

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Narrative Reconstruction Of Female Images In The Dissemination Of Liaozhai Zhiyi In Uzbekistan

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VOLUME: Special Issue 2026

PAGE: 97-99

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Abstract

This study explores cross-cultural narrative reconstruction of female images in the 2021 Uzbek Liaozhai translation via Mona Baker's theory.

KEY WORDS

Liaozhai Zhiyi (Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio); Dissemination in Uzbekistan; Female Images; Narrative Reconstruction; Cross-Cultural Translation; Symbolic Dissipation

INTRODUCTION

Multidimensional Examination of the Translation of Female Images

The cross-cultural reconstruction of female images is a complex exploration of the "narrative of humanity," sharing the underlying logic of "symbolic value ranking" and "reader cognition adaptation" while developing targeted transformation mechanisms due to their "subjective" characteristics (e.g., emotional agency, social relational networks). The over 400 female images in Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio (Liaozhai Zhiyi) carry multiple connotations, including cultural archetypes, gender metaphors, and social mirrors. As the first complete Central Asian translation, the 2017 Uzbek version adopts a "strategic innovation alongside meaning loss" approach, forming a distinct path from costume symbol translation due to gender narrative particularities between Turkic and Chinese cultures.

This study employs Mona Baker's narrative theory to construct a "source-language narrative – translator's operation – target-language narrative" model, focusing on three core questions: How did the translator ensure character acceptability via identity transformation and imagery replacement? What

hierarchical dissipation occurred in female image signifiers and cultural metaphors? How did Uzbek cultural gender cognition constrain narrative reception? This research extends costume symbol translation rules and reveals gender narrative logic in cross-cultural communication, presenting the cultural translation chain of classical Chinese literature overseas and elaborating the "gradient selection" theory. The following focuses on "external aesthetic imagery" and its cross-cultural transformation through translation examples.

Paradigm Shift of Aesthetic Imagery

The cross-cultural reconstruction of female images first manifests in adaptive transformations of external aesthetic symbols, parallel to costume symbols' "material function transformation" but with more pronounced paradigm shifts due to aesthetic differences. By adjusting the aesthetic coordinate system, translators align source-language "freehand brushwork aesthetics" with target cultural "cognitive habits," consistent with costume translation's "functional equivalence" principle.

Take the translation of the female character in Wu Xiaolian ("The Martial Provincial Graduate"): Original text describes a

woman "in her forties, gorgeously dressed, with charm and grace." The translation renders this as "Ayolning yoshi qirqlardan oshgan, yaxshi kiyingan, xushbichim qomatli, istarasi issiq ekan." The source text's "age-costume-spirit" aesthetic system undergoes structural rupture: "qirqlardan oshgan" aligns with Central Asian Islamic culture's emphasis on mature women's inner virtue; "yaxshi kiyingan" dissolves Chinese costume-class symbolism into personal taste and cleanliness; "xushbichim qomatli" reduces abstract "charm" to concrete physical description. This de-metaphorization resonates with other translations (e.g., "eyes like flowing water" to "jet-black and bright eyes"), forming a systematic transformation of "de-ethicization, de-stratification, and de-abstraction."

Narrative Enhancement of Character Functions

While aesthetic imagery paradigm shifts adapt external symbols, "narrative enhancement of character functions" deepens female images' core role in the overall narrative by focusing on dominant traits (e.g., wisdom, independence), achieving a leap from "fragmented external symbols" to "internal narrative subjects." This inherits "functional equivalence" logic and elevates character portrayal to the narrative core.

A Bao in *Strange Tales* exemplifies this. The translator adopted "strengthening functional equivalence" to highlight her wisdom and independence, concretizing dilemma-resolution details and amplifying her agency, in line with Baker's "narrative salience" principle. Unlike Qingfeng's downplayed "cleverness" due to target cultural ethical taboos, A Bao's wisdom avoided cognitive conflicts, preserving "female agency" and enabling Uzbek readers to perceive her as a "narrative driver." However, translation inevitably encounters "symbolic dissipation" when cultural symbols exceed target-language cognitive reserves, forming a dialectical coexistence with "functional enhancement."

Multidimensional Examination of Cultural Symbolic Dissipation

Cross-cultural translation of female images involves a symbiotic relationship between "functional enhancement" and "symbolic dissipation." When symbolic connotations exceed target cognitive reserves, deep meaning loss is unavoidable, reflecting cognitive differences and manifesting in simplified supernatural archetypes, dissolved gender metaphors, and faded social contexts.

In supernatural archetype simplification, the "white-fin dolphin spirit" in Bai Qiulian is rendered as "white fish," retaining only biological attributes while losing cultural and literary metaphors, aligning with Eco's (1976) symbolic hierarchy theory. For gender metaphor dissolution, E Qiushun's "shrinking like a maiden" in Yan Zhi is collapsed into "timid and cowardly," losing coming-of-age ritual connotations and gender analogy tension due to Central Asian views that "male shyness is a flaw." Sociocultural context fading is seen in the translation of "loose hair—coiled bun," omitting *The Book of Rites'* coming-of-age rituals, textile economy-related hair accessories, and gender power structures.

A Bao's image underwent "double filtering": Islamic "awrah" concepts weakened her fantastical behaviors, and the Uzbek "hardworking housewife" archetype reshaped her independence, transforming her into a figure conforming to Central Asian aesthetics, validating Toury's (1995) "cultural norms" theory. Essentially, symbolic dissipation follows three mechanisms: deconstruction of signifier hierarchies, contextual evaporation, and gender norm filtering—a strategic compromise between "cultural fidelity" and "cognitive economy" that ensures understanding fluency but loses original "cultural depth" and "narrative polyphony."

The Cultural Cognitive Mechanism of Narrative Reception

Symbol dissipation and reconstruction form a unique narrative reception path for target readers. The Uzbek translation's reception reflects cultural cognitive frameworks' dual role: direct results of dissipation and implicit bases for translator choices. A typical example is the "angel—beauty" symbolic mapping, which facilitates basic aesthetic understanding but limits Eastern freehand aesthetics experience, revealing three paradoxes in classical Chinese literature's overseas gender narrative reconstruction: balancing cultural loyalty and narrative fluency, misalignment between sign systems and cognitive frameworks, and conflict between literary aesthetics and cultural discount. Translator choices are microcosms of cultural power relations.

Notably, religious translation involves more complex cognitive differences and negotiations. Traditional Chinese religious culture (Taoist "Bagua," folk supernatural beliefs) and Uzbek Islamic culture have fundamental divergences, exceeding aesthetic and gender symbolic transformation challenges. Deep spiritual and cultural collisions require dedicated research on "cross-cultural translation of religious

phenomena."

In summary, the narrative reconstruction of female images in the Uzbek translation of *Strange Tales* reflects the collision and integration of Han and Uzbek cultures in gender, aesthetics, and religion. It provides dual insights for classical Chinese literature's "going global": practically, establish a "extract commensurable traits—predict cultural differences—adopt multi-level strategies" path; theoretically, focus on "human narratives" and "object symbols" collaborative research and breaking religious cognitive barriers. Ultimately, this promotes overseas communication from "textual translation" to "cultural dialogue."

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