

An Independent Woman with Clear Awareness - A Study of Bai Liusu's Image in the English Translation of *Love in a Fallen City*

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Abstract:

From the perspective of feminist translation theory, this paper focuses on the English version of *Love in a Fallen City* translated by American sinologist Karen S. Kingsbury, taking the female protagonist Bai Liusu as a case study. It systematically explores the specific manifestation of four major feminist translation strategies—Supplementing, Hijacking, Prefacing, and Footnoting—in the translated version and their role in the cross-linguistic reconstruction of Bai Liusu's image. The research finds that the four strategies, each with its own focus and working synergistically, form a complete logical chain for image construction: the Prefacing strategy builds a feminist interpretive context and anchors the direction for image shaping; the supplementing strategy clarifies Bai Liusu's implicit psychology and emotions, strengthening her trait of clear cognition; the Hijacking strategy subverts patriarchal discourse discipline and constructs her independent subject status as an active gamer; the footnoting strategy decodes Chinese gender imagery and deepens the core of her image resisting objectification. Together, they ultimately shape Bai Liusu into an independent woman with clear awareness and self-possession. This paper verifies the adaptability of feminist translation theory in the English translation of Chinese literature, reveals the gender-political nature of translation as a “cultural rewriting”, and provides strategic reference and theoretical support for the cross-cultural communication and positive construction of female images in classic Chinese literature.

Keywords:

Love in a Fallen City, Bai Liusu, Feminist Translation Theory

1. Introduction

As a highly distinctive female writer in the history of modern Chinese literature, Eileen Chang depicted the living predicaments and emotional worlds of urban women in Shanghai and Hong Kong in the 1930s and 1940s with delicate and detached strokes. *Love in a Fallen City*, one of her representative works, has shaped the classic

female image of Bai Liusu, who struggles to survive in the gap between traditional Chinese family ethics and modern urban civilization. Stories involving war, love, marriage, human nature, survival and struggle are inherently fascinating and gripping; coupled with Eileen Chang's use of desolate implications such as huqin, moon, mosquito coils, mirrors, and empty rooms, the work is endowed with a tension that transcends time and space [3]. She is a complex character who returns to her maiden home after divorce, endures cold glances from her relatives, and finally bets her future on marriage to find refuge in the special context of Hong Kong's fall. This image embodies Eileen Chang's profound insights into women's fate, family relationships, and human choices against the backdrop of war, possessing rich literary value and significance for gender studies.

With the acceleration of the “going global” process of Chinese literature, the English translation and overseas dissemination of Eileen Chang's works have become important academic topics. Among them, the English version of *Love in a Fallen City* translated by American sinologist Karen S. Kingsbury is regarded as an authoritative translation and has exerted a wide influence in the English-speaking world. Most of Eileen Chang's works describe the grievances and entanglements between various characters in feudal large families. However, compared with Eileen Chang's other works, the character relationships in *Love in a Fallen City* are relatively simple, without the intricate character relationships that confuse and trouble British and American readers [4]. Existing academic research on the English translation of Eileen Chang's works mainly focuses on translation comparison and cultural transmission, while there is still room for expansion in specialized research on how feminist translation strategies shape a single female image.

This study focuses on the English translation of Eileen Chang's *Love in a Fallen City*, aiming to systematically examine how the translator employs core strategies of feminist translation theory—such as supplementing to strengthen Bai Liusu's clear cognition, hijacking to construct her active subjectivity, prefacing to build a feminist interpretive context, and footnoting to elaborate on her feminist core—to translate and depict the complex image of the female protagonist Bai Liusu as a female subject who makes rational trade-offs and adheres to her own stance. Eileen Chang was praised by sinologist C. T. Hsia as “the most outstanding and important writer in China today” [5]. Thanks to C. T. Hsia's recommendation, Eileen Chang has received academic attention and recognition since the 1970s and entered the mainstream literary research perspective. Her long-term living experience in Hong Kong and abroad made Western scholars feel a sense of familiarity in form, while the exotic landscapes in her works, especially the urban writing of Shanghai, endow her works with a lingering and graceful Oriental characteristic, enabling readers to obtain an “other” reading experience [6]. This study is expected to enrich the research on the English translation of Eileen Chang's works from the perspective of feminist translation, and provide a reference for the translation and dissemination of Chinese female literature in the English-speaking world.

2. Bai Liusu from the Perspective of Feminist Translation Theory— An Independent Woman with Clear Awareness

In her English translation of *Love in a Fallen City*, Karen S. Kingsbury has carried out precise translation practices centered on Bai Liusu's image by virtue of four major strategies: Supplementing, Hijacking, Prefacing, and Footnoting. Bai Liusu, as portrayed by Eileen Chang, is a complex woman with both rationality and

perseverance trapped in patriarchal shackles and survival dilemmas. Her clear trade-offs and adherence to her own stance constitute the core feminist connotation of the image. This chapter will combine specific translation examples to analyze the specific application of the four major strategies in strengthening Bai Liusu's clear cognition, constructing her active subjectivity, building an interpretive context, and elaborating on the core of her image. It will also explore how the translator, through the textual practice of feminist translation, enables Bai Liusu's image as a "female subject who makes rational trade-offs and adheres to her own stance" to be accurately presented and deeply conveyed in the English translation.

2.1. Supplementing Strategy: Strengthening Bai Liusu's Clear Cognition

Supplementing is one of the core strategies of feminist translation. It mainly clarifies the vague or hidden female experiences and subjective consciousness in the original text through adding words and making implicit meanings explicit, so as to make the female image more distinct. This strategy does not arbitrarily alter the core meaning of the original text, but allows the translator to intervene from a gender perspective, fill the gaps in female discourse, and help women "emerge" in the translated text.

This strategy has been well reflected in the shaping of Bai Liusu's image in the English translation of *Love in a Fallen City*. Eileen Chang is fond of leaving blanks in depicting Bai Liusu—her emotions, determination, and inner calculations are mostly hidden in concise words, seemingly plain but with profound meanings. Eileen Chang depicted a picture of Chinese society in the 1930s and 1940s for the world. Against the background of a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, the urbanites depicted by Eileen Chang had complex psychology and values equivalent to social form changes during the transition period between the old and new societies. Eileen Chang's literature integrates two cultures: traditional and modern [7]. This writing style not only makes Bai Liusu's image more three-dimensional but also provides space for the translator to use the Supplementing strategy. The following will combine specific translation examples to analyze how the translator uses the Supplementing strategy to show Bai Liusu's unspoken emotions and thoughts and plays a role in strengthening her subjective image.

Example 1

Source Text (ST): 如果赌赢了，她可以得到众人虎视眈眈的目的物范柳原，出净她胸中这一口气。 [1]

Target Text (TT): If she won, she'd get the prize the whole crowd was eyeing like so many greedy tigers—Fan Liuyuan—and all her stifled rancor would be swept clean away. [2]

From the perspective of the feminist translation's "Supplementing" strategy, this example is a typical practice of the translator's active intervention to make female experiences "visible". "胸中这一口气" is a highly condensed and vague physical-emotional metaphor, and it is not specified whether it is anger, grievance, or resentment. Instead of staying at the literal level, the translator takes the initiative to fill this gap by adding the specific qualification of "stifled rancor". The key lies in the word "stifled", which is not a direct translation of "一口气", but a profound supplement. This word reveals that Bai Liusu's resentment is not a momentary anger but accumulated in a long-term repressed and unspeakable situation. Therefore, the

target text not only conveys the action of “出气” but also clearly reveals the predicament of women’s emotional expression under a specific social structure by adding the attributive “stifled”, making the previously hidden female experiences in the original text concrete and perceptible, and bringing the silent female voice and her living conditions to light in the text.

Example 2

ST: 流苏的手没有沾过骨牌和骰子，然而她也是喜欢赌的，她决定用她的前途来下注。[1]

TT: Liusu had never touched cards or dice, but she too liked to gamble. She decided to wager her future. [2]

Analyzed from the “Supplementing” strategy, the translator’s choice of the word “wager” is an important manifestation and strengthening of the metaphor of “bet” in the original text. “Wager” is more formal in English than the neutral “bet”, and it strongly refers to a solemn, high-risk gamble with an uncertain outcome. This lexical choice is not a simple literal translation but supplements the implicit subtext of “extremely high risk and great cost” in the original text. Through this supplement, the translator further shapes Bai Liusu as a resolute actor who, after soberly assessing the risks, resolutely stakes all her life’s chips. Her decision is no longer an ordinary choice but a solemn bet against fate. This supplement effectively highlights her rare initiative and courage in the face of difficulties, making her image in the translated text more like a strategist with courage and a tragic protagonist with depth.

Example 3

ST: 流苏自己忖量着，原来范柳原是讲究精神恋爱的。[1]

TT: Liusu assessed the situation. It turned out that what Liuyuan cared about was spiritual love. [2]

In the translation of Bai Liusu’s inner thoughts, the translator injects active color into her seemingly passive image through key semantic supplements. The original text “流苏自己忖量着” only simply describes the psychological action with a slightly confused tone. The translator renders it as “Liusu assessed the situation”, which is a typical explanatory supplement. “Assessed” implies a calm and rational calculation, and “the situation” elevates her thoughts from speculating about a man’s mind to a comprehensive judgment of the overall situation. This supplement not only resolves the potential ambiguity caused by the original text’s sketchy writing style but also reshapes the character image. Bai Liusu is no longer a passive recipient but a strategist who actively analyzes the situation in difficulties, echoing the metaphor of “wager” mentioned earlier. This supplement not only completes the semantic conversion but also strengthens Bai Liusu’s initiative, highlighting her trait of rational calculation in the face of constraints, which perfectly reflects the positive intervention effect of the Supplementing strategy.

As a core strategy of feminist translation, supplementing fills the gaps in female discourse in the original text by adding words and making implicit meanings explicit. It has played a key role in shaping Bai Liusu’s image in the English translation of *Love in a Fallen City*, effectively strengthening her clear cognition and subjective traits. Eileen Chang’s portrayal of Bai Liusu leaves much room for psychology and emotions, and the translator takes the initiative to intervene with the supplementing strategy to materialize these hidden traits, realizing a three-dimensional presentation of the female image. The three examples confirm the value of this strategy from

different dimensions: the translator supplements “胸中这一口气” with “stifled rancor” to clarify Bai Liusu’s long-repressed resentment, reveal the root of her emotional predicament, and make the hidden female experiences visible; strengthens the metaphorical connotation of “bet” with “wager”, supplements the subtext of high-risk gambling, and highlights Bai Liusu’s soberness and resolute courage when making choices; translates “忖量” into “assessed the situation”, elevates the pattern of her thinking, and shapes the image of a rational strategist who actively judges the situation. The three supplements echo each other and progress layer by layer. While adhering to the core of the original narrative, they strengthen Bai Liusu’s clear cognition and subjective initiative from a gender perspective. This fully shows that the Supplementing strategy is not only an improvement at the semantic level but also can reshape the female image and convey female consciousness through precise linguistic intervention, providing strong support for the cross-linguistic construction of female images.

2.2. Hijacking Strategy: Constructing Bai Liusu’s Active Subjectivity

Hijacking is a highly interventionist and subversive core strategy in feminist translation. Its core essence lies in the translator’s active intervention from a gender perspective, subverting the patriarchal discourse’s discipline and belittlement of women by reconstructing original images, rewriting semantic tendencies, and transforming value expressions, so as to open up a textual path for the positive reshaping of female independent subject images. Compared with the “filling gaps” of the supplementing strategy, the hijacking strategy focuses more on breaking the original semantic framework and endowing the text with new gender connotations through creative rewriting, which accurately serves the strengthening of female subjective traits.

In the shaping of Bai Liusu’s image in the English translation of *Love in a Fallen City*, the hijacking strategy has been applied at multiple levels. Centering on Bai Liusu’s living situation, psychological state, and identity positioning, the translator has carried out hijacking rewrites on three key texts: reconstructing the social field as a competitive arena, transforming the passive situation into active gambling, or eliminating the shackles of fame from a patriarchal perspective. These rewrites have not deviated from the core narrative of the original text, but have reshaped Bai Liusu’s relationships with the environment and others through precise semantic intervention, transforming her from a passive recipient into an independent subject with strategies, perseverance, and initiative.

Example 4

ST: 如果赌赢了，她可以得到众人虎视眈眈的目的物范柳原，出净她胸中这一口气。[1]

TT: If she won, she’d get the prize the whole crowd was eyeing like so many greedy tigers—Fan Liuyuan—and all her stifled rancor would be swept clean away.[2]

In this translation of the essence of the marriage market, the translator reshapes Bai Liusu’s relationship with the world through an image hijacking. The original text “众人虎视眈眈的目的物范柳原” still retains the potential logic of “women passively waiting to be chosen”, but the translator transforms it into “the prize the whole crowd was eyeing like so many greedy tigers”, directly hijacking the social field into a competitive arena. When Fan Liuyuan is clearly marked as a prize, Bai Liusu’s survival choice is framed as a public competition. She is no longer just a divorced

woman discussed by her family but an independent individual who actively participates in the competition to strive for her own interests. This hijacking endows her actions with a clear active logic—she is no longer a weak person waiting for men’s favor but an independent subject who actively gambles for her own future, and her trait of clear awareness and self-possession is strengthened in this image reconstruction.

Example 5

ST: 今天的事，她不是有意的，但无论如何，她给了她们一点颜色看看。她们以为她这一辈子已经完了么？早哩！她微笑着。宝络心里一定也在骂她，骂得比四奶奶的话还要难听。可是她知道宝络恨虽恨她，同时也对她刮目相看，肃然起敬。一个女人，再好些，得不着异性的爱，也就得不着同性的尊重。女人们就是这点贱。[1]

TT: She hadn’t planned the evening’s events, but in any case she’d shown them a thing or two. So they thought she was finished, that her life was already over? The game was just beginning! She smiled. Baolu must be cursing her silently, far more fiercely even than Fourth Mistress. But she knew that as much as Baolu hated her, the younger woman’s heart was also full of respect and admiration. No matter how amazing a woman is, she won’t be respected by her own sex unless she’s loved by a member of the opposite one. Women are petty this way. [2]

In the translation of this passage of Bai Liusu’s inner monologue, the translator depicts Bai Liusu’s psychological state through two key hijackings. The first is translating the colloquial exclamation “早哩！” into “The game was just beginning!”. The translator takes the initiative to hijack the original time statement and injects a game metaphor into it. This rewrite frames Bai Liusu’s living situation as a competition that requires strategies and participation, thereby hijacking and reshaping her from a passive person arranged by fate into a subject who knows the rules and takes the initiative to enter the game, strengthening her initiative. The second is the hijacking of the original sharp criticism. Through the character’s words, the author Eileen Chang uses the phrase “Women are just cheap that way” to coldly reveal the tragic logic that women’s value is defined by men’s gaze and leads to mutual trampling among women. The translator renders it as “Women are petty this way”, replacing the word “贱” which carries heavy moral derogation and cultural criticism with “petty”. This is a typical semantic “hijacking”, which greatly weakens the original sharp exposure and satirical edge of the predicament of women’s survival under the patriarchal system.

In summary, these two hijackings work together: on the one hand, adding the game “metaphor enhances the initiative and strategic color of Bai Liusu’s individual image; on the other hand, weakening the key criticism eases the insulting and negative expressions of female images in the traditional patriarchal society in the text.

Example 6

ST: 柳原用手抚摸着下巴，微笑道：“你别枉担了这个虚名！”[1]

TT: Liuyuan stroked his chin and laughed. “Why content yourself with appearances only?” [2]

The “虚名” mentioned by Fan Liuyuan in the original text refers specifically to Bai Liusu being called “Mrs. Fan” even though she is not married. In the patriarchal context, this reputation firmly binds Bai Liusu’s identity to men, putting her in a passive predicament of being defined and judged, as if her value can only exist by

relying on the label of “Mrs. Fan”. This is an invisible shackle set for women by the patriarchal discourse. Instead of literally translating “false reputation”, the translator reconstructs the line as “Why content yourself with appearances only?” through the Hijacking strategy, finding a key way to break this shackle.

This rewrite is exactly the core embodiment of the Hijacking strategy. It completely jumps out of the entanglement and judgment of the “Mrs. Fan” reputation from a patriarchal perspective, opening up a new path for the shaping of Bai Liusu’s image that is free from dependence. The target text no longer traps Bai Liusu in the passive situation of whether she deserves the reputation, but frees her from the shackles of fame, highlighting her independent trait of being able to transcend secular labels and actively examine the essence of the relationship. The image that might have been confined within the framework of seeking fame by relying on men has successfully broken through the constraints of patriarchal discourse through the intervention and guidance of the hijacking strategy, transforming into an independent woman who is not trapped by false fame and has her own perseverance and judgment. This rewrite not only fits the original scene but also completes the positive reshaping of Bai Liusu’s subjective image through the textual path of the Hijacking strategy, demonstrating the core value of this strategy in breaking gender prejudices and empowering female images.

In summary, through the differentiated application of the hijacking strategy in three places, the translator has joined forces to complete the three-dimensional reshaping of Bai Liusu’s image, fully demonstrating the core value of this strategy in subverting patriarchal discourse and empowering female subjects. The three rewrites have their own focuses but are consistent: the image hijacking that defines Fan Liuyuan as a “prize” transforms Bai Liusu from an object of discussion into an active competitor, endowing her actions with a strategic direction; the metaphorical hijacking that rewrites “Far from it!” into “The game was just beginning!” injects a gambling core, strengthening her initiative to enter the game; the semantic hijacking that reconstructs the lines related to “false reputation” breaks the shackles of fame, highlighting her independent trait of transcending secular labels. Overall, the Hijacking strategy provides key textual support for Bai Liusu’s image to jump out of the patriarchal framework, making her independent, sober, and courageous subjective traits distinctively prominent, and also providing an effective path for the positive cross-linguistic construction of female images.

2.3. Prefacing Strategy: Building a Feminist Interpretive Framework for Bai Liusu

As an important strategy of feminist translation theory, the core value of the Prefacing strategy lies in guiding readers through pre-narration, building a feminist interpretive framework, implanting a gender perspective in advance, and laying a solid foundation for the interpretation of female images and the practice of translation strategies in the main text. In the preface to the English translation of *Love in a Fallen City*, the translator gradually improves the feminist interpretive context through three groups of key expressions that progress layer by layer—from the construction of gender power opposition, the positioning of textual creation characteristics to the explanation of translation method choices. It not only clears obstacles for cross-cultural readers to understand the text but also accurately anchors the direction for interpreting Bai Liusu’s image. The following will combine three core examples in the preface to specifically analyze the process of constructing and improving the feminist interpretive framework.

Example 7

Preface: “Chang’s father, however, was an entirely different sort of aristocrat: he smoked opium, kept a fawning concubine, and, when his temper flared, beat up the members of his own family, especially the women. This happened with fair regularity, since his wife and his sister, Eileen’s maiden aunt, were daring and independent in the New Woman mode: they traveled to Europe and remained there for several years, leaving Eileen and her younger brother behind in the care of the family patriarch.” [2]

This preface deliberately outlines a sharp contrast between decadent old-style patriarchy and independent new women, laying a feminist interpretive perspective for readers in advance. In the preface, the image of Eileen Chang’s father is depicted in detail. Through behaviors such as “smoking opium, keeping a fawning concubine, and beating women in the family”, he is directly shaped as a representative of old-era patriarchal power, and the brutality and oppression of patriarchy are clearly visible at a glance. In contrast, the preface clearly defines Eileen Chang’s mother and aunt as “bold and independent” new women, and highlights their courage to break free from family constraints and pursue freedom through the act of “living in Europe for several years”. Supplementing the explanation of the aunt’s identity and pointing out the “care of the patriarchal head of the family” further amplifies the conflict between the old and new concepts. This contrast enables readers to form a certain cognition before reading the main text: Bai Liusu’s choices and struggles are not her own personal matters, but those of new women like her mother and aunt resisting patriarchy. They are the common predicament faced by women in that era, which also lays the foundation for interpreting Bai Liusu’s image and understanding relevant translation strategies in the following text.

Example 8

Preface: Thus, these translations grow out of the central conviction that Chang’s melding of Qing and Edwardian, patriarchal and feminist, past and present offers her readers a nuanced, historicized view of their own cultural moment, in all its singularity and repetitiveness.[2]

This preface further deepens the feminist interpretive framework. Its core is to point out the core characteristic of Eileen Chang’s creation, which is the integration of opposing elements, especially highlighting the collision between patriarchal and feminist perspectives. This means that Bai Liusu’s story is not only an individual narrative of the Republic of China period but also carries the cross-era gender power game. Her struggles between patriarchy and self-awareness are not only the exclusive predicament of that era but also the common embodiment of women facing gender oppression in different stages. Through this positioning, the preface elevates the interpretive dimension of Bai Liusu’s image, making readers understand that the shaping of her image in the following text is not just a simple restoration of the character, but an exploration of the cross-temporal feminist connotations behind her. At the same time, it provides a core foothold for the application of relevant translation strategies.

Example 9

Preface: If the reader finds that the timbre of that story is different from that in my translations, in ways that go beyond dialect difference (British or Hong Kong versus American English), this probably is because I’ve pushed hard at commonplace idioms and metaphors, trying to find lively equivalents instead of letting them dissolve

unobtrusively, as could well happen in a skilled Chinese reader's mind. My excuse for this is that my Taiwanese students have often told me that Chang's Chinese is not easy for them to understand... It seems to me that if Chang is tantalizing but tough for young Chinese readers today, a translator ought to err on the side of 'over-translation', even though Chang herself... rendered 'The Golden Cangue' in fairly plain, understated English." [2]

This preface focuses on explaining the choice of "over-translation", which essentially aims to break the barrier of understanding Eileen Chang's text and clear the way for interpreting Bai Liusu's image in the following text. The preface mentions that Eileen Chang's writing is not easy to understand even for young Chinese readers, let alone cross-cultural readers. Those idioms and metaphors are likely to be weakened in reading, and "over-translation" is to take the initiative to explain these hidden contents thoroughly and vividly so as not to lose the core connotations. This choice seems to deviate from Eileen Chang's own plain and understated translation style, but in fact, it aims to enable readers to accurately capture the gender tension in the text, especially Bai Liusu's psychological activities, sober calculations, and resistant attitudes hidden in the delicate words. By explaining this in advance, the preface not only justifies the subsequent translation strategies but also guides readers to understand the deep-seated traits of Bai Liusu's image, preventing them from ignoring her independent core as a new woman due to the obscurity of the text, thus further improving the feminist interpretive framework.

The above three preface contents construct and improve the feminist interpretive framework from different dimensions, forming a progressive logical chain. First, through the shaping of binary opposite images, it lays the core cognition of "patriarchal oppression—female resistance" and anchors the era background for Bai Liusu's image. Second, through the positioning of textual creation characteristics, it elevates the image interpretation dimension, endowing Bai Liusu's struggles with the significance of cross-temporal gender games. Finally, through the explanation of the rationality of "over-translation", it clears the obstacles to text understanding and ensures that Bai Liusu's independent core is accurately perceived. The three work together to not only provide legitimacy support for the application of translation strategies such as Supplementing and Hijacking in the following text but also guide readers to interpret Bai Liusu's image from a feminist perspective, elevating her from an individual role in the Republic of China period to a typical representative carrying the era's gender predicament and female awakening consciousness, fully demonstrating the core value of the Prefacing strategy in feminist translation.

2.4. Footnoting Supplement: Elaborating on the Core of Bai Liusu's Image

Footnotes, together with prefaces, belong to the core paratextual strategies of feminist translation. They form a synergistic and echoing relationship, jointly serving the excavation and transmission of the feminist connotations of the text. The core value of paratextual strategies lies in breaking the shackles of "invisible translator" in traditional translation. By taking the initiative to supplement background, disassemble the core, and implant perspectives, it makes the hidden gender logic and cultural connotations of the original text explicit. Footnotes are the concrete implementation carrier of the preface's over-translation concept. For the images carrying Chinese-style culture and gender metaphors in *Love in a Fallen City*, Western readers are likely to ignore their deep feminist criticism due to cultural barriers. Through the precise paratextual practice of footnotes, the translator not only clears the obstacles to

cross-cultural understanding but also strengthens the interpretive main line of patriarchal oppression and female awakening, making Bai Liusu's image traits and fate struggles more deeply perceived. The following will combine two core images and the translator's annotations to specifically analyze the feminist empowerment role of footnotes as a paratextual strategy.

例 10

ST: 柳原什么也没说。过了许久，他才开口：“《诗经》里有一句诗——”“我不懂这些。”流苏打断他。“我知道你不懂，”柳原不耐烦地说，“你懂的话，我就不用解释了！你听着：‘执子之手，与子偕老’，大意是面对生死与别离，我向你起誓，牵着你的手，和你一同老去。”他的中文不太好，不确定译得是否准确，只道，“这是首很悲凉的诗，说生死离别是人力难控的大事。” [1]

TT: Liuyuan didn't say anything. Then, after a long while, he said "In The Book of Songs there's a verse—" "I don't understand that sort of thing," Liusu cut in. "I know you don't understand," Liuyuan said impatiently. "If you understood, I wouldn't need to explain! So listen: 'Facing life, death, distance Here is my promise to thee—I take thy hand in mine: We will grow old together.' My Chinese isn't very good, and I don't know if I've got it right, but I think this is a very mournful poem which says that life and death and parting are enormous things, well beyond human control." [2]

Footnote: Facing life, death, distance: A line from the third stanza of the thirty-first poem in The Book of Songs (composed between the fifth and tenth centuries BC); the poem's fourth stanza implies that the lovers' vow to remain faithful across time and distance was not kept.[2]

This image originates from *The Book of Songs*, carrying the profound sense of traditional Chinese love oaths, and implying the gender tension of "men dominating oaths and women craving stability". Western readers are not familiar with The Book of Songs culture and can only understand the literal meaning, unable to grasp the emotional weight and tragic core behind the oath. The translator's annotation accurately supplements the source, age, and implied ending of the verse. The translator takes the initiative to explain the hidden cultural connotations and emotional tone, not only enabling readers to understand the metaphor of Liuyuan quoting the verse and the tragedy of the emotional entanglement between him and Liusu but also highlighting the gender power game in their relationship.

ST: 那些倾国倾城的传奇美女，大抵都是这般模样。传奇随处可见，结局却未必都圆满。万盏灯火的夜晚，胡琴呜呜咽咽地拉着，琴弓来回滑动，奏出一段难以言喻的凄凉曲调——唉！何必细说呢？ [1]

TT: Those legendary beauties who felled cities and kingdoms were probably all like that. Legends exist everywhere, but they don't necessarily have such happy endings. When the huqin wails on a night of ten thousand lamps, the bow slides back and forth, drawing forth a tale too desolate for words—oh! why go into it?[2]

Footnote: Those legendary beauties who felled cities and kingdoms: A city-toppling woman, in ancient military strategy, is a beautiful woman who is sent to a rival in order to distract him from his city's defense. It later became a poetic compliment, roughly equivalent to "a devastating beauty." [2]

"The legendary beauties who overthrew cities and kingdoms" is a female image symbolized by patriarchal narratives, essentially implying the core of "women being instrumentalized and their value bound to male power." Western readers are likely to

understand it as an ordinary praise of beauty, ignoring the underlying gender discipline. By tracing the origin and evolution of the term through annotations, the translator disassembles its instrumental essence, fulfills the preface's appeal of "over-translation", and takes the initiative to reveal the patriarchal logic behind the image, enabling readers to understand the tragic fate of such women, and then associate Bai Liusu's struggle against the fate of "being objectified", making the feminist criticism of the text more in-depth.

Taking footnotes as the paratextual carrier, the translator transforms the preface's concept into specific practice, not only solving the cross-cultural understanding difficulties of Western readers but also strengthening the feminist criticism dimension of the text. From the interpretation of the tragic core of the verse in *The Book of Songs* to the disassembly of the instrumental essence of the image of "the legendary beauties who overthrew cities and kingdoms", the footnotes always focus on the main line of "patriarchal oppression—female resistance". Relying on the synergistic advantages of paratextual strategies, Bai Liusu's image traits are more easily perceived. This paratextual practice not only highlights the translator's subjectivity but also enables the accurate transmission of the text's feminist connotations, echoing the previous Hijacking strategy and jointly constructing a complete system of feminist translation of *Love in a Fallen City*.

3. Conclusions

From the perspective of feminist translation theory, this study focuses on Karen S. Kingsbury's English translation of *Love in a Fallen City*, exploring the specific manifestations of the four major strategies—Supplementing, Hijacking, Prefacing, and Footnoting—and their synergistic role in depicting Bai Liusu's image in the English translation, verifying the important significance of such strategies for the transmission and value sublimation of female subjective images. The four major strategies, each with its own focus and working synergistically, have jointly shaped Bai Liusu into an independent woman with clear awareness and self-possession. The Supplementing strategy clarifies her implicit psychology and emotions; the Hijacking strategy breaks patriarchal discipline to construct her active subjective status; the Prefacing strategy builds a feminist interpretive framework to anchor the direction; the Footnoting strategy decodes Chinese-style images, clears cross-cultural barriers, and deepens the core of her resistance to objectification. The application of these strategies not only accurately conveys the complexity and literary value of Bai Liusu's image but also reveals the gender-political nature of translation as a cultural rewriting, providing an effective path for the cross-cultural transmission of classic Chinese female images. Eileen Chang's aesthetic view of "gorgeous desolation", her writing technique of "contrast and disparity", and her delicate visual language expression like a movie endow *Love in a Fallen City* with a unique "Chang-style" charm [8]. This study verifies the adaptability of feminist translation theory in the English translation of Chinese literature, enriches its Eastern textual practice dimension, and provides strategic reference for the English translation of female images in similar works. In summary, feminist translation strategies provide core support for the construction of Bai Liusu's image, confirming that translation is a creative activity carrying gender games and cultural transmission, and providing a textual path for highlighting the value of female subjects.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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