

The Intercultural Study of Eileen Chang's Unique Feminine Charm in her Translation of *The Old Man and the Sea*

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Abstract: *The Old Man and the Sea* is one of the representative works of the renowned American writer Ernest Hemingway. Since its publication in 1952, it has won widespread acclaim for its unique narrative style, profound themes, and vivid character portrayal. Eileen Chang, a distinguished female writer in the history of modern Chinese literature, not only presents a more delicate and sentimental world of the story through her translation of *The Old Man and the Sea*, but also offers Chinese readers a new perspective to understand this literary classic. This paper aims to review the current research on Eileen Chang's translation of *The Old Man and the Sea*, explore its translation characteristics, cultural connotations, and interpretation of the original work.

Keywords: Translation style; Translation strategy; Intercultural communication; Feminine perspective.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* has long been celebrated as a cornerstone of modern American literature. Since its publication in 1952, the novella has garnered widespread acclaim for its distinctive narrative style, profound thematic depth, and vivid character portrayals. The story of Santiago, the resilient old fisherman, has resonated with readers across cultures, offering insights into perseverance, dignity, and the human spirit. In the realm of Chinese literature, Eileen Chang, a prominent female writer, has made a significant contribution by translating this classic work. Her version of *The Old Man and the Sea* not only captures the essence of Hemingway's original but also enriches it with a unique sensibility that appeals to Chinese readers. Chang's translation stands out for its delicate emotional nuances and cultural sensitivity, providing a fresh perspective on Hemingway's masterpiece. This paper aims to explore the distinctive characteristics of Eileen Chang's translation, examining how her approach reflects both fidelity to the original text and an innovative adaptation that bridges cultural divides. Through an analysis of her translation strategies, we will uncover how Chang's work enhances the cross-cultural understanding of *The Old Man and the Sea* and offers new dimensions for its appreciation in a global context.

2. Literature Review

Eileen Chang's translation of Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* has garnered significant attention in both translation studies and comparative literature. This section reviews the existing scholarship on Chang's translation, focusing on its stylistic features, cultural implications, and contributions to cross-cultural understanding.

2.1 Translation Style and Strategies

Chang's translation style has been widely recognized for its unique blend of faithfulness to the original text and creative adaptation. Scholars such as Li Jiguang (2021) have noted that Chang's translation retains the essence of Hemingway's sparse and powerful prose while infusing it with a delicate sensibility that resonates with Chinese readers. Her ability to capture the emotional nuances of the original work has been praised for its sensitivity and depth. For instance, Chang's use of descriptive language to portray the old man's resilience and loneliness has been highlighted as a key feature of her translation (Chang, 2012). This approach not only preserves the original's thematic integrity but also enhances its readability in Chinese contexts.

2.2 Cultural Adaptation and Interpretation

The cultural adaptation in Chang's translation is another area of scholarly interest. Researchers have pointed out

that Chang's translation goes beyond a mere linguistic conversion, engaging deeply with the cultural contexts of both the source and target texts. Chengdu University of Technology's comparative study (2020) emphasizes Chang's innovative strategies in translating culturally specific elements. For example, her translation of "terrace" as "Terrace Hotel" not only retains the original's locational reference but also evokes a vivid image in the minds of Chinese readers, thereby bridging cultural gaps (Chang, 2012). This approach exemplifies her sensitivity to cultural differences and her ability to convey these nuances effectively.

2.3 Feminine Perspective and Literary Charm

Chang's translation is also distinguished by her feminine perspective, which adds a layer of emotional depth to the narrative. Scholars have noted that her translation captures the delicate emotions of the characters, particularly the old man's relationship with nature and his inner struggles. This feminine touch is evident in her choice of language and the way she conveys the old man's resilience and perseverance. Chang's literary style, characterized by its elegance and sensitivity, has been described as a significant contribution to the translation's success (Yu, 2013). Her ability to integrate her own literary charm into the translation has enriched the narrative, making it more relatable to Chinese readers.

2.4 Comparative Analysis with Other Translations

Comparative studies have also shed light on the unique qualities of Chang's translation. For instance, Zhu Haiguan's translation (2010) is noted for its straightforwardness, while Chang's version is more nuanced and evocative. Scholars have highlighted that Chang's translation often employs more descriptive language to convey the same meaning, thereby enhancing the reader's emotional engagement. This comparative approach underscores the importance of translation style in shaping the reader's experience of the text.

2.5 Contributions to Cross-Cultural Understanding

Chang's translation has been recognized for its role in promoting cross-cultural understanding. By making Hemingway's work accessible to Chinese readers, her translation has facilitated a deeper appreciation of American literature and culture. Scholars have argued that her translation strategies, which balance fidelity with innovation, serve as a model for translators aiming to bridge cultural divides. Chang's work demonstrates how translation can be both a linguistic and a cultural endeavor, contributing to the broader dialogue between different literary traditions.

The existing literature on Eileen Chang's translation of *The Old Man and the Sea* highlights its stylistic innovation, cultural sensitivity, and emotional depth. Chang's translation has been praised for its ability to capture the essence of Hemingway's original while adapting it to the Chinese context. Her work stands as a testament to the importance of translation in cross-cultural communication and offers valuable insights for future research in translation studies and comparative literature.

3. Eileen Chang's Translation Style and Strategy

Eileen Chang's translation style is unique and charming. She is adept at combining the essence of the original text with the artistry of Chinese expression to create translations that are both faithful to the original and distinctly personal. In terms of translation strategy, she focuses on creating context, striving to convey the emotional nuances and deeper meanings of the original text. At the same time, she skillfully employs various rhetorical devices to make her translations more vivid and lifelike. During the translation process, Eileen Chang fully leverages her advantage as a writer. Her translations are not only fluent but also stylistically unique. She can accurately grasp the essence of the original text and cleverly transform it into Chinese expression, retaining the original's style while catering to the reading habits and aesthetic tastes of Chinese readers. The following points demonstrate Eileen Chang's profound understanding and exquisite skill in the art of translation.

3.1 Faithfulness to the Original

In translating *The Old Man and the Sea*, Eileen Chang fully demonstrates her translation style of faithfulness to the original. She strives to maintain the original's style and artistic conception while accurately conveying every detail and emotion of the original text. The following specific examples illustrate her faithfulness in translation:

In describing the old man's appearance and image, Eileen Chang's translation closely follows the original text. For example, in the sentence "The old man was thin and gaunt with deep wrinkles in the back of his neck" (Hemingway, 1952), she translates it as "老人瘦而憔悴，颈后有深的皱纹" (Chang, 2012). Her translation effectively captures the characteristic of the old man's deep wrinkles on his neck. Through the phrases "瘦而憔悴" and "深的皱纹," she vividly depicts the old man's aging and the marks of time. Another example is "The brown blotches of the benevolent skin cancer the sun brings from its reflection on the tropic sea were on his cheeks. The blotches ran well down the sides of his face" (Hemingway, 1952). She translates it as "面颊上生着棕色的肿起的一小块，那是热带海上反映的阳光洒出来的一种无害的瘤。" (Chang, 2012). In translating the sunspots, she uses the phrase "棕色的肿起的一小块" to vividly describe their appearance on the old man's face. Moreover, by explaining that these patches are a type of benign skin cancer caused by the reflected sunlight from the tropical sea, she conveys the cause of the sunspots while also implying that they are harmless to the old man. This faithful translation of details ensures that Eileen Chang's translation is highly consistent with the original in character portrayal.

In depicting the old man's struggle with the great fish, Eileen Chang's translation also fully captures the tense atmosphere and intense emotions of the original. When translating "The old man was not afraid of the great fish and felt a little sorry for him" (Hemingway, 1952), she writes, "老人并不怕这大鱼，他甚至有些怜悯它" (Chang, 2012). Although she does not directly translate the word "紧张," the contrast between "并不怕这大鱼" and "甚至有些怜悯它" creates a subtle nuance that allows readers to sense the old man's complex emotions. It also sets a tense and uncertain atmosphere for the subsequent struggle. This faithful translation of plot and emotions ensures that Eileen Chang's version not only maintains the original's thrilling nature but also allows readers to deeply appreciate the old man's resilience and perseverance.

From the analysis of the above sentences, it is evident that Eileen Chang fully demonstrates her faithfulness to the original in translating *The Old Man and the Sea*. Through accurate word choice and expressions that closely follow the original, her translation retains the style and artistic conception of the original while conveying its essence and emotions. This faithfulness is not only reflected in the translation of details but also in the portrayal of plot, emotions, and character traits.

3.2 Conciseness and Clarity

As is well-known, Hemingway is known for his economical use of words. Eileen Chang's translation of *The Old Man and the Sea* also retains this characteristic of the original, accurately conveying the meaning of the text while avoiding redundancy and complexity. The following specific examples illustrate the conciseness and clarity in her translation:

In expressing the old man's emotions and inner world, Eileen Chang employs concise and powerful language. For instance, in the sentence "He was too simple to wonder about defeat. He knew he had gone out too far and that the fish had been too big" (Hemingway, 1952), she translates it as "他太单纯了，不会去想什么是失败。他知道他走得太远了，鱼也太大了。" (Chang, 2012). The translation is straightforward and unadorned, directly conveying the old man's thoughts—that he did not feel discouraged by failure but recognized the facts that he had gone too far and the fish was too large. Through concise vocabulary and short sentences, she accurately conveys the old man's loneliness, resilience, and optimism. This concise expression not only makes the translation more fluent but also better highlights the old man's character traits.

In translating the old man's actions and his struggle with the fish, Eileen Chang also demonstrates a concise and clear style. In the original text, "The old man felt the line go taut from the great weight as he struck the fish one after another. He drove the harpoon down well out and held it, and then he leaned back to put all his weight on it" (Hemingway, 1952). Eileen Chang translates it as "老人觉得鱼很重，一下子把钓索拉紧了，他一次又一次地刺着它。他把鱼叉插得很深，把绳子套住，然后往后靠，用全身的重量来拉。" (Chang, 2012). Through short verbs and compact sentence structures, she vividly depicts the intense struggle between the old man and the fish. This concise and powerful expression makes the translation more compact and leaves a deep impression on readers.

In summary, in translating *The Old Man and the Sea*, Eileen Chang successfully conveys the meaning and emotions of the original through concise and clear language and concise expression. Her translation is both accurate and vivid, retaining the original's style while catering to the reading habits of Chinese readers. This

concise and clear translation style not only showcases Eileen Chang's superb translation skills but also provides a better reading experience for readers.

3.3 Attention to Cultural Differences

In translating *The Old Man and the Sea*, Eileen Chang fully demonstrates her translation style of paying attention to cultural differences. She profoundly understands and respects the cultural elements in the original work and, through skillful translation strategies, accurately conveys these elements to Chinese readers. Her translations are not only faithful to the original but also rich in cultural connotations.

For example, in the sentence "But the boy was sad and when he saw the old man he was sad too" (Hemingway, 1952), Eileen Chang translates it as "但那孩子心里难过，当他看到老人的时候，他也感到难过。" (Chang, 2012). Here, she skillfully uses the phrase "felt sad" to translate "心里难过," which not only conveys the emotional tone of the original but also adds a layer of emotional depth specific to the Chinese context. In Chinese, the word "心里" is often associated with internal emotional states, and this translation strategy effectively narrows the emotional distance between the reader and the text, allowing readers to more closely connect with the characters' inner worlds.

In another example, "He was too simple to worry about his own death" (Hemingway, 1952) is translated by Eileen Chang as "他太纯朴了，不会去担心自己的死。" (Chang, 2012). The word "simple" is translated as "纯朴," which in Chinese is often associated with a plain and unpretentious attitude towards life, unconcerned with personal gain or loss. Eileen Chang's choice of this word not only retains the original's portrayal of the old man's indifference to death but also endows the character with a spiritual realm that transcends material pursuits. This translation strategy reflects Eileen Chang's profound understanding of Chinese cultural values and provides Chinese readers with an interpretation that is more in line with their cultural background.

Thus, in translating *The Old Man and the Sea*, Eileen Chang fully demonstrates her attention to cultural differences. Through skillful translation strategies, she accurately conveys the cultural elements of the original work to Chinese readers, making her translations both faithful to the original and rich in cultural connotations. This translation style not only enhances the quality of the translation but also promotes the exchange and integration of Chinese and foreign cultures.

3.4 Innovation and Boldness

In translating *The Old Man and the Sea*, Eileen Chang not only demonstrates her faithfulness to the original but also shows her innovative and bold translation style. She does not stick to traditional translation methods but skillfully processes and recreates the original text according to the expression habits of Chinese language and the readers' acceptance, making her translation both retain the essence of the original and full of new vitality and creativity.

For example, the sentence "He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream" (Hemingway, 1952) is translated by Eileen Chang as "他是一个孤独的老人，独自在墨西哥湾流的小船上捕鱼。" (Chang, 2012). Here, she adds the description "孤独的" to "一个老人," which not only enriches the portrayal of the old man but also deepens the readers' understanding of his inner world. This added description expands the emotional layer of the original text, reflecting Eileen Chang's innovative spirit in translation and her pursuit of emotional depth. In another example, "He did not go home when the wind changed as the other fishermen did" (Hemingway, 1952) is translated by her as "当风向改变时，他不像其他渔夫那样回家。" (Chang, 2012). In this translation, she omits the word "did not" from the original and directly uses "不像其他渔夫那样" to express the old man's unique behavior. This omission and reorganization make the sentence more concise and powerful, while also highlighting the old man's persistence and independent character. This innovative sentence structure demonstrates Eileen Chang's profound insight into and flexible use of Chinese expression habits. In the sentence "The sea was very dark and the light made a wide path that cut through the water" (Hemingway, 1952), Eileen Chang translates it as "大海非常黑暗，而那道光划出了一条宽阔的水路。" (Chang, 2012). In this translation, she creatively translates "made a wide path" as "划出了一条宽阔的水路," which not only retains the original imagery but also adds a sense of dynamism and visual impact to the scene. This translation technique reflects Eileen Chang's bold innovation and artistic pursuit in language expression.

In summary, in translating *The Old Man and the Sea*, Eileen Chang successfully conveys the essence and emotions of the original through innovative and bold word choices, sentence structures, and stylistic control. Her translation not only retains the essence of the original but also injects new vitality and creativity into the text. This innovative and bold translation style reflects Eileen Chang's profound understanding of the art of translation and her exquisite skills, making an important contribution to the development of translation.

4. The Unique Feminine Charm of Eileen Chang from a Translation Perspective

From a translation perspective, Eileen Chang's feminine identity and unique translation style are the biggest differences between her and other translators. She is skilled at capturing the delicate emotions of characters and conveying them to readers through her delicate writing. For example, in her translation of *The Old Man and the Sea*, she pays special attention to the emotional connections between the old man and natural elements such as the sea and the fish. Through her words, readers can feel the old man's loneliness, resilience, and reverence for nature. Moreover, her literary language is unique, both gorgeous and desolate. She can depict the complexity of life with concise and powerful words. In the translation process, she integrates this unique literary style into her work, making the translation both faithful to the original meaning and imbued with her personal literary charm. For example, she uses techniques such as reduplication and color words to enhance the influences of the translation, allowing readers to feel her unique literary charm during the reading process. Of course, as a female writer and translator, Eileen Chang's works often carry a feminist perspective. In the translation process, she interprets and analyzes the original text from a feminist standpoint. She focuses on the conflicts and contradictions between the old man as an individual and nature and society, as well as the impact of these conflicts and contradictions on the old man's inner world. The integration of this feminist perspective enriches the connotations and depth of her translation works.

As a world-renowned classic, *The Old Man and the Sea* has attracted many translators. There are indeed significant differences in the translations of different translators, and these differences give each translation its unique charm. The following is a summary and analysis of the translation characteristics of different translators:

For the sentence "Can I offer you a beer on the Terrace and then we'll take the stuff home" (Hemingway, 1952), Mr. Yu Guangzhong's translation is: "我请你去平台上喝杯啤酒, 好不好? 喝过了, 我们再把这些东西拿回去。" (Yu, 2013). He translates "terrace" as the common noun "平台." In fact, "terrace" in the book is a proper noun, whose prototype is the La Terraza bar in the Bay of Cabañas in Havana. This bar has become famous because of *The Old Man and the Sea* and is now a local attraction, drawing countless tourists to visit (Li, 2021). However, Eileen Chang translates "terrace" as "露台酒店," which not only retains the original location information but also allows readers to associate it with a place that provides drinks and food. In fact, translating "terrace" as "露台酒店" is a translation strategy that combines literal and free translation, taking into account the cultural background and specific context. This translation method not only accurately conveys the original information but also retains the cultural and regional characteristics of the original text, enabling Chinese readers to better understand and appreciate the work *The Old Man and the Sea*.

For the sentence "He was a man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish" (Hemingway, 1952), Mr. Zhu Haiguan's translation is: "他是个独自在湾流里的一只小船上打鱼的老头儿, 他到那儿接连去了八十四天, 一条鱼也没提到。" (Zhu, 2010). This translation is relatively concise, without too many embellishments, directly expressing the old man's fishing situation and result. However, in translating "without taking a fish," he used the expression "一条鱼也没提到," which, although conveying the original meaning, is slightly awkward in the Chinese context. Eileen Chang, on the other hand, translates it as "他是一个老头子, 一个人划着一只小船在墨西哥湾大海流打鱼, 而他已经有八十四天没有捕到一条鱼了。" (Chang, 2012). Her translation is more accurate. For example, she translates "Gulf Stream" as "墨西哥湾大海流," which is more accurate and better reflects the old man's fishing situation. Moreover, "一个小老头" and "划着一支小船" also give the translation a stronger sense of imagery.

5. The Role of Translation as a Bridge in Intercultural Communication

Translation, as a bridge in intercultural communication, undertakes the important mission of conveying different cultural ideas, emotions, and values. Eileen Chang's translation of *The Old Man and the Sea* is a vivid embodiment of this mission. Her translation work not only promotes mutual understanding and respect between Chinese and

American cultures but also deepens the sharing of global cultural diversity.

The core of translation lies in understanding. In translating *The Old Man and the Sea*, Eileen Chang deeply explored Hemingway's literary style and the cultural connotations behind the work, ensuring that the translation faithfully reflects the spirit of the original. Her translation, through accurate language conversion and cultural annotations, helps Chinese readers overcome language barriers and directly experience the emotional depth and cultural characteristics of the original work, thereby promoting a deeper understanding of American culture.

Translation is not just the conversion of language but also the creation of cultural resonance. Eileen Chang's translation, through its delicate writing and sensitive capture of cultural differences, enhances the cross-cultural appeal of the work. Her translation demonstrates how she participates in cross-cultural dialogue through translation. Her translation is not just a conversion of language but also a reshaping and recreation of cultural meaning. At the same time, her translation practice proves the creative role of translators in conveying cultural values and emotional expression, injecting new vitality into the spread of the original work in different cultures and deepening the resonance among readers from different cultural backgrounds. Through her translation, Chinese readers can better understand Hemingway's literary world and also promote the exchange and dialogue between Chinese and American cultures.

Translation research encourages translators to develop intercultural competence, which includes language skills, cultural awareness, and communication strategies. Eileen Chang's translation practice is a model of intercultural competence development. Her translation is not only faithful to the original but also promotes mutual understanding and appreciation of cultures based on respect for cultural differences. Her work shows how translators can cultivate and enhance their intercultural communication skills through in-depth cultural insights and sensitive language use, enabling them to more effectively build bridges of communication between different cultures.

6. Conclusion

Eileen Chang's translation of *The Old Man and the Sea* has won widespread acclaim for its unique translation style, rich cultural connotations, and profound interpretation of the original work. Through a review of the current research, we can see that Eileen Chang fully considered the differences and integration of Chinese and Western cultures in the translation process. She conveyed the essence of the original work to Chinese readers through delicate writing and rich emotions. At the same time, her translation also provides us with a new perspective and 思路 for understanding the literary classic *The Old Man and the Sea*. In the future, we can continue to deeply explore the translation characteristics, cultural connotations, and interpretation of the original work in Eileen Chang's translation of *The Old Man and the Sea*, to further promote the in-depth development of related research.

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