

Original Paper

Reconstructing Lotus Huang: An Examination of Translation in *Legends of Condor Heroes*

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Abstract

This study adopts the theoretical framework of imagologie to analyze the text of Legends of the Condor Heroes, focusing on aspects like appellation, action, dialogue, and psychological activities to explore the multifaceted process of reshaping the image of the female protagonist, Lotus Huang. Incorporating external feedback from target readers, the study also investigates the reception of Lotus Huang and identifies external factors influencing the image reshaping. The findings reveal that translators skillfully use techniques like amplification and omission to successfully reconstruct Huang as a spirited, principled, daring, and intelligent female knight-errant. However, variations are observed in certain features, such as her devotion to Guo Jing, which seem to be influenced by translators' opinions on female characters and modern readers' preferences. Despite these variations, the study highlights the positive reception of Lotus Huang among the target readers, indicating the successful dissemination effects.

Key words

Lotus Huang, Image Construction, Legends of the Condor Heroes, C-E translation studies

1. Introduction

The translation of classic Chinese literature carries a crucial responsibility of promoting Chinese culture to the world and serves as an indispensable practice in cross-cultural communication, particularly in the domain of literary translation, which holds its unique significance and value. Since *Legends of the Condor Heroes* (hereafter referred as *LCH*) was published, it has received positive feedback. As a martial arts novel, *LCH* spares no effort in crafting its characters. Jin Yong once expressed, "Writing martial arts novels is about creating characters and depicting their experiences in a specific martial arts environment. "This highlights the paramount importance of successfully shaping

characters for both the author and the work. Character portrayal is a critical component of novels, and the success or failure of a literary work hinges on it. However, compared to male characters, female characters often tend to be overlooked. *LCH* as a Chinese martial arts novel, features numerous typical martial arts female characters, who bring captivating plots to the literary work and present readers with an extraordinary martial arts literary feast. Therefore, these female character portrayals in the English translation of *LCH* deserve attention.

2. The Current State of Research on *LCH* and Its Translation

The successful translation of *LCH* has drawn considerable attention from scholars both domestically and internationally. For a translated work, one of the primary concerns of translators lies in its reception among readers and its dissemination. Therefore, many scholars evaluate the success of a translation by examining factors such as reader feedback on websites, professional book reviews, and sales figures. For instance, Zhang Gu and Wang Zhiwei (2020) analyzed over a thousand comments from readers on the Goodreads website regarding the English translation of Volume One of *LCH*. Liu Yi (2021) employed actor-network theory and field theory to explore the position of *LCH* in the Western literary translation field, the interactive process of capital utilization in translation publication and online dissemination, and the role of translator habits in translation strategies. These studies indicate that the English translation of *LCH* has received positive responses in the English-speaking world, and the successful aspects of the translators' work have been well documented by scholars.

Scholars have also turned their focus to the translators themselves. Jiang Beibei (2019) pointed out that the success of the introduction of *LCH* can be attributed to the sponsor's choice of the original text, the translation strategies adopted by the translators, and the multiple channels of promotion. Consequently, many researchers began to examine the role of translators in shaping the translation. Zhao Gang and Gou Yajun (2019) highlighted that one of the key reasons for the successful English translation of the novel lies in the translators' creative translation strategies, combining form, content, and language in the process. Katherine Zhang (2020) conducted an in-depth interview with translator Zhang Jing, covering the translator's background, the process of taking on the translation of *LCH* and the methods employed in translating Chinese traditional cultural concepts and names. Chen Lin (2021) explored the translation strategy, revision and publication process, differences between Chinese and Western literature, and their impact on translation through an online interview with translator Zhang Jing, providing readers and researchers with insights into the underlying decision-making process shaping the final translation product. Additionally, Diao Hong (2021) utilized primary materials, such as emails, call records, interview records, agent reports, and unpublished articles, to investigate how Hollywood's habits as a literary agent led her to become the initiator and marketer of the translation project. These studies highlight the crucial role of translators in the translation and promotion process. Translators need to adopt innovative and diverse translation strategies while closely attending to reader feedback and dissemination to achieve optimal translation and communication effects.

As the number of research works increases, research methods continue to evolve. Kan Wu (2021) employed sentiment analysis and text mining techniques to investigate the reception of English and French translations of Jin Yong's martial arts novel *LCH*. Furthermore, Chen Lin and Dai RuoYu (2021) utilized corpus-assisted methods, combining translation studies and narrative theory, to conduct a descriptive study based on translation deletions in Hao Yuling's English translation of *LCH* and analyzed the intervention of the translator at the narrative structure level and the motives for intervening in narrative norms. The research scope has also expanded to include paratexts. Zhang Ying (2023), drawing on J.R.R. Tolkien's concept of the "secondary world," explored whether the translator's paratextual translation strategies can help readers quickly immerse themselves in the "secondary world" of the English translation of *LCH* (Volume One). Nevertheless, many studies have focused on linguistic and cultural aspects of the text, including translation strategies for proper names, appellations, culturally loaded terms, and martial arts techniques. Zhou Jing (2020), relying on Leffers' manipulation theory, investigated the appellations in *LCH*. Andrea Musumeci et al. (2021) examined the constraints faced by translating martial arts techniques based on the French and Spanish translations of *LCH*. Liu Hehua (2021) employed Leffers' adaptation theory to interpret translator Hao Yuling's English translation of *LCH* from the perspectives of patriotic sentiments, character standardization, gender adaptation, and cultural appellations.

Despite the plethora of research on the translation of Jin Yong's martial arts novels, the portrayal or reshaping of character images has been relatively overlooked by scholars. Jiang Siyuan (2021) categorized the cultural images in the original *LCH* into three categories: "Wu" image, "Xia" image, and historical-cultural image. From the perspective of imageology, Jiang explored how these three categories of "other" images are observed, imagined, and transformed during the translation process, and the resulting variation, analyzing the reasons behind them. Furthermore, different translators' depictions of certain female characters may also undergo changes (Liang Linxin & Sun Yingbin, 2022). Therefore, it is essential to conduct more detailed research on the portrayal of character images in translation.

3. Imagology and Translation

Imagology primarily explores the depiction of exotic and ethnic images in literary works, delving into the observation, imagination, and shaping of these "others" in the process of constructing the "self." Additionally, imagology aims to uncover the underlying social and cultural contexts behind the creation of foreign images and how these images reflect the "self" image (Zhang Yundan, 2014). In the context of imagology, images are regarded as representations of present elements in an author's or collective thinking. These present elements substitute for absent prototypes (i.e., the exotic) and represent a mixture of emotions and thoughts. Therefore, it is essential to delve into the reflection of images at the emotional and ideological levels, as well as the deviations resulting from imagination (Pageaux, 2001). Pageaux points out that translation is also a field within imagology research. In the

translation process, the author is the creator of images, while the translator is the re-creator. The translator's relationship with the images in the original text constitutes the interaction between the self and the other. For various reasons, the translator may negate the "other" images in the original text (Zhang Yingxian, 2002). In the process of translation, the images presented in the original work are introduced into the target language and culture, forming new images. The translator becomes both the observer and creator of these new images, while the images created by the original author become the others the translator scrutinizes. Throughout the process of re-shaping images, the translator is influenced by various factors, leading to variations or re-creations of the other images from the original work (Zhang Yundan, 2014).

As a crucial form of intercultural communication, translation plays a pivotal role in image construction, particularly in constructing images of the other. It exerts a significant influence on identity formation and image shaping between different language communities and ethnic groups (Wang Hongyun, 2018). In the translation process, translators are not mere conveyors of language but also inheritors of culture and meaning. By transforming words and meanings, they reconstruct and present images from the original work to diverse audiences, thereby providing a bridge for cross-cultural understanding and cognition. This medium of cultural exchange facilitates dialogue and communication between different cultures, contributing to a deeper understanding and respect for the other culture. The presentation of "other" images in translated works is generally subject to the selection and manipulation of relevant parties involved in the translation process (Wang Yunhong, 2018). Therefore, translation, as a significant tool for image construction, should not be underestimated in terms of its role and impact. In the translation of literary works, image reshaping refers to the process in which the translator retains the images from the original text but modifies and adjusts their characteristics and attributes based on the pragmatic conventions and aesthetic values of the target language. This ensures that target language readers can comprehend and accept the meaning conveyed by the images in the original text, avoiding misunderstandings or misinterpretations due to linguistic and cultural differences (He Ying & Lei Jiadi, 2022).

L  fevere (1992) argues that for most readers of literary works, what they read is the literary work rewritten by the translator, not the one written by the original author. Upon completing a literary work, readers only retain specific images in their minds. The reshaped images by the rewriter (translator) encompass the image of the author, the work, the subject matter, a period of literary work, and even the entire literary image. The process of creating these images is often unknown and rarely becomes the subject of study. The images reshaped or, so to speak, recreated by the translator are disseminated farther than the images created by the original author in reality and reach a broader readership and audience, significantly influencing the success of literary work translation. Consequently, the reshaping of character images holds considerable research value.

4. An analysis on Lotus Huang Reconstruction

4.1 Lotus Huang in Original Text

In the original work, Lotus Huang possesses unparalleled beauty, with a mischievous charm that adds to her lovable nature. However, her appeal extends beyond just being adorable; she exudes intelligence, making her an ideal female protagonist with beauty and wisdom coexisting harmoniously. As the daughter of the Peach Blossom Island's master—The Eastern Heretic Apothecary Huang, she naturally carries an eccentric air, as noted by Jade Sun Wang Chuyi who remarked, “这人的身法好生古怪 (Some most unusual skills)…….” Yet Heretic is not synonymous with “malevolence”; she possesses exceptional martial prowess and unparalleled wit, standing up for justice and righteousness, representing the image of a female chivalrous hero. Proficient in the knowledge of Yin and Yang, she is also skilled in music, chess, calligraphy, and painting, and boasts exceptional culinary skills. Her fateful union with Guo Jing, their shared adversities, and her ultimate sacrifice during the defense of Xiangyang City exemplify her bravery and loyalty. However, in comparison to the portrayal of Lotus Huang in the original work, how did the translator reshape her character? What led to these changes? This section will explore these questions from both internal and external perspectives.

To emphasize the character's personality and inner world, Jin Yong utilizes various descriptive techniques such as appellations, environments, actions, language, and psychological aspects to create a multi-dimensional portrayal, making the central theme prominent and the protagonist distinctive, while breathing life into abstract concepts. The extent to which the translator retained the original author's methods of character development and portrayal, as well as the adjustments and alterations made, will determine the preservation or reshaping of Lotus Huang during the translation process. Through internal analysis, examining the linguistic choices and stylistic adaptations made by the translator, we can discern the degree to which the essence of Lotus Huang's characteristics was maintained or altered. Meanwhile, external analysis will explore the impact of cultural factors, target audience preferences, and the translator's individual interpretative decisions on portrayal of Lotus. By delving into these aspects, we can gain a deeper understanding of how Lotus Huang was either preserved or reshaped in the translation, shedding light on the trans-formative journey of this iconic female character.

4.1.1 Appellation

Chinese traditional serial novel traces their origins back to the performances of folk artists. The methods used to portray characters in these works are characterized by a certain level of stylization. The characters' image and personality traits are often condensed into nicknames, sobriquets, or directly reflected in their names, titles, and honorifics, making appellations and physical descriptions complementary means. These appellations not only serve a generic function but also enhance linguistic expression, convey emotions, and thereby shape the character. Titles such as The Black Swamp Recluse (黑沼隐女), Twice Foul Dark Wind (黑风双煞), Sage of Tranquillity Sun Bu'er (清静散人) not only mirror the characters' physical appearances and personalities but also emphasize their expertise, and the contexts in which they exist. On the other hand, physical descriptions allow readers to vividly

perceive the characters' images, grasp their characteristics, and reveal the social environment they inhabit, as well as the characters' inner emotions, conveying the author's favor or disfavor towards them.

1. *ST* : “我姓黄，单名一个蓉字。”

TT : “My family name is Huang, my given name Lotus.”

For example 1, The name “黄蓉” consists of first name “黄” and Last name “蓉” (Rong), which refers to a flower called lotus in a way. In “Miscellaneous Records of the Western Capital,” there is a relevant record: “文君姣好，眉色如望远山，脸际常若芙蓉”(Wenjun is beautiful, with eyebrows resembling distant mountains, and her face always resembles the lotus). Subsequently, “lotus” was used as a metaphor for a beautiful woman. The translator adopts domestication by rendering “黄蓉” as “Lotus Huang,” with “Lotus” being a commonly used given name in English-speaking countries, while preserving the implied meaning of the original name. The translator also adds a footnote: In the pronunciation of the Chinese name, the gender of “蓉” (Rong) cannot be determined; therefore, readers who can see the characters have already guessed that Lotus Huang is female. However, Guo Jing, who only hears the pronunciation, still calls her “黄贤弟” (my brother). This deliberate technique by Jin Yong creates a sense of anticipation and curiosity for readers. Such an approach allows readers to experience a “watching a play” state while reading and seeks to restore Lotus Huang’s mischievous and clever personality through name translation.

Throughout the original text, there are over twenty different appellations used for Lotus Huang (see Table 1). These various appellations highlight Lotus Huang’s mischievous, childlike, and clever traits. For example, when Guo Jing first encounters Lotus Huang in a beggar’s appearance, he addresses her as “黄贤弟” (my brother), and the Jiangnan Six Freaks refer to her as “小妖女” (tricky, young girl), implying her craftiness. Terms like “妖女” (she-demon), “小妖女” (little she-demon), “鬼妖女” (Sinful witch), “小贱人” (little whore), “贱货” (whore), are mostly used by the Jiangnan Six Freaks, who hold a deep-seated grudge against the Twin Devils due to the death of their companion, Zhang A-Sheng. They believe that the martial arts Zhang A-Sheng practiced that led to his death were taught by Huang Yaoshi. Hence, they naturally view Lotus Huang as a little she-demon and address her in derogatory terms. However, after the misunderstanding is resolved, Ke Zhan’s affectionately calls her “乖蓉儿” (Lotus).

Table 1. Appellations Related to Lotus Huang in LCH

In Source Text	In Target text	Context
黄蓉	Lotus Huang/Lotus	self-appellation
蓉儿	Lotus	A more affectionate nickname used by Guo Jing.
小女	my daughter	used by Apothecary Huang
黄岛主的爱女	daughter of Master Huang	A respectful reference to her identity as the

		daughter of Apothecary Huang, the Island Master.
令爱/千金小姐	daughter/ precious daughter?	used by Viper Ouyang
丐帮帮主	Chief of the Beggar Clan	A respectful reference to her identity
贤弟、黄贤弟、黄贤妹	brother, my friends Lotus, brother Huang	Guo Jing's first address to Lotus Huang when he mistakes her for a young man.
姑娘/好姑娘	my lady	used by Viper Ouyang
小叫化	A bagger boy	self-appellation
小妹	I	self-appellation
妖女、小妖女、鬼妖女、小妖精	Demon/ she-demon /Sinful witch/hag/harlot whore	derogatory terms used by the Jiangnan Six Freaks due to their misunderstanding of Lotus Huang's intentions.
小贱人、贱货	/	derogatory terms used by the Jiangnan Six Freaks during their hostility towards Lotus Huang.
女强盗、女强人	Mistress	a nickname used by others when Lotus disguise herself as a bandit.
姑娘大王、女大王	Sweetheart	a nickname used by others when Lotus disguise herself as a bandit.
小情人	stinky little rascal, little peasant boy	The first time Mei Cyclone Mei met Lotus Huang and Guo Jing
臭小子、脏小子	the dirty/ little beggar boy	a term given by The Four Daemons of the Yellow River
臭丫头	silly little girl	a term given by The Four Daemons of the Yellow River
小丫头	little girl	used by Apothecary Huang
小小丫头	/	a term given by Madam Ying
黄家妹子、黄姑娘	Lotus, Miss Huang	used by Mercy Mu
黄家小姑娘	lotus	used by Jade Han
这小妮子	little girl	by The Northern Beggar Count Seven Hong
小媳妇儿	little wife	by The Northern Beggar Count Seven Hong
黄妹妹	sister Huang	by Gallant Ouyang to address Lotus Huang when he tries to win her over.
徒儿	disciple	by The Northern Beggar Count Seven Hong
乖蓉儿、乖宝贝	Lotus	An affectionate term used by Ke Zhen's after

resolving the misunderstanding.

4.1.2 Psychological Description

Psychological description provides a more intuitive portrayal of a character's inner world, revealing their deeper thoughts, emotions, desires, and reflections. It showcases the character's personality traits, thus enhancing the depth and richness of their image. The depiction of psychological activities contributes to a more comprehensive and profound character portrayal. Such descriptions are often conveyed through character dialogues and monologues. In depicting the protagonist's psychological activities, Jin Yong frequently employs direct speech, and when dealing with such instances, translators often convert direct speech into indirect statements, aiding readers in quickly immersing themselves into the storyline. (Zhang Gu, 2020)

2. ST: 蓉心道：“杨康怎会有我岛上总图？啊，是了，当日欧阳克来求婚，我爹爹将岛上总图借了给他，杨康在牛家村杀了欧阳克，自然在他身上将总图搜了出来。

TT : *It was Lotus's turn to be baffled. How did the map fall into Yang Kang's hands? Papa gave it to Gallant Ouyang for one month as a consolation prize when his suit for my hand came to nothing . . . Yang Kang must have seized it after he stabbed Gallant in Ox Village. That's how they were able to open Mama's tomb. I see how it all happened, now.*

Lotus Huang's independent and autonomous thinking ability is manifested in many situations. She excels in observation and contemplation, making quick decisions in complex matters, and providing valuable assistance during critical moments. Her handling of martial world affairs and problem-solving often exhibits remarkable wisdom and strategic acumen, earning her the title of Chief Huang. In example 2, the translator deftly introduces Lotus Huang's reasoning with the addition of "It was Lotus's turn to be baffled," smoothly leading into the subsequent content. By converting the indirect speech “黄蓉心道：杨康怎会有我...” into free indirect speech, the translation gains more vividness and expressive power. Placing “啊，是了” at the end of the sentence aligns with the reading habits of English-speaking readers. Moreover, the added phrase “That's how they were able to open Mama's tomb” helps readers recall the previous storyline while showcasing Lotus Huang's intelligence and resourcefulness to the target readers.

4.1.3 Personal Speech

Personal Speech vividly portrays characters' personalities, breathing life into their actions and making them leap off the pages. It allows readers to immerse themselves in diverse contexts, revealing aspects of social life, propelling the development of the storyline, and preventing monotony. Through this dialogue, Lotus Huang displays her firm belief in gender equality and her pursuit of it. She refuses to be confined to traditional gender roles and firmly believes in possessing independent thoughts and the right to make her own choices. Responding to the man's remarks with confidence and determination, she demonstrates her pursuit of equality and respect, showcasing her progressive ideas on gender equality. This attitude and mindset are consistently portrayed throughout Lotus Huang's character,

making her an important figure in LCH with a strong personality and a quest for equality. Through this character, Jin Yong conveys a positive attitude towards gender equality and female autonomy, presenting a modern, empowered female figure to readers.

2. ST: 自古道: “兄弟如手足, 夫妻如衣服。区区一个女子, 又当得什么大事?” 黄蓉急道: “呸, 呸, 师伯, 你瞧不起女子, 这几句话简直胡说八道。”那农夫再也忍不住了, 大声道: “你别打岔, 成不成?” 黄蓉道: “他说话不对, 我定然要驳。”

TT: You know the time-honored saying, “Like limbs are brothers, like garbs are helpmeets.” This is simply a matter with a woman, it is of no import. “Fie! Fie! Uncle, how could you treat her like that? Your words are utter, utter hogwash!” “Enough!” the farmer roared. “Why can’t I argue back when he’s wrong?”

In the original text, when the four fishermen, woodcutters, farmers, and scholars hear the words of Reverend Sole Light (一灯大师), they regard him as their esteemed teacher, refraining from any verbal or mental dissent and treating his words with utmost reverence. However, when they hear Lotus Huang’s impromptu interruption, they cannot help but feel surprised and angered. The translator renders this dialogue as “Enough,” keeping it concise and reader-friendly, while faithfully conveying Lotus Huang’s straightforward and fearless character, unafraid to speak her mind and challenge authority. By transforming “他说话不对, 我定然要驳.” into a questioning tone, the translator slightly softens Lotus Huang’s firmness. Moreover, translating “你瞧不起女子” as “how could you treat her like that?” intensifies the tone, highlighting Lotus Huang’s defense of women’s dignity.

4.1.4 Action Description

As one of the essential methods for portraying characters, action description typically illustrates distinctive behaviors that vividly reflect a character’s personality, qualities, and social status. A vivid and detailed portrayal of actions provides context for each action’s cause and effect, depicting the entire process of occurrence, development, and conclusion, thereby creating an immersive and lifelike impression. Such descriptions reveal unique personalities and inner thoughts, resulting in more fully developed, flexible, and three-dimensional character roles.

3. ST: 黄蓉拍手唱道: “矮冬瓜, 滚皮球, 踢一脚, 溜三溜; 踢两脚……” 郭靖喝道: “蓉儿 不许顽皮! 这几位是我师父。” 黄蓉伸伸舌头, 做个鬼脸。韩宝驹踏步上前, 伸手向她推去。黄蓉侧身让开, 又唱: “矮冬瓜, 滚皮球……”

TT: “Squat melon, roll and roll. One kick to the backside, And there he goes . . .” Lotus Huang sang, beating time with her hands. Ryder Han charged at her. She skipped sideways, evading him with ease. “They’re my teachers!” Guo Jing pleaded. Lotus pulled a face and stuck her tongue out. “Squat melon, roll and roll. One kick . . .”

For example 3, Lotus Huang responds with displeasure when Ryder Han accused her father of wrongdoing, and playfully retorts with the phrase “矮冬瓜”. In Chinese, “矮冬瓜” is used to metaphorically describe someone as short and chubby, often likened to the shape of a winter melon. However, such a direct association does not exist in English. The translator chooses a phrase that

conveys the intended meaning while adhering to the idiomatic expressions of the target language, thus translating “矮冬瓜” as “Squat melon,” capturing Ryder Han’ distinctive features while ensuring linguistic compatibility. Furthermore, the translator faithfully renders a series of comical actions such as “拍手唱道” (sang, beating time with her hands), “伸伸舌头”(stuck her tongue out), and “做个鬼脸”(pulled a face), maintaining the form of a nursery rhyme and reimagining Lotus Huang’s mischievous behavior and youthful character.

4. ST : 郭靖瞧着这情景，心想：“蓉儿真心跟我好，再也不会变心，她定不会要你的什么见面礼。”不料却听得黄蓉笑道：“多谢您啦！”伸手去接。

TT : Throughout Viper Ouyang’s speech, Guo Jing kept telling himself, Lotus will never err. She will never accept your gift . . . But cruelly, she defied his expectations by reaching out with a jovial “Thank you!” and offering the Venom her most beguiling smile.

The translator, based on their own understanding, employs visualization techniques to enhance the fickleness of Lotus by adding adjective “beguiling” and adverb “cruelly”, making these female characters less loyal. “蓉儿真心跟我好，再也不会变心” is simplified as “She will never err”, which undermines her devotion to Guo Jing.

4.2 Lotus Huang in the Eyes of Readers



Figure 1. Lotus Huang in the Eyes of the Target Readers (World Cloud)

By collecting about 60 comments from target readers on the Lotus Huang on the GoodReads website, a word cloud depicting readers’ perception of Lotus Huang was generated (as shown above). From the word cloud, it is evident that the size of the word love/like reflect the level of readers’ fondness for Lotus Huang, as expressed through words like “well/fascinating/wonderful/kind/considerate and more.

Many readers consider Lotus Huang to be a witty (fun, interesting, humor), resourceful (cunning, sharp), brave (bold), and intelligent (clever, smart) female character. Some readers particularly emphasize her intelligence and strategizing abilities, regarding her as one of the smartest characters in the story, playing a significant role in the progression of the plot and problem-solving. Furthermore, readers express a high level of interest in the relationship between Lotus Huang and Guo Jing. Many comments reflect their love and approval for the affection between the two characters, viewing Lotus Huang as a flawless soulmate (unparalleled, unmatched soulmate) and a platonic (perfect, best) lover in a Platonic sense. However, some comments also point out that Lotus Huang's personality may appear too headstrong and mischievous (spoiled, playing, mischievous, impish, badass, devious) in some situations, which can occasionally lead to reader dissatisfaction (annoying, insensitive, emotional).

There exist some negative comments. It is posited that Lotus is conniving and controlling. The author clearly wants the reader to sympathize with her and to desire her and Guo Jing to marry. A reader said that one thing that makes Lotus especially repulsive to me is how she manipulates Guo Jing. She wants to control him, and to do so she frequently plays the role of a pouty, needy child. Some readers hope for a more balanced portrayal of certain aspects of Lotus Huang to better align with contemporary audience expectations of female characters.

4.2 Translators' Role in Reconstruction of Lotus Huang

Translators play a decisive role in the reconstruction of Lotus Huang's image. Translator Shelly Bryant, in an interview on the Nüvoices Podcast, shared her perspectives on the portrayal of Lotus Huang in *LCH*. She said, "(1) Lotus has a character that she seems so fickle when I translated her into English. And yet that is really the opposite of what's intended in the text. That fickle should not be how she comes across to an English language reader, because what's happening in the original is even her back and forth is a sign of her loyalty, a real love for Guo Jing, that she's trying her best to do what's good for him because she loves him. But when you translate it into English, it really comes across that way. And if you translate it just as it's written, because you don't have these same cultural assumptions that are going to be made by your English language reader. And they're going to say what is with this guy? Can't he see through this girl? she's just playing games with him, toying with him because he's naive, or something like that. That's how it feels when it's translated, just as it's written on the page, if you're just looking at the surface, if you're faithful in terms of just the words on the page, it goes completely against the intent of the text. (2) And it has to do with the cultural assumptions that the different readerships are bringing to the text, that you don't have the same background of these relationships, the gender relations from history. This was actually the one concern that I did have about us being an all-female team translating this book. (3) That at the end of the day, you must acknowledge that these characters are being written from the perspective of the male gaze, and it's a very strong driving point about how these women are developed on the page, that they are idealized women, I think. Gigi Chang describes them as the girlfriends that every Chinese guy wants, or something along those lines, I can't remember exactly. You're worried with something, right? So that that there are any fantasy girls, um,

but the fantasy, the fantasy is good at cooking, that's right. And the fantasy is created by men. (4) We as women and female translators, I think we have this tendency to want to push back against it a little bit, and that's struggle. How do you stay faithful to the original text? Do you need to present it with all its biases, or do you need to present it something a little more positive? Because at the end of the day, we did also say, we want this to be the book that people are going to keep turning the pages. In the same way, when we talk about Lotus and her fickleness, what does that back and forth? What is it saying? It's saying that she loves Guo Jing and is trying to do what's best for him because she loves even if it means it cost her something, she's willing to do that, and she's trying to struggle to give him up, because she believes that's what she's supposed to do right as a loving woman. Debris Smith has described it in some of her translations of Korean literature, that sometimes you must commit an infidelity for the sake of a greater fidelity. And I think that's what we had to decide. When do we need to commit a small infidelity for the sake of a greater fidelity? How do we maybe bend the words a little bit, so that they're not quite as sticking closely to exactly what said on the page so that we can get across the real message, which is, Lotus is loyal. Lotus is faithful. She is doing what's best for Guo Jing. She really does love him. (5) So how do you kind of get that bigger message across it, which is what we're trying to create, is this image of her absolute commitment to him, not fickleness. How do you deal with the male gaze? How do you be accurately representing it, and yet still create a book that people are going to want to read? Because that's not necessarily what people want to read today, you know? And so how do we address all that?"

From translator Shelly Bryant's response, we can observe her attention to cultural assumptions and her awareness of the challenges faced by readers who may not share those assumptions. Consequently, she adopts appropriate translation strategies. The translator also expresses her thoughts on how female characters are portrayed through the male gaze in the original text. Her translation purpose is to create a captivating and appealing work for modern English-speaking readers while respecting the integrity of the original. It is evident that translators face multiple pressures and considerations, and some choices may be made in response to these complexities. In this case, as all three translators are female, they might make extra efforts in shaping a likable female protagonist. Their goal is to create a character that resonates with contemporary readers, striking a balance between catering to reader preferences and staying true to the essence of the original work. This undertaking involves a delicate interplay of artistic interpretation and faithfulness to the source text. In navigating these challenges, the translators may need to make conscious decisions about certain elements of the characters' portrayal, aiming to present a more empowering and relatable depiction of female protagonists. By doing so, they contribute to shaping an appealing image of the female lead that modern readers can connect with and appreciate.

5. Conclusion

LCH is not only filled with thrilling and dramatic storylines but also features a diverse array of characters with distinct personalities. Whether it's the grandeur of national justice or the complexities

of love and relationships, the novel offers a feast for readers' enjoyment. In the eyes of the target readers, Lotus Huang is not only portrayed as a beautiful and talented ideal female protagonist, but also as a multi-dimensional character with shades of mischievous, cunning, and sometimes even a hint of wickedness. Three female translators, in order to fully showcase and shape Lotus Huang, considers various aspects during the translation process such as cultural consumption and reader's need. The ultimate result is the presentation of a vivid, well-rounded, and positively empowering female martial artist for English-speaking readers.

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