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The Comparison of Female Identity Dilemmas in "Jane Eyre" and "City of Love and Desire"

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Abstract: This study selects "Jane Eyre" and "The Love in a Fallen City" as its focal texts, conducting a comparative examination of the female characters' life trajectories and identity challenges through a feminist lens. Initially, it explores Jane Eyre's personal development and her perspectives on love and marriage, while also investigating Bai Loushu's struggles and pursuit of self-fulfillment in "The Love in a Fallen City". Following this, the paper compares the feminist ideologies embedded in both works, focusing on themes such as autonomy, attitudes toward romantic relationships, and resistance to societal biases. Furthermore, it delves into how female identity crises are portrayed in each text, including efforts to attain educational rights, achieve financial independence, navigate difficulties in choosing a spouse, and manage external social pressures. In conclusion, the paper offers a comprehensive evaluation of both works from a feminist standpoint, while also suggesting potential avenues for future research and possible developments in this field.

Keywords: Feminist Criticism; Postcolonial Theory; Comparative Literature; Gender Politics; Cross-cultural Interpretation.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background and Significance

1.1.1. Research Background

"Jane Eyre" and "City of Ashes" are respectively classic literary works from China and the West, each creating representative female characters such as Jane Eyre and Bai Liushu. These works fully reveal the identity dilemmas faced by women in 19th-century Britain and 20th-century China under the patriarchal society. Charlotte Bronte, through Jane Eyre's struggles, revealed the awakening status of Victorian-era women in terms of class, gender, and economic oppression; Zhang Ailing, through Bai Liushu's various games in marriage, reflected the helpless feeling of traditional Chinese women regarding marriage as the only way out in the backdrop of war. Although these two works are in different cultural contexts, they both focus on the marginalized status of women in the family, marriage, and society, thus providing a rich textual basis for conducting comparative studies. Abbreviations and Acronyms

1.1.2. Research Significance

This study is helpful for deepening the understanding of the female themes in the two works, and it can also reveal the universal training imposed by patriarchy on female identities from a cross-cultural perspective. By comparing the differences between the two, such as the differences in Jane Eyre's independent consciousness and Bai Liushu's survival strategies, we can explore how social systems and cultural traditions shape the various resistance paths of women. At the same time, this study has certain implications for contemporary gender equality issues, highlighting the initiative and limitations demonstrated by women when breaking through identity dilemmas, and thereby opening up new interpretive dimensions for feminist literary criticism. Equations

1.2. Current Research Status at Home and Abroad

1.2.1. The Current State of Research on "Jane Eyre"

Research on "Jane Eyre" conducted both domestically and internationally has already established a relatively mature theoretical framework. In foreign-related studies, feminist criticism and post-colonial perspectives have dominated. Take Sandra Gilbert *and Susan Gubar for example. In their 1979 book "The Madwoman in the Attic", they proposed the view that "the madwoman Bertha is actually an embodiment of Jane Eyre's suppressed anger"[1]. This view has become a classic theory. Additionally, Spivak, from a post-colonial perspective, criticized the situation where Bertha Mason is otherized in the novel[2]. Moreover, psychological analysis perspectives and religious moral perspectives have further expanded and enriched the dimensions of the research. As for domestic research on "Jane Eyre", it focuses more on the localized interpretation of female consciousness, such as comparing Jane Eyre with Sunjun in Lu Xun's "The Tragedy of Love" for analysis, or exploring the value of "Jane Eyre" in English teaching[3].*

1.2.2. The Current Research Status of "City of Love"

*Regarding the research on "City of Love", among all the works created by Zhang Ailing, the results are quite abundant. However, in terms of the depth of theory reached and the situation in cross-cultural comparison, there is still room for further expansion. The related research conducted abroad often focuses on modernity and female survival. For instance, Li Luowan believes that Bai Liushu is actually "a survivor in the gap of modernity" [3]. While the research conducted in China mainly focuses on several different points. There are controversies regarding feminism, such as whether Bai Liushu is a so-called "accomplice of patriarchy" or a "*realist*"; there are analyses in terms of narratology, such as the ironic language used in the work; and there are cultural studies, such as the influence of colonial culture in Shanghai and Hong Kong, etc[5]. In recent years, the film adaptations of "City of Love" have gradually become a new hotspot, such as*

the related films directed by Xu Anhua [6].

1.2.3. The Current State of Comparative Studies of the Two Works

Many comparative studies tend to focus on the differences in the patterns of female resistance. For instance, they might compare the idealism held by Jane Eyre and the pragmatism displayed by Bai Roushu, or consider the two different choices of economic independence and marriage strategies. From a methodological perspective, recent related studies have tended to combine the content of word frequency statistics and social network analysis in digital humanities with postcolonial theory and feminism, such as exploring situations like Jane Eyre's "white female subjectivity" and Bai Roushu's "colonial female predicament". However, in non-Western contexts, such as studies from the perspective of reception history and economic history on the impact on women's property rights in 19th-century Britain and 1940s China, there are still many areas that need to be filled.

1.3. Research Objectives and Contents

This study focuses on comparing and analyzing the identity dilemmas faced by female characters in "Jane Eyre" and "City of Love and Desire" within a patriarchal society. It aims to explore how these two works, with different cultural backgrounds - namely, 19th-century Britain and 20th-century Hong Kong, showcase women's pursuit of self-worth, marital freedom, and social status. The main content of the study centers on the resistance strategies adopted by the two female protagonists, Jane Eyre and Bai Liushu, in situations such as gender oppression, economic dependence, and moral constraints. It then reveals how Bronte and Zhang Ailing present the awakening of female consciousness and the compromises made through literary narration. By using methods of close reading of the text and social-historical criticism, this paper will analyze the commonalities and differences in the female predicaments found in Chinese and Western literature, such as marriage being regarded as a means of survival, and aspects of religious independence versus worldly calculation. Finally, it will demonstrate the different paths chosen by the two writers in constructing female subjectivity and their significance in literary history. Table Type Styles

1.4. Research Methods and Technical Route

This study employs methods such as close reading of texts, feminist criticism, and comparative literature, while integrating social-historical analysis. It conducts a systematic comparison of the identity dilemmas faced by women in the two texts. The technical route consists of four steps: First, using close reading to extract the core contradictions of women in marriage, economy, education, and other dimensions in "Jane Eyre" and "City of Love", such as Jane Eyre's "declaration of soul equality" and Bai Liushu's "gambling game of the city", and thereby establishing a thematic coding framework; Second, using feminist theories, such as Beauvoir's concept of "the other", to analyze the mechanism by which patriarchy suppresses the subjectivity of women; Third, introducing the method of social-historical criticism, connecting the specific contexts of 19th-century British religious ethics and 20th-century semi-colonial Chinese society, to deconstruct the cultural soil that forms these dilemmas; Fourth, through parallel comparison and influence studies, summarize and outline the differences in women's resistance strategies in Chinese and Western literature, namely the differences in spiritual independence and survival wisdom, as well as their modern significance. This research, with a cross-disciplinary perspective, integrates quantitative topic frequency statistics and qualitative discourse strategy analysis to reveal the deep interaction relationship between literary narration and social structure.

1.5. Possible Innovations and Shortcomings

The potential innovations of this study are as follows: Firstly, from a cross-cultural perspective, the predicaments faced by Chinese and Western women are juxtaposed and compared. This way, it breaks through the limitation of only conducting research on a single text, and thus can reveal the universality and cultural particularity of patriarchal oppression, just like the religiously colored independent way held by Jane Eyre and the subtext contained in Bai Liusu's "bowing strategy". Secondly, at the methodological level, feminist theory and new historicist criticism are integrated. On the one hand, the internal gender discourse of the text is analyzed, such as Jane Eyre's declaration of "equal souls" and the latent meaning contained in Bai Liusu's "bowing strategy". On the other hand, the social generation mechanism of the predicament is deconstructed by combining the ascetic ethics of the Victorian era and the civic culture of the colonial Republic of China. Thirdly, the concept of "structural compromise" is proposed, which corrects the traditional feminist interpretation of the binary opposition of "resistance/obedience", clearly pointing out that the game Bai Liusu played in marriage was actually a limited breakthrough within the framework of male power rules.

The shortcomings of this study mainly lie in the following aspects. Firstly, the research subjects selected are limited to the two female protagonists, and the scope of vision has not been expanded to cover the female images of a wider range of social strata. This to some extent limits the breadth of the research. Secondly, in terms of the theoretical framework, there is a lack of discussion on the situation of Eastern women being "otherized" in the post-colonial context. For example, the complexity shown by Bai Liusu when catering to Fan Liuyuan's Orientalist gaze has not been adequately analyzed in the research. Thirdly, the nihilistic undertone of Zhang Ailing's works may weaken the positive construction of female subjectivity. However, regarding this situation, the related research still needs to further deepen and improve the critical reflection, and the current work is still insufficient.

2. Research on the Female Destiny in "Jane Eyre" and "City of Love" from a Feminist Perspective

2.1. Analysis of Women's Fate in "Jane Eyre"

2.1.1. The Growth and Struggles of Jane Eyre

The growth experience of Jane Eyre is truly a history filled with the color of struggle and hard work by a woman. During the period at Gateshead Hall, the young Jane Eyre already demonstrated a spirit of resistance. When facing the wanton bullying of her cousin John, she did not fear at all and launched a brave counterattack, and asked: 'You don't deserve me at all.' Analyzing this plot from the perspective of feminism, it can be seen that the oppressed began to show the initial signs of awakening against patriarchy. And Jane's experience at Lowood School was even more significant in terms of social and historical significance. Under the religious

oppression imposed by Brocklehurst, Jane relied on her own hard work to study and eventually obtained a position as a teacher, thus achieving a preliminary state of economic independence. Through detailed study of the text, it can be found that Jane repeatedly emphasized 'books can show me a broader world', which fully reflects the extremely crucial role of education for women to change their own destinies in 19th-century Britain.

Jane's struggles clearly have a religious color. When she was at Thornfield Manor and faced the moral dilemma of possibly becoming Rochester's mistress, her inner monologue 'I care about myself' precisely revealed the awakening of individual consciousness. This collision between religious individualism and Victorian ascetic ethics constituted the core contradiction during Jane's growth period. Through thematic coding analysis, it can be found that many key words such as 'equality', 'dignity', and 'independence' frequently appeared in Jane's monologues, which undoubtedly confirmed her self-awareness and systematic characteristics in the struggle.

2.1.2. Jane Eyre's Views on Love and Marriage

Jane Eyre's views on love have transcended the limitations of her time. When faced with Rochester's proposal, she resolutely insisted that "I am not a plaything for others to enjoy, but someone who can have a dialogue with you on an equal footing." From a feminist perspective, this declaration can actually be regarded as a literary prelude to Beauvoir's 'Other' theory. When Jane Eyre discovered that Rochester already had a wife, she decisively chose to leave and claimed, "Law and principles are not existences without emotions." Through this action, she fully demonstrated her relatively profound understanding of the essence of marriage.

Jane's view on marriage underwent a transformation, moving from idealism to a state of realistic balance. After inheriting the inheritance, she firmly refused St. John's proposal under the guise of religion, and clearly stated, "I am not an instrument that others can use at will, but a person with an independent will." Eventually, Jane returned to the blind Rochester with her economic independence and achieved the ideal state of 'equal souls' in marriage. Through the analysis of social history, it can be found that such an outcome not only truly reflects the progressive characteristics of feminism, but also inevitably carries the compromising color typical of the Victorian .

2.2. Analysis of the Fate of Women in "Love in a Fallen City"

2.2.1. The Struggles and Strains of Bai Liushu

Bai Liushu's efforts and struggles throughout her life fully demonstrated the special predicament faced by women in a semi-colonial society. Through a detailed study of the text, it can be observed that after her divorce, the situation she was in, where 'the money was taken by her brothers for investment and ultimately failed', truly reflected the lack of property rights among women in the Republic of China era. When facing a severe survival crisis, Bai Liushu resolutely chose to treat marriage as a 'huge gamble'. And the kind of behavior she exhibited, which can be called 'structural compromise', to some extent corrected the binary opposition viewpoint held by traditional feminism.

The struggle strategies adopted by Bai Liushu presented very distinct Eastern characteristics. She meticulously designed the cheongsam with a 'dark and eerie' color tone to deliberately create a sense of mystery. Moreover, she ingeniously used the strategy of 'lowering her head' to well cater to Fan Liuyuan's inner imagination of the East. From a new historicalism perspective, it can be clearly seen that such a survival wisdom has a very close connection with the pragmatism tendency existing in the Shanghai concession culture. Through thematic coding, it can be discovered that words like 'calculating', 'compromising', and 'survival' appeared at a high frequency. This undoubtedly also well confirmed the realistic characteristics of her resistance.

2.2.2. The Self-Realization and Sacrifice of Bai Liushu

During the process of self-realization, Bai Liushu was filled with numerous contradictions. The fall of Hong Kong 'triggered' her marriage, yet after the marriage, Fan Liuyuan turned those witty remarks to other women to listen. Regarding this outcome, when interpreted from a feminist perspective, it can be found that in a society dominated by male power, even if women have obtained marital security, it is still extremely difficult for them to truly achieve equality.

The sacrifice made by Bai Liushu was of great typical significance in that era. She gave up a part of her own autonomy in exchange for economic security. Such a choice precisely reflects the common predicament faced by women in China during the transformation period of the 20th century. Analyzing from the perspective of social history, Bai Liushu's fate was closely related to the gradual disintegration of the feudal family system in the Republic of China, while the new social order had not yet been established. Through comparative research, it can be seen that, unlike the independent approach with religious overtones taken by Jane Eyre, Bai Liushu's secular survival strategy fully demonstrated the cultural differences between Eastern and Western women in their resistance paths.

2.3. Analysis of Female Destiny Comparisons

2.3.1. The Differentiation in The Construction of Marital Concepts and Subjectivity

The marital concepts of Jane Eyre and Bai Liushu clearly exhibit distinct cultural characteristics. Jane Eyre consistently adhered to the declaration of "equal souls," stating: "I am poor, humble, and not beautiful. However, when our souls cross the grave and stand before God, we are equal." From this, it can be seen that under the influence of religion, she made a demand for maintaining independence in the spiritual realm. As for Bai Liushu, the "mass-market gambling game" she experienced fully demonstrated the survival wisdom with secular characteristics. She was very clearly aware of a viewpoint, that is, "marriage is essentially long-term prostitution", so she regarded marriage as an extremely realistic choice that could help her escape the predicament faced by her original family.

By applying the "other" theory proposed by Beauvoir for analysis, it can be discovered that both female protagonists are attempting to break through the objectified positioning under the patriarchal system. Regarding Jane Eyre, she achieved the construction of subjectivity through direct confrontation, for example, she explicitly rejected Rochester's unequal proposal. While for Bai Liushu, she adopted a "submissive strategy". In the process of catering to Fan Liuyuan's imagination of Eastern women, she also secretly engaged in marital game activities. Such differences precisely demonstrate the explanatory power of the concept of "structural compromise" - you should know that Bai Liushu's resistance was actually a limited breakthrough action made under the premise of acknowledging the male rule.

2.3.2. The Mechanism of Generating Predicaments in The Social-Historical Context

When we consider the religious ethics of 19th-century Britain in conjunction with the semi-colonial social context of 20th-century China, it is possible to discover the cultural soil with profound implications that gave rise to the predicaments of women. In the Victorian era, the ascetic ethics played a shaping role in Jane Eyre's moral outlook, which made Jane's resistance have a religious redemption aspect; while in the Republic of China period, the colonial urban culture prompted Bai Luoshu to form a realistic philosophy of survival. From the perspective of social-historical criticism, Jane Eyre's resistance was based on the tradition of religious individualism, while Bai Luoshu's struggle reflected the conflict between traditional ethics and modern desires.

From the perspective of New Historicism, the economic conditions in which the two female protagonists were situated are worthy of attention. Jane Eyre achieved economic independence through the inheritance of her estate, and she consistently held the idea of 'I will continue to do the job as a governess and rely on my own ability to sustain my life'; while Bai Luoshu, because 'her own money was taken by her brothers for investment and ended up failing', had to be forced to use marriage as a means to obtain economic security. Through such a comparison, the differences in the paths taken by women to obtain autonomy under different social structures are revealed.

2.3.3. The Modern Significance of Resistance Strategies

A parallel comparative study reveals that what "Jane Eyre" represents is a spiritual-level independent resistance model. It uses education and personal unremitting efforts to break through numerous restrictions in terms of class and gender. While in "City of Ashes", Bai Liushu demonstrates a survival strategy at the level of wisdom, relying on the charm of traditional women and various calculations in marriage to strive for a living space. Such differences precisely reflect the different traditions regarding the portrayal of female characters in Chinese and Western literature.

From relevant impact studies, it can be seen that the final outcomes of the two female protagonists both exhibit certain characteristics of compromise. Take Jane Eyre for example, she eventually chose to return to her family; while Bai Liushu, her marriage was filled with a sense of desolation. Such similar endings actually implicitly indicate the stubborn nature of the patriarchal structure, and at the same time, also reveal the differences in the creative positions of the two writers. In her creative process, Bronte focused on the gradual growth of female power, while Zhang Ailing revealed the structural predicament from a detached perspective.

3. The Manifestation and Comparison of The Female Identity Dilemma in the Two Works

3.1. The Diverse Presentation of Marriage Dilemmas

Upon careful reading of the text, it can be observed that the female protagonists in both works have encountered core marital dilemmas, but their manifestations are entirely different. Jane Eyre's declaration of "equal souls" - "I am poor, humble, and not beautiful, yet when our souls cross the grave and stand before God, we are equal" - undoubtedly reflects her demand for spiritual independence under the influence of religion. She firmly rejected Rochester's unequal proposal and consistently maintained that "I am not a plaything for people to enjoy, but someone who can have a dialogue with you in an equal manner", thereby fully demonstrating her distinct rebellious consciousness. In contrast, Bai Liushu views marriage as "a long-term form of prostitution", and her survival strategy of "the city-wide gamble" is more influenced by the practical aspects. She candidly stated: "Liushu is already at this age and has divorced. So the difficulties one would encounter when remarrying can be easily imagined", and this choice under such a sense of helplessness actually reflects the survival predicament faced by women in a semi-colonial society.

By analyzing with the "Other" theory proposed by Beauvoir, it can be found that these two women are actually attempting to break free from the positioning of women as objects under the patriarchal system. Jane Eyre chooses to achieve the construction of subjectivity through direct confrontation, while Bai Liushu adopts the "lowering strategy", that is, while catering to Fan Liuyuan's imagination of Eastern women, she is also conducting a game in the dark. Such differences precisely demonstrate the interpretive power of the concept of "structural compromise" - Bai Liushu's resistance is actually a limited breakthrough action carried out under the premise of acknowledging the male rule.

3.2. Comparative Analysis of Economic and Educational Dilemmas

From the perspective of social and historical criticism, the economic conditions of the two female protagonists present a striking contrast. Jane Eyre achieved economic independence through inheriting an inheritance, and she always held the belief that "I will continue to work as a governess and rely on my own abilities to sustain my life." However, Bai Liushu, due to the situation where "her own money was used by her brothers for investment and ultimately failed," had no choice but to regard marriage as a way to obtain economic security. Such a difference precisely reflects that in different social structures, the paths followed by women to obtain autonomy are different.

On the educational level, Jane Eyre firmly held such a belief that "books enable me to see a broader and boundless world." It was precisely through this educational path that she successfully achieved a class-level advancement. In contrast, Bai Liushu frankly stated, "I haven't read much, my shoulders don't have the strength to carry things, and my hands don't have the ability to hold objects."[7] Thus, she could only rely on the skills possessed by traditional young ladies to seek a means of survival. The contrast between these two completely different situations undoubtedly vividly highlights the extremely significant gap in the access to educational resources for women in 19th-century Britain and 20th-century China.

3.3. The Cultural Roots of Social Prejudice and Resistance Strategies

By comparing and analyzing the ascetic ethics of the Victorian era and the colonial urban culture of the Republic of China, it can be seen that Jane Eyre's resistance has a religious redemption color. Through actions like forgiving her aunt, she demonstrates the influence of Christian ethics. While Bai Liushu's realistic philosophy of survival precisely reflects the conflict between traditional ethics and modern desires. From the perspective of New Historicism, the

'softness overcoming hardness' strategy adopted by Bai Liushu is closely related to the pragmatism tendency in Shanghai concession culture.

Parallel comparative studies can reveal that what "Jane Eyre" represents is a model of spiritual independence resistance, which breaks through many restrictions through education and personal unremitting efforts. While what Bai Liushu embodies is a resistance strategy related to survival wisdom. Such differences actually reflect the deep-seated differences between Chinese and Western cultural traditions, and also confirm the cultural particularity of patriarchal oppression.

4. Overall Evaluation of Two Works from a Feminist Perspective

4.1. Evaluation of "Jane Eyre"

4.1.1. The Growth Process of Jane Eyre

From a feminist perspective, Jane Eyre's growth process holds extremely significant meaning and can be regarded as a milestone. The trajectory of her growth fully demonstrates the three important stages that Victorian-era women's consciousness underwent: During her childhood at Gateshead Hall, she achieved the initial awakening of her female self-awareness by resisting the oppression imposed by her aunt and cousin; During her study journey at Lowood School, she used knowledge to enrich and arm herself, thereby achieving a transformation from passive resistance to active construction; And in the love experience she had at Thornfield, she firmly established the subjective consciousness of "equal souls" by rejecting unequal marital relationships. It should be pointed out that throughout her entire growth process, Jane Eyre always carried a color of religious redemption. This characteristic of integrating the independent spirit of women with Christian ethics precisely forms the unique charm of Bronte's feminist narrative [1].

4.1.2. The Factors Contributing to Jane Eyre's Success

Jane Eyre eventually achieved a relatively satisfactory outcome, and the underlying factors behind her success are worthy of careful exploration. From a social and historical perspective, her success was primarily due to the education she received, which endowed her with the necessary professional skills. With this ability, she was able to break free from the economic dependence on others. Additionally, the plot of inheritance was ingeniously designed, successfully breaking through the legal restrictions on women's property rights at that time. The most crucial point is that Jane Eyre transformed her religious beliefs into an internal force within herself, thereby creating a brand-new model of gender relationship known as 'spiritual equality'. However, feminist criticism has clearly pointed out that the success Jane achieved ultimately still relied on the framework of the patriarchal society. Her eventual return to the family also implies the historical limitations of female liberation in the Victorian era.

4.2. The Evaluation of "City of Love"

4.2.1. The Struggle Journey of Bai Liushu

Bai Liushu's struggle process fully demonstrates the special predicaments that traditional Chinese women faced during the modern transformation period and the wisdom they displayed. Compared to Jane Eyre, Bai Liushu did not have the kind of institutional means to break through. The resistance she carried out presented a characteristic of 'retreating to advance', that is, by conforming to the male-dominated rules on the surface, just like catering to Fan Liuyuan's imagination of the East, in fact, she was making extremely astute calculations related to survival. This kind of 'structural compromise' strategy profoundly reflects the situation in a semi-colonial society where the space available for women to fight is actually very limited. In the text, Bai Liushu's meticulous design of details such as the cheongsam, speech, etc., were all her rather special ways to strive for the initiative in an unequal environment. This also fully demonstrates Tchaïline's profound insight into the wisdom of women's survival.

4.2.2. The Degree of Female Consciousness Awakening in "The Love of a City"

The female consciousness awakening depicted in "The Love of a City" exhibits a contradictory feature. On one hand, Bai Liushu actively sought to dissolve her unhappy marriage and meticulously planned her strategy for remarriage. Such behavior truly demonstrated a rather clear sense of self-protection. On the other hand, this awakening of hers never managed to transcend the level of survival needs. It completely lacked the pursuit of spiritual equality like that of Jane Eyre. This disparity is caused not only by the different cultural backgrounds between China and the West, but also reflects Zhang Ailing's pessimistic view of women's fate. In this work, the famous assertion "The fall of Hong Kong fulfilled her" vaguely implies that women's liberation depends on historical contingency[7]. Such a viewpoint, to some extent, has played a deconstructive role in the progressive narrative of traditional feminism.

4.3. Overall Evaluation of The Feminist Perspectives in the Two Works

4.3.1. The Richness of Female Character Portrayal

In terms of the portrayal of female characters, both of these works have presented their own unique characteristics. Regarding the work "Jane Eyre", it uses the linear development of the protagonist's growth narrative to create an idealized female character with a religious sense of nobility. On the other hand, "City of Love and Desire" presents a more complex and diverse picture of female existence through the comparison of Bai Liushu and many other female characters, such as Mrs. Xu and the Fourth Aunt. When comparing the two, it is obvious that Zhang Ailing has a more realistic texture in the portrayal of female characters, while Bronte's creation more prominently showcases the color of idealism. These two completely different creative tendencies have together enriched and filled out the female character spectrum in world literature.

4.3.2. The Depth of Feminist Thought

In terms of the extent to which feminist thought has been developed, both works have their own breakthroughs and limitations. The novel "Jane Eyre" first proposed the progressive concept of "equal souls", but when it came to discussions on issues such as economic independence and institutional change, its handling method was relatively simplistic. While "City of Love" did not explicitly advocate feminist theories, it used a cold revelation of the essence of marriage transactions to touch upon the structural contradictions of the patriarchal system to a certain extent. From a contemporary perspective, Bronte's contribution lies in successfully constructing a discourse framework concerning the female subjectivity. Zhang Ailing's value lies in deconstructing the romantic imagination carried by

traditional female narratives. The complementary thinking presented by these two works provides an extremely important reference standard for feminist literary criticism.

5. Conclusion and Prospects

5.1. Summary of Research Findings

This study conducted a review of the current research status of "Jane Eyre" and "City of Love" both domestically and internationally. From this review, it was observed that the research approaches presented by these two works under relevant theoretical frameworks such as feminism, post-colonialism, and narratology are indeed different [1,2]. Regarding the work "Jane Eyre", its related research has already established a relatively mature theoretical system. Abroad, it mainly focuses on feminist criticism, such as the "mad woman" theory proposed by Gilbert and Gubar, and post-colonial perspectives, like the criticism made by Spivak, etc[1]. ; while in China, it is more inclined towards the localized interpretation of female consciousness and its application in teaching [3]. In contrast, the research on "City of Love" has, despite having achieved considerable results within the spectrum of Zhang Ailing's creative works, still has room for further enhancement in terms of theoretical depth. In recent years, the film adaptations and cultural studies of this work have become new hotspots.

The comparative study of these two works often focuses on exploring the differences in the patterns of female resistance. For instance, Jane Eyre embodies idealism, while Bai Liushu demonstrates pragmatism, creating a stark contrast. Moreover, in certain situations, they have different choices regarding economic independence and the selection of marriage strategies. However, the existing related studies currently have certain limitations. For example, during the research process, there is a lack of analysis from perspectives such as non-Western reception history and economic history. Overall, these two works have considerable comparative value in terms of the strategies adopted by women for survival, the social and historical environment they are in, and cross-cultural interpretation, laying an extremely important foundation for further research.

5.2. Research Deficiencies

Although this study conducted a relatively systematic review of the current research status of "Jane Eyre" and "City of Love", there are still some shortcomings as follows:

5.2.1. The Coverage of Literature has Certain Limitations

Some of the latest foreign research results, such as those from perspectives like digital humanities and eco-feminism, have not been fully incorporated into the analysis.

5.2.2. There are Deficiencies at the Theoretical Level:

For the two works, the discussions on the economic history and legal history backgrounds are rather weak. For instance, aspects related to the property rights of British women in the 19th century, as well as the survival conditions of Chinese women during wartime, are all like this.

5.2.3. Regarding the Limitations of Cross-Cultural Comparison:

The existing related studies mostly focus on the academic circles in Europe and America as well as the Chinese academic circle. However, for regions such as Africa and Latin America, which belong to non-Western worlds, the attention received in their related acceptance histories is relatively less.

5.2.4. There is a Situation of Relatively Single Methodology:

There is a lack of empirical research such as reader reception surveys and social network analysis for support. Some conclusions are derived based on theoretical deductions.

5.2.5. Future Research Directions and Prospects

5.3. Future Research Can Expand in the Following Directions:

1) Integrate perspectives from various disciplines such as sociology, economics, and legal history to meticulously analyze the social structure of 19th-century Britain and 1940s China, in order to explore the various impacts, it has on women's survival strategies.

2) Conduct research on globalization and reception history: Examine the translation, adaptation, and acceptance of "Jane Eyre" and "City of Love" in non-Western contexts, such as Southeast Asia and Africa, and explore the differences in interpretations arising from different cultural backgrounds.

3) Regarding the application of emerging theories, introduce ecological feminism and post-humanism, etc., to re-examine the content related to nature, body, and gender politics in the two works.

4) In terms of digital humanities methods, use techniques such as word frequency statistics and social network analysis to quantify and compare the narrative style, character relationships, and emotional expression of the two works [8].

5) Regarding research on film and cross-media, focus on exploring how a series of adapted works such as films, dramas, and comics reconfigure the gender and power narratives in the classic text.

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