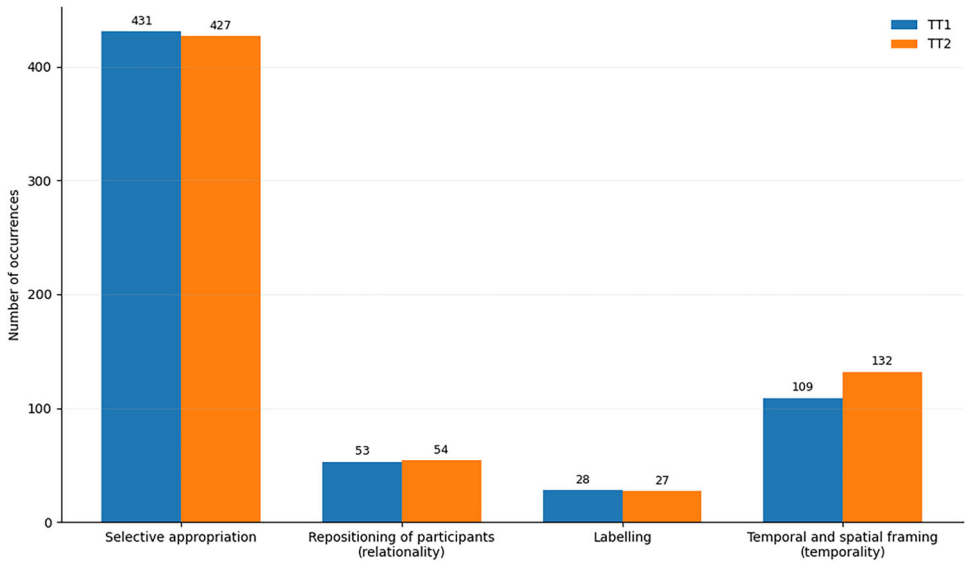

Fig. 4 Distribution of framing-strategy occurrences in depicting sexual assault.

framing in TT2. This contrasts with physical violence, where participant repositioning constitutes the most pronounced difference between the translations. Section 5.2 examines how these quantitative patterns operate at the lexical and narrative levels, particularly in relation to verbal aggression, victim-blaming, and gendered power relations.

Quantitative patterns in framing sexual assault narratives

Sexual assault constitutes the smallest category, accounting for 1.03% of the ST, 1.12% of TT1 and 1.00% of TT2, and comprising only 621 and 640 words of coded material, respectively. Figure 4 shows near-identical proportions across all four strategies, with no difference exceeding three percentage points. These totals are small enough that the proportions should be treated as indicative only. Overall, the quantitative differences are limited, suggesting that the significance of translational reframing in sexual assault narratives lies less in frequency than in the particular lexical and syntactic choices through which coercion, consent, and perpetrator agency are represented. These differences are examined through close textual analysis in Section 5.3.

To summarise, the quantitative analysis reveals both convergence and divergence in the framing of DV across the two translations. TT2's relative allocation of textual space to DV remains close to its overall translation baseline, whereas TT1 shows greater proportional prominence of DV across the three categories. At the level of framing strategies, the most pronounced difference concerns participant repositioning in physical violence, while psychological abuse shows a smaller difference in temporal-spatial framing. Sexual assault, by contrast, displays broadly similar distributions of framing strategies across the two translations. These quantitative patterns identify where translational differences occur, but they cannot establish how individual shifts affect perpetrator agency, victimhood, coercion, or gendered power relations. Section 5 therefore uses qualitative close reading to examine how these framing strategies operate within specific textual contexts.

Qualitative analysis of translational framing of DV narratives

Maugham employs two distinct methods to convey the episode analysed here: direct authorial depictions and accounts narrated by the victims in *Liza of Lambeth*. Throughout the narrative, numerous women, including Liza, her mother, Mrs. Stanley (Liza's neighbour), Sally (Liza's friend) and her mother, Jim's wife, Jim's daughters, Polly on Vere Street, fall

victim to different forms of abuse. Read through the contemporary DV framework specified above, the recurrence of violence across multiple characters indicates a broader pattern rather than a problem confined to a single relationship. At the same time, these episodes remain embedded in the particular class, gender, and moral assumptions of late-Victorian working-class life. They contribute to the novel's wider exploration of unequal power relations and poverty while highlighting the limited opportunities available to women seeking to resist or escape violence.

Although Maugham's representation reflects late-Victorian assumptions concerning class, morality, and female sexuality, the novel also exposes the unequal gender relations within which violence against women is normalised. From the contemporary analytical standpoint adopted in this study, these episodes can be examined as both individual experiences of suffering and manifestations of broader gendered power relations. This distinction is important because the ST itself cannot be treated as an ideologically neutral representation of violence, nor can contemporary DV categories be treated as historically self-evident. Rather, the ST provides the textual baseline for examining how physical violence, psychological abuse, and sexual coercion are subsequently reframed in the two Chinese translations.

Translating physical violence: shifts in agency and perpetrator responsibility

Liza, the central character, experiences physical violence from several characters, including her parents, Jim, and Jim's pregnant wife. The recurrence of such violence reinforces its representation as an ingrained feature of the social environment rather than an isolated occurrence. Example 1 concerns Jim's assault on Liza after she arrives late to meet him, having stayed to console her friend Sally following a beating by her newlywed husband. Maugham initially foregrounds Jim's agency through the active construction "he pushed her back," although the subsequent phrase "in the little scuffle caught her a blow over the face" partially embeds the blow within the surrounding altercation. The severity of the assault becomes apparent the following day, when Liza's eye is described as "black and blue and green" (Maugham, 2017, p. 108). The passage therefore combines explicit perpetrator agency with contextual framing that presents the violence as occurring within a physical struggle.

Example 1

… As she tried to catch hold of it again, he pushed her back, and in the little scuffle caught her a blow over the face. (p. 107)

TT1	当她试图再次拉住他时, 吉姆推开了她, 混乱中丽莎的脸上挨了他一拳 。(When she tried to catch hold of Jim again, amidst the chaos, Jim pushed her away, and Liza got his fist on her face).
TT2	她还想去拖住他, 他推开她, 在你拉我扯的当儿, 他给她扑面一拳。(She still tried to hold onto him, he pushed her away; while she is pulling and tug him, he punched her on the face directly)

Example 1 reveals different patterns in the representation of agency and responsibility.

In TT1, the source-text construction "he […] caught her a blow over the face" is rendered as 丽莎的脸上挨了他一拳 (Liza was hit by his fist in the face). This repositioning shifts the grammatical focus from Jim as the actor to Liza as the recipient of the blow, thereby backgrounding, although not eliminating, Jim's agency. Such shifts are significant in representations of violence because active and passive constructions can affect the linguistic attribution of perpetrator responsibility (Frazer and Miller, 2009). TT1 further introduces 混乱中 (amidst the chaos), a temporal-spatial frame that situates the blow within the disorder of the altercation. This addition foregrounds the surrounding circumstances of the violence, making the situational disorder more salient alongside Jim's individual action.

In contrast, TT2 retains the active voice. Yu renders 'caught her a blow over the face' into '给她扑面一拳 (punched her directly on the face)', making the perpetrator and violent action explicit. At the same time, TT2 elaborates the physical interaction preceding the blow through 她还想去拖住他 (she still tried to hold onto him) and 在你拉我扯的当儿 (while they were pulling and tugging at each other). These additions foreground Liza's continued physical engagement immediately before the assault and frame the blow within a reciprocal struggle. TT2 therefore

does not simply mitigate or intensify the violence: it makes Jim's perpetrator agency more explicit while simultaneously increasing the salience of Liza's participation in the events immediately preceding the assault.

The two translations consequently redistribute agency in different ways. TT1 backgrounds Jim's grammatical agency and foregrounds the situational disorder surrounding the blow, whereas TT2 explicitly identifies Jim as the perpetrator but provides a more elaborate account of the reciprocal struggle. In both cases, grammatical agencies interact with selective appropriation and contextual framing to shape how the relationship between perpetrator, victim, and the act of violence is constructed in translation.

Translating psychological abuse: verbal aggression and social stigma

Psychological abuse in *Liza of Lambeth* is a key mechanism of control and subjugation, manifesting in verbal aggression, emotional coercion, and public shaming. Liza is repeatedly subjected to insults, gossip, and moral condemnation, illustrating how language is used to police female behaviour and reinforce gendered social norms. This is particularly evident after her relationship with Jim becomes known. In the late Victorian context, sexual relations between a married man and an unmarried woman attracted strong social condemnation (Frost, 1995), yet much of the hostility in the novel is directed towards Liza rather than Jim. A pivotal example occurs when Jim's wife, Mrs Blakeston, verbally and physically attacks Liza while members of the community cheer and applaud. The episode presents psychological abuse not simply as interpersonal hostility but as a form of collective social punishment in which gendered stigma is reinforced by the wider community.

As Baker (2014) argues, narratives can structure emotional engagement by positioning participants and events within particular interpretative frames. In this episode, derogatory labelling, selective appropriation, and participant repositioning alter the evaluative force of Liza's humiliation and the way her victimhood and suffering are represented in the two translations. The translation of gendered insults in Example 2 exemplifies this phenomenon.

Example 2 Translations of gendered insults: labelling

ST	TT1	TT2
Yer dirty bitch	你这个嫉子	你这臭狗娘!
Prostitute	妓女	婊子
Dirty little bitch	肮脏的孃子	肮脏的小狗娘

In TT1, Xian adopts a more restrained approach to offensive language, using less overtly vulgar expressions. For instance, the harsh insults "dirty bitch" and "dirty little bitch" are rendered as 嫉子 (promiscuous woman) and 肮脏的孃子 (dirty young woman), while "prostitute" is translated as 妓女, a relatively standard and formal term. However, 嫉子 and 孃子 are also lexically unusual and would sound archaic or unfamiliar to many contemporary Chinese readers. Their effect should therefore not be understood simply as mitigation. By replacing colloquial verbal aggression with marked and less idiomatic expressions, TT1 creates greater linguistic distance between the insult and the contemporary reader, reducing some of the immediacy and conversational force of the abuse.

TT2, by contrast, uses colloquial and highly derogatory expressions, including 婊子 (bitch, whore), 肮脏的小狗娘 (dirty little bitch), and 臭狗娘 (filthy whore), making the verbal aggression more immediately recognisable and confrontational. These lexical choices preserve or heighten the confrontational quality of the source-text insults and make the verbal aggression more explicit. The contrast between 妓女 in TT1 and 婊子 in TT2 is particularly revealing: while both refer to sexualised moral judgement, the latter carries a stronger colloquial and insulting force. The translations therefore construct Liza's public humiliation through different registers of gendered labelling: TT1 creates greater lexical distance from the verbal aggression, whereas TT2 foregrounds its vulgarity and hostility.

Another major instance of psychological abuse occurs when Jim dismisses DV as acceptable and even necessary. In this scenario, Liza arrives late for her meeting with Jim because she spends time comforting her friend Sally, another female victim in the novel who suffers physical violence at the hands of her newlywed husband, Harry.

Maugham uses dialogues to depict a tense interaction, embodying issues of gender equality, alcohol use, and male attitudes towards women.

Example 3 shows Jim's response to Liza's apology: 'I'm very sorry, Jim, but I went in to Sally, an' 'er bloke 'ad been knockin' 'er abaht, an' so I sat with 'er a bit.' Jim, instead of showing sympathy, approves of the physical violence, asserting that Sally deserved it. Jim's comment serves as a threatening ideological assertion—that DV is a norm, and women should accept it. This functions as a form of psychological intimidation, reinforcing male dominance. Maugham interweaves the narrative of Jim's psychological abuse against Liza and other women through a curse on women and Jim's threat to Liza that more women deserve such treatment. Liza, faced with this harsh perspective, remains silent. Despite Liza's apologies and visible fear, she still becomes a target of Jim's physical violence due to her late arrival, mirroring other instances of abuse. The dialogue in Cockney dialect reveals Jim's aggressive and insensitive attitude, while Liza responds with fear and later, 'Liza did not answer' suggests her emotional turmoil and indicates that she is either afraid to challenge Jim or is emotionally worn down by these justifications of violence.

Example 3

… 'Knockin' 'er abaht, 'ad 'e? and serve 'er damn well right too; an' there's many more as could do with a good 'idin'!'

Liza did not answer.

TT1 '她丈夫打了她吗? 这可真是太棒了, 该好好打的女人确实也不少! '
丽莎没有回答。' (Did her husband beat her up? That's really fantastic. Indeed, many women deserve to be beaten up. Liza made no answer)

TT2 '打了一顿吗? 也是活该；该好好打的女人多着呢! '丽莎不响。(Did he give her a beating? She deserved it; lots of women **should** be beaten up. Liza remained silent.)

TT1 reframes this exchange through several instances of selective appropriation and makes several elements of Jim's response more explicit. The elliptical source-text question "Knockin' 'er abaht, 'ad 'e?" becomes 她丈夫打了她吗? ("Did her husband beat her?"), explicitly identifying both the marital relationship and the victim. More strikingly, TT1 renders "serve 'er damn well right too" as 这可真是太棒了 ("That's really fantastic/great"). Rather than merely reproducing Jim's judgement that Sally deserved the beating, this formulation introduces an overtly enthusiastic evaluation of the violence itself. The addition of 真 (really) further strengthens this evaluative reaction. The subsequent statement, 该好好打的女人确实也不少 (Indeed, there are quite a few women who deserve a good beating), restores the punitive judgement and generalises it to women as a group. The addition of 确实 (indeed) gives Jim's assertion further emphatic force. TT1 therefore does not simply mitigate Jim's verbal aggression; its shifts alter its evaluative form, moving from victim-blaming in the source text towards an overtly approving response to violence before reinforcing the wider claim that some women deserve to be beaten.

TT2 follows the source text more closely in its evaluative structure. It renders the beating as 打了一顿 ("gave [her] a beating"). Here, 一顿 functions as a verbal measure expression denoting a sustained bout of physical action, thereby reinforcing the severity and intensity of the assault. Jim's response, 也是活该 ("she deserved it too"), retains the blunt victim-blaming of the source text, while 该好好打的女人多着呢 ("there are plenty of women who deserve a good beating") reproduces Jim's generalisation from Sally to women more broadly. The modal expression 该 (should/deserve to) and 好好打 (give a good beating) make the normative dimension of Jim's statement particularly explicit: violence is represented not merely as something that happens to women, but as punishment that certain women are deemed to deserve.

The framing of Liza's reaction also differs subtly between the two translations. TT1 renders "Liza did not answer" as 丽莎没有回答 (Liza did not answer), closely preserving the propositional meaning of the source text. TT2 uses the more colloquial 丽莎不响 (Liza remained silent), foregrounding silence as a state rather than simply the absence of a verbal reply. In the immediate narrative context, this silence creates a marked contrast with Jim's forceful endorsement of violence and reinforces the unequal interpersonal dynamic between them. Rather than explicitly signalling

submission or passivity, both translations leave Liza's silence open to interpretation while positioning it against Jim's aggressive assertion of male authority.

Example 3 demonstrates that both translations preserve Jim's normalisation of violence against women, but they reframe his attitude in different ways. TT1 substantially alters the evaluative force of "serve 'er damn well right" by rendering it as 这可真是太棒了, portraying Jim as responding positively to the beating itself, before reinforcing his broader generalisation through 确实. TT2, by contrast, remains closer to the source text's victim-blaming logic through 活该 and retains the proposition that certain women deserve physical punishment. The differences therefore lie not simply in whether psychological abuse is intensified or mitigated, but in how Jim's misogynistic justification of violence is linguistically reconstructed. These choices produce different representations of the gender ideology underlying his speech: TT1 foregrounds his approval of the violence, whereas TT2 more directly preserves the victim-blaming logic through which violence against women is presented as deserved and therefore justifiable. In both translations, Liza's silence following Jim's statement further sharpens the contrast between his forceful endorsement of violence and her lack of verbal response.

Translating sexual assault: framing intimacy and coercion

This study uses the contemporary category of sexual assault/coercion. It refers to non-consensual sexual touching, coercive sexual behaviour, and other unwanted sexual contact (Kippert, 2021; WHO, 2002). This terminology is an analytical tool rather than a claim that late-Victorian actors would have conceptualised these encounters in equivalent terms. In *Liza of Lambeth*, sexual coercion is primarily associated with Jim's relationship with Liza. Maugham portrays these encounters through indirect narration, euphemistic language, and situational ambiguity, making the boundary between intimacy, sexual pursuit, and coercion not always explicitly marked. Jim, an older married man, "drinks heavily, loves but neglects his children, keeps his wife pregnant and beats her, and generally maintains a sharp eye upon any decent-looking woman with whom he can effectuate a liaison" (Rogal, 1997, p. 156). His relationship with Liza develops through a series of increasingly intimate physical encounters in which differences in age, marital status, and gender intersect with unequal power relations. This ambiguity is particularly important for translation, since relatively small shifts in agency, lexical choice, and narrative perspective can make physical contact appear more intimate or more intrusive. This section examines how TT1 (Xian) and TT2 (Yu) frame two key encounters: Jim's unsolicited physical contact with Liza (Example 4) and his forced kiss (Example 5).

Example 4 depicts Jim initiating physical contact with Liza during a coach ride on a Bank Holiday. At this stage of the novel, Jim has been gradually pursuing Liza, but the physical contact described here occurs without any indication that she has invited or anticipated it. The sudden movement of a hand along her leg, followed by the revelation that it belongs to Jim, introduces an element of surprise and suggests that Liza was not expecting this physical contact. Significantly, Maugham presents the encounter indirectly through passive constructions—"a hand was advanced" and "her hand was grasped and gently pressed"—before identifying Jim as the actor. Passive constructions have been associated with linguistic distancing in representations of sexual violence because they can background perpetrator agency (Bohner, 2001). In this passage, the delayed identification of Jim similarly places initial emphasis on the physical action and Liza's experience of it rather than on the person initiating the contact. At the same time, the expression "gently pressed" introduces an element of intimacy, creating ambiguity between apparently affectionate contact and unwanted physical intrusion. This ambiguity in the source text provides an important point of comparison for examining how the two translations frame Jim's agency and Liza's position in the encounter.

Example 4:

But suddenly there was a movement on the other side of her, a hand was advanced along her leg, and her hand was grasped and gently pressed. It was Jim Blakeston. (Maugham, 2017, p. 60)

TT1

……而突然, 她身体的另一边也有了动静, 她感到有只手正在自己的腿上摸索, 还有人握住了她的手, 温柔地攥着——是吉姆•布莱克斯通! (But suddenly, there was a movement on the other side of her, and **she felt** someone **touching** her leg, taking her hand, **clutching it tenderly**. It was Jim Blakeston)

TT2 但是, 忽然她另外一边有什么在蠕动, 一只手在她腿上伸过来, 她的手被握住, 被轻轻地挤捏着。那是吉姆•布莱克斯顿。 (But suddenly something **was wriggling** on the other side of her, a hand **advanced along** her leg, and her hand **was grasped** and lightly **squeezed**. It was Jim Blakeston)

Both TT1 and TT2 use selective appropriation and repositioning of participants in Example 4. In TT1, the addition of 她感到 (she felt) shifts the narrative perspective towards Liza's sensory experience, placing her perception of the physical contact at the centre of the description. This is followed by 摸索 (feel/fumble along), 握住 (take hold of), and 攥着 (clutch/hold), together with the adverb 温柔地 (tenderly). The combination of sensory focalisation and 温柔地 gives the encounter a more intimate quality, developing the ambiguity already present in Maugham's "gently pressed". At the same time, Jim is not immediately presented as the grammatical agent of these actions; his identity is revealed only at the end of the passage through 是吉姆•布莱克斯通 (It was Jim Blakeston). TT1 therefore foregrounds Liza's experience of contact while backgrounding Jim's agency in initiating it. Rather than explicitly representing the encounter as coercive, the translation frames the physical contact through a language of intimacy and tenderness, making its intrusive character less immediately salient.

TT2 remains structurally closer to the source text, retaining the delayed identification of Jim and the passive representation of Liza's hand through 被握住 (was grasped) and 被轻轻地挤捏着 (was gently squeezed). However, 蠕动 (wriggling/moving) and 挤捏 (squeezing) give the physical contact a more tactile and potentially unsettling quality. Compared with TT1's 温柔地攥着 (clutching/holding tenderly), TT2 therefore makes the physical nature of Jim's contact more salient while continuing to position Liza as the recipient rather than the initiator of the action.

The two translations consequently develop different aspects of the ambiguity already present in Maugham's description. TT1 foregrounds Liza's sensory perception and gives the encounter a more intimate quality, whereas TT2 foregrounds the physicality of Jim's actions and maintains a clearer distinction between the initiator and recipient of the contact. These differences are significant because they affect how Jim's agency and the potentially coercive nature of the encounter are represented in translation.

Example 5:

Suddenly, a man from the side **darted into** the middle of the road, stood straight in her way, and before she knew where she was, she had jumped shrieking into his arms, and he, lifting her up to him, had imprinted two sounding kisses on her cheeks.

TT1: 突然, 边上的一个男人猛冲到路中央, 挡在她的道上, 还没等她反应过来, 便尖叫着撞入了那人怀里。那男人于是将她举起, 硬在她脸上留下了两记重重的亲吻。

TT2: 忽然路旁有个人冲到街道中央, 扑面挡住了她的去路。她自己也不知道是怎么回事, 尖叫着扑倒在他的怀里。而他, 捧起她的脸, 就在她两面面颊上出声地吻了两下。

Example 5 provides a more explicit instance of unsolicited physical intimacy and reveals substantial differences in how the two translations frame Jim's actions. TT1 intensifies the physical force of the encounter through selective appropriation. 猛冲 (dash/rush forcefully) strengthens the sudden movement expressed by "darted", while 挡在她的道上 (blocked her way) maintains Jim's obstruction of Liza's movement. More significantly, the addition of 硬 (forcibly) in 硬在她脸上留下了两记重重的亲吻 explicitly marks the kisses as forceful. 两记重重的亲吻 (two heavy kisses) further amplifies their physical intensity. Together with 将她举起 (lifted her up), these choices foreground Jim's physical control and make the coercive character of the encounter more explicit than in the source text.

TT2 frames the same encounter differently. Although 冲到 (rushed into) and 扑面挡住了她的去路 (blocked her way head-on) retain the suddenness and obstruction of Jim's approach, 捧起她的脸 (held/cradled her face) changes the physical action represented in the source text. Maugham's "lifting her up to him" involves Jim lifting Liza bodily, whereas TT2 shifts the action to her face, reducing the representation of his physical control over her body. Similarly,

出声地吻了两下 (kissed her twice audibly) reproduces the "sounding kisses" without adding an explicit marker of force comparable to TT1's 硬 and 重重. The result is a representation in which the physical intrusion remains visible, but the kiss itself is framed in less overtly forceful terms.

Paratextual framing: repositioning DV through publicity blurbs

The textual analyses above reveal different patterns in the framing of physical, psychological, and sexual violence across the two translations. These patterns, however, should not be attributed solely to individual translator intention. Translation is produced within broader historical and institutional contexts in which publishers and other editorial actors may also influence how a literary work is presented. Publicity blurbs appear on both the translated volumes and provide further evidence of how the two translations frame Liza's story for their target readerships.

TT1's blurb below emphasizes Liza's difficult family background and her love affair, framing her as a fatherless girl living with a troubled mother and engaging in a destructive relationship with a married man. The opening references to an "early deceased father", an "alcoholic mother", and an "absent family" foreground emotional and familial deprivation, while the statement that fate "deprived her of the right to be loved" positions her relationship with Jim within a narrative of unfulfilled emotional need. The emphasis on Liza's "astonishing beauty", admiration from others, and search for love further individualises the tragedy.

This written material may lead readers to interpret the tragedy primarily through a psychological lens; combined with the mitigated attribution of responsibility to male characters for disrespectful and violent behaviour in TT1, the narrative constructed in the blurb implies a tenuous connection between DV and the tragic outcome. This framing of Liza indirectly constructs her as a flawed character and a mistress; significantly, it also emphasizes her beauty. This framing potentially leads readers to downplay the male-inflicted nature of DV and to attribute greater responsibility for the tragedy to women's perceived moral transgression rather than to the actions of the more powerful male characters. Such patterns resonate with documented forms of victim-blaming and gendered attribution in Chinese discourse surrounding intimate partner violence (Hu et al. 2021; Wu, 2014). The blurb also centres on notions of fate, destiny, and falling in love—romantic tropes that frame Liza's suffering as a seemingly predestined tragedy. In doing so, it potentially obscures the unequal gendered power relations underlying the narrative and further reduces the visibility of Jim's agency and responsibility.

TT1 Blurb:

早逝的父亲, 酗酒的母亲, 缺位的家庭……命运剥夺了她被关爱的权利, 却给了她惊人的美貌。然而众人的艳羡与追逐弥补不了少女丽莎内心的遗憾, 她爱上了那个注定毁灭她的人……

人穷尽一生追求的, 往往是自己永远得不到的。

Born in a broken family with an early deceased father and an alcoholic mother… Fate deprived her of the right to be loved, but endowed her with physical beauty. However, the admiration and pursuit of others couldn't compensate for the regret in the heart of the young girl Liza. She fell in love with the man who was destined to destroy her…

What people often pursue throughout their entire lives is often something they can never truly obtain (our translation).

In contrast, the translator's publicity blurb for TT2 (below) provides insights into the story's societal backdrop, outlining the matrix of relationships linking Liza, her love affair, and the environment, and placing the protagonist within a working-class community residing in a 19th-century slum. Significantly, the blurb initially focuses on the persona of the author Maugham, observing the behaviour of the slum dwellers with scientific detachment as one would with the specimens of a research project; this has the effect of undermining the emotional charge of Liza's fate. The blurb characterises the narrative as 一个劳工阶层的通奸故事 ('a story of adultery in the labouring class'). 通奸 is a reciprocal term that distributes the transgression between both parties and carries a legal-moral register absent

from Maugham's framing; it forecloses the reading of Liza as the object of an older married man's pursuit that the novel's own narration supports. This lens serves to illuminate the daily realities of London at that time but, more importantly, it resonates with Chinese readers as an important contemporary social issue in China. This portrayal highlights that the protagonist is a victim of her grim social environment, this being partially conveyed through the narratives of abuse and mistreatment in TT2. Consequently, domestic violence – as instigated by men – seems to occupy a less prominent role in the tragedy, with the focus shifted towards the broader social context and towards the actions of all parties involved in the violence. In summary, TT2's publicity blurb focuses on the depiction of the urban settings where violence flares up, a factor contributing to Liza's tragic fate rather than emphasizing that she is the victim of mistreatment at the hands of a more socially powerful male character.

TT2 blurb:

《兰贝斯的丽莎》是毛姆长篇小说的处女作和成名作。

一八九二年十月三日, 十八岁的毛姆成为伦敦圣托马斯医院医学院的一名学生, 为期五年的学医生涯, 不仅使他有机会了解到底层人民的生活状况, 而且使他学会用解剖刀-样冷峻、犀利的目光来剖视人生和社会。他的第一部小说《兰贝斯的丽莎, 即根据他作为见习医生在贫困产妇接生时的见闻用自然主义手法写成。它描写的是贫民窟的一个与寡母相依为命的漂亮姑娘丽莎短促的–生和悲剧性的死亡, 通过一个劳工阶层的通奸故事真切地反映出世纪之交劳工阶层的伦敦人的日常生活。真实、大胆, 又饱含同情的幽默。

W. Somerset Maugham rose to fame with the first novel Liza of Lambeth.

On October 3, 1892, the 18-year-old Maugham became a medical student at St. Thomas's Hospital in London, embarking on his five-year journey of medical studies. This experience not only provided him with insights into the living conditions of the lower-class population, but also taught him to dissect life and society from a cold and sharp perspective, like a scalpel. Based on his experience as an obstetric intern in the ghetto, he wrote Liza of Lambeth in a naturalistic style. It depicts the short and tragic life of a beautiful girl named Liza, who lives with her widowed mother in a slum. Through an adulterous story in the working class, it vividly reflects the daily life of the labouring class in London at the turn of the century. The novel reads real, bold, humorously sympathetic, and filled with compassion. (Our translation)

The two blurbs therefore extend the textual analysis by showing how different paratextual frames coexist with the linguistic patterns identified in the translations themselves. TT1 presents Liza's tragedy predominantly through an individualised and romantic frame, while TT2 places greater emphasis on moral categorisation and socio-economic context. Importantly, these paratextual differences cannot be assumed to reflect the translators' individual intentions, since responsibility for the blurbs and other publishing materials cannot be established without further evidence. They nevertheless demonstrate how the two published editions position Liza of Lambeth differently and provide distinct interpretative contexts for its representations of gendered violence. Considered alongside the textual analysis, these differences suggest that the reframing of DV operates not only through linguistic choices within the translated text but also through the broader historical, socio-cultural, and institutional contexts in which translations are produced and presented.

Conclusion

This study has examined how the two Chinese translations of *Liza of Lambeth* frame DV through selective appropriation, participant repositioning, labelling, and temporal-spatial framing. Using corpus-assisted analysis alongside Mona Baker's narrative framing theory, the findings reveal systematic differences in how DV narratives are reframed across the two translations.

The quantitative analysis shows that TT1 gives DV narratives greater relative textual prominence than would be expected from its overall expansion of the source text, exceeding its baseline expansion by 12.0% overall and by 15.5% for psychological abuse. By contrast, TT2's allocation of textual space to DV remains broadly proportional to its overall expansion (− 0.4%). The most pronounced difference in the framing of physical violence concerns participant repositioning, which accounts for 35.9% of TT1's coded physical-violence material compared with 23.9% in TT2. These quantitative patterns identify where the two translations diverge but do not, in themselves, establish a consistent ideological orientation.

The qualitative analysis further demonstrates that TT1 backgrounds Jim's grammatical agency in some representations of physical violence and creates greater lexical distance from colloquial verbal abuse, yet elsewhere makes his endorsement of violence against women more emphatic and renders the forced kiss in Example 5 more explicitly coercive. TT2 more directly foregrounds perpetrator agency in some passages while simultaneously increasing the salience of reciprocal physical struggle or reducing the bodily force represented in others. In response to the third research question, neither translation can therefore be assigned a consistent position in relation to dominant gender ideologies. Each makes male violence more visible at some points while mitigating, redistributing, or contextualising agency at others.

The paratextual analysis adds a further dimension to this uneven pattern of reframing. The publisher blurb accompanying TT1 presents Liza's tragedy predominantly through an individualised and romantic frame, foregrounding family deprivation, beauty, love, fate, and emotional need. TT2, by contrast, places greater emphasis on moral categorisation and socio-economic context, notably framing the relationship as "a story of adultery in the labouring class" and situating Liza's tragedy within working-class life. Neither blurb explicitly foregrounds DV as the principal explanation for Liza's tragedy, although they background it in different ways. These paratextual differences cannot be attributed directly to the translators, since authorship of the publishing materials cannot be established. Nevertheless, they demonstrate that the reframing of gendered violence extends beyond linguistic choices within the translated text to the broader institutional and socio-cultural contexts through which translated literature is presented.

This unevenness across textual and paratextual framing constitutes an important finding of the study. Rather than treating aggregate frequencies or the overall direction of translational shifts as sufficient evidence of ideological orientation, the analysis demonstrates the value of examining how individual framing strategies operate across different episodes and forms of DV. The relationship between translation and gender ideology is therefore more complex than a binary distinction between amplification and mitigation. Corpus-assisted quantitative analysis can reveal recurrent patterns, but close textual and paratextual analysis is necessary to establish how agency, responsibility, victimhood, and gendered power relations are constructed in particular contexts. The study thus contributes to research on translation and gendered violence by demonstrating that narrative framing operates unevenly within the same translated literary work and is embedded within wider processes of textual and institutional mediation.

The study is necessarily limited to two Chinese translations of a single literary work and examines textual and paratextual framing rather than translator intention or empirical reader reception. It also does not examine the representation of Liza's experiences through contemporary clinical categories. Future research could extend the analysis to other translations and literary works, investigate editorial and publisher interventions through archival or paratextual evidence, and use reception studies to examine how translated representations of gendered violence are interpreted by readers. Further research could also explore, with appropriate historical contextualisation, how translation mediates literary representations of psychological suffering, coercion, and survivors' experiences across cultural and historical contexts.

Acknowledgements We would like to express our thanks to the journal editors and the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and feedback.

Author contributions We declare that this article is our original research and that there is no conflict of interest. Suwen Zhou, Saihong Li, and William Hope contributed to writing the manuscript. Dr Hope and Dr Li revised, proofread, and improved the overall quality of the article. This research was conducted independently, and the Article Processing Charge (APC) will be covered or agreement with Springer Nature and the University of Stirling. All interpretations and conclusions presented in this paper reflect the authors' independent analysis and understanding of the subject matter, with no external influence or bias affecting the research findings.

Competing interests The authors declare no competing interests.

Ethics approval and consent to participate This study was conducted in accordance with the University of Stirling's Code of Conduct. As it did not involve human participants, ethical approval and informed consent were not required.

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Appendix A Coding Manual

A1: Domestic Violence coding

Category	Operational definition	Inclusion criteria	Boundary/decision rule	Illustrative examples
Physical violence	Use of physical force against another person	Hitting, punching, kicking, pushing, beating and related bodily assault	Where physical violence occurs together with threats, insults or humiliation, the physical act is coded as physical violence and the verbal or emotional component may additionally be coded as psychological abuse.	punch, slap, kick
Psychological abuse	Verbal or emotional behaviour involving threats, intimidation, humiliation, coercive control or public shaming	Insults, threats, victim-blaming, humiliation, intimidation and emotional coercion	Economically related behaviour is included where its dominant narrative function is threat, coercive control or emotional manipulation rather than sustained financial deprivation.	Passage that Jim stating that women deserve to be beaten
Sexual assault	Non-consensual or coercive sexual contact or behaviour	Unwanted sexual touching, forced kissing and coercive physical intimacy	Where consent is not explicitly verbalised, the surrounding narrative context, including unexpected contact, resistance, fear or coercive circumstances, is considered in determining inclusion	Passages on Jim's unwanted touching of Liza during the coach ride

A2: Narrative Framing strategies coding

	Coding criteria	Boundary/decision rule	Illustrative examples

Framing strategy	Coding criteria	Boundary/decision rule	Illustrative examples
Framing strategy			
Selective appropriation	Addition, omission, amplification or paraphrase changes the amount, prominence or presentation of narrative information	primary shift concerns information content or degree of elaboration. If an added expression also introduces an evaluative label, multiple coding is permitted where both functions are independently present	ST "serve 'er damn well right" → TT1 这可真是太棒了 ("That's really fantastic"). The source-text expression of deserved punishment is reformulated as an overtly positive reaction to the beating, changing the presentation and evaluative force of Jim's response.
Repositioning of participants	Grammatical or narrative change alters agency, responsibility or participant relationships	voice, subject/object structure or participant configuration changes who is foregrounded as actor, perpetrator or recipient	ST "he…caught her a blow" → TT1 foregrounds Liza as recipient: 丽莎的脸上挨了他一拳
Framing by Labelling	Lexical choice changes evaluative naming or characterisation of a participant, action or form of violence	When the primary shift concerns evaluative categorisation rather than simply addition of information	"prostitute" → 妓女 / 婊子, producing different degrees/registers of derogatory labelling
Temporal-spatial framing	Added, omitted or altered temporal, spatial or situational information changes the context in which violence is represented	Code when contextual framing changes how the circumstances surrounding an act are construed	混乱中 ("amidst the chaos") situates the blow within general disorder

A3. Coding and Boundary Decision Rules

- Unit of analysis: Coding was based on aligned source- and target-text units. A translation unit could consist of a word, phrase, clause, or sentence, depending on the textual feature being analysed.
- Definition of an occurrence: An occurrence was recorded when an identifiable textual shift fulfilled the operational criteria for one of the four framing strategies.
- Multiple coding: Where a single translation unit performed more than one independently identifiable framing function, multiple coding was permitted, with each strategy recorded separately.
- Repeated strategies: Multiple instances of the same strategy within a passage were counted separately only when they represented distinct textual shifts.
- Overlapping DV categories: Where an episode contained more than one form of violence, distinct components could receive separate DV codes. Physical assault was coded as physical violence; threats, humiliation, intimidation, and emotional coercion as psychological abuse; and unwanted or coercive sexual contact as sexual assault/coercion.
- Dominant-function rule: Where an act could potentially fall into more than one DV category, classification was determined by its dominant narrative function in the immediate context.
- Ambiguous cases: Ambiguous instances were reconsidered against the source text, corresponding target passages, surrounding narrative context, and the operational definitions before a final coding decision was made.
- Segment boundaries: The textual span of a DV episode began when the narration or dialogue entered the violent

interaction and ended when it moved away from that interaction. Contextual material was included only where necessary to interpret the immediate violent episode.

A4. Worked Examples of Boundary Decisions

- Selective appropriation vs. labelling: Where information was added, omitted, amplified, or paraphrased, it was coded as selective appropriation. Where the shift changed the evaluative naming or categorisation of a participant or action, it was coded as labelling. Where an added expression independently performed both functions, multiple coding was permitted.
- Selective appropriation through amplification: In Example 5, ST "imprinted two sounding kisses on her cheeks" is rendered in TT1 as 硬在她脸上留下了两记重重的亲吻 ("forcibly left two heavy kisses on her face"). The additions 硬 ("forcibly") and 重重 ("heavily/forcefully") make the coercive force of the action more explicit and were therefore coded as amplification through selective appropriation.
- Psychological vs. economic abuse: Economically related behaviour was not automatically classified as economic abuse. Where its primary narrative function was to threaten, intimidate, humiliate, or emotionally control another character, it was coded as psychological abuse. A separate economic-abuse category would have required evidence of sustained financial deprivation or restriction.
- Participant repositioning vs. selective appropriation: A grammatical change was coded as participant repositioning where it altered the visibility, agency, or responsibility of a participant. For example, ST "he […] caught her a blow" is rendered in TT1 as 丽莎的脸上挨了他一拳, shifting grammatical focus from Jim as actor to Liza as recipient. Additional information surrounding such a construction was separately coded as selective appropriation where appropriate.
- Selective appropriation vs. temporal-spatial framing: An added expression was coded as selective appropriation because it introduced information absent from the ST, but it could also receive a temporal-spatial framing code where the added information specifically altered the situational context of the violent act. For example, TT1's addition 混乱中 ("amidst the chaos") introduces new information while simultaneously situating Jim's blow within a broader scene of disorder.
- Sexual coercion in ambiguous passages: Where the source text did not explicitly label an act as sexual assault, coding was based on textual evidence such as unexpected or unsolicited physical contact, coercive circumstances, resistance, or absence of consent. The immediate narrative context was examined before the passage was included under sexual assault/coercion.

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