

# Imaging and Inventing Self: Constructing Heroines Through Translation in Late Qing China

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**Abstract:** A fad for female heroism emerged in the late Qing China as women were urgently mobilized to undertake the mission of ‘strengthening the nation and preserving the race.’ However, women reaching the modern standards of heroines were almost absent in China. Western heroines were then introduced into China as exemplars for Chinese women to emulate. The story of Madame Roland, the most prestigious Western heroine at that time, was appropriated to the political ends. The male-coded virtues of her were highlighted in conformity to the standards of heroines in late Qing China: hero-worship, patriotism, political maternity and beauty. An ideal heroine was thus created through translation. As a prototype of heroine, she inspired a flood of localized Chinese heroines.

**Keywords:** Heroines; Madame Roland; Translation; Late Qing China; Imaging self

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## 1. Introduction

Chinese women emancipation in the early nineteenth century is closely related to the unprecedented national crisis of China in the late Qing Dynasty. Confronted with the threat of national genocide posed by imperialistic aggression and domestic unrest, Chinese intellectuals had to mobilize people, including women to preserve and rejuvenate the nation. The physical weakness and overall lack of education disqualified Chinese women from public life for almost two thousand years. They were educated to keep their place in boudoir, helping their husbands, and instructing their children. However, the fear of national genocide and racial extinction made the male elites in late Qing China realize how ridiculous it was to deny women the right of fully participating in society, as illustrated by the following quote:

*As women account for half of the people, depriving them of power means diminishing half of the nation’s power. The remaining half of the people, the men, are weak and heavily-loaded with families. Expecting them alone to protect and preserve the nation is merely talking idiotic nonsense*<sup>[1]</sup>.

The late Qing radicals were not content to emancipate women and endow them with power. They went further to forge female heroism, expecting these new heroines to fully engage in strengthening the nation and preserving the race, a mission long regarded to be undertaken by men. They acclaimed heroines even at the expense of degrading men:

*The national spirit is to be lifted by the delicate hands of the heroines. Their valor and grace overshadow their male counterparts*<sup>[2]</sup>.

Despite the desperate appeal for heroines, the notion and image of heroines required re-defining and re-constructing as heroines were rare in late Qing China. The reformers thus ascribed several traits to heroines, and interestingly, the primary one is manhood. As discussed, heroines in late Qing China were expected to strengthen the nation and preserve the race. They were supposed to be featured with masculinity, such as strength, courage, and resoluteness. Jin Tianhe (1874–1947), a passionate advocate of female emancipation delineated eight traits of heroines, among which manhood was reiterated. For example, an ideal heroine was supposed to be: (1) active in mind and featured with manhood; (2) a pioneer resolute to transform the society; (3) strong and well-built to breed healthy offspring; and (4) an iron-willed, radical revolutionist <sup>[3]</sup>.

Another trait ascribed to heroines was patriotism. Ding Zuyin (1871–1930) (also known as Ding Chuwo), an advocate of female reformation as well as an editor of a well-known magazine, *Nüzi shijie* (*Women's World*), traced the root of Chinese women's weakness, and identified the following causes: Chinese women "do not love their own kind," they "are not warrior-like," and they "are not soldierly" <sup>[4]</sup>. Loving their own kind was specified as patriotism. According to Ding Zuyin, patriotism, warrior-likeness, and soldier-likeness were believed to exist in the Western countries but absent in China. He even attributed the national crisis to the lack of these female traits:

*They (these three positive traits) are nurtured daily in the Western countries, but are damaged daily in our country. Then, how could our nation not decline? How could our race not degenerate?* <sup>[5]</sup>.

Even ancient Chinese heroines like Hua Mulan (a legendary figure in the Northern and Southern Dynasties [420–589]; in order to spare her old father from the suffering of serving in the army, Mulan disguised herself as a man and fought bravely, winning great honor) and Liang Hongyu (a legendary figure; the wife of a general in Song Dynasty [960–1279]; when her troop was about to be defeated, she sounded the drum to boost the morale of the army) were accused of lacking patriotism. For example, Hua Mulan was driven by filial piety to her father rather than her love for the nation. Her great bravery resulted from her personal concern instead of patriotism <sup>[6]</sup>. In sharp contrast, Joan of Arc (1412–1431), the French religious visionary and patriot, was sincerely admired as a true heroine in late Qing China for she ushered French people to repulse the British Duke of Bedford during the Hundred Year's War (1336–1453).

Finally, and also ironically, the heroines were expected to be featured with distinct femininity. Liang Qichao (1873–1923), an enthusiastic reformer, asserted that gender equality does not mean that women can do what men can do. He attributed modesty, gentleness, tenacity, and patience as the endowments of women, while boldness, strength, and grasp of general principle as the intrinsic traits of men <sup>[7]</sup>. An obvious embodiment of the gender label on heroine prevalent in late Qing is the "mother of citizens."

These positive female traits, as discussed, are almost absent in late Qing China. The male elites therefore introduced the Western heroines as the resources for Chinese new women to emulate. Through translation, Western heroines flooded into China. Madame Roland was undoubtedly the most prestigious and influential one among them as she was fully exploited in the imagining and constructing of Chinese heroines <sup>[8]</sup>. Her popularity was mainly due to Liang Qichao's *Biography of Madame Roland* and the *Foremost Heroine of Modern Times* (*Jinshi diyi nüjie Luolan furen zhuan, Biography of Madame Roland* hereafter). This essay focuses on the following two questions:

- (1) How the above-mentioned heroine traits, namely manhood, patriotism, and femininity were embodied in Madame Roland?
- (2) Based on Madame Roland, what images of Chinese heroines were constructed?

## 2. Liang Qichao's view on historiography

Madame Roland (1754–1793) is the wife of Jean-Marie Roland, the leader of the Girondist Party in the French Revolution (1789–1799). Being moderate, while opposing the revolutionary terror, the Girondists were purged by the radical followers of Maximilien Robespierre. Rather than fleeing to Paris like her fellow Girondist members, including her husband, Madame Roland bravely awaited her death. She was guillotined in November 1793 on the charge of being a royalist. She was among the first Western heroines introduced in Japan, appearing in Shirose's *Biographies of Western Women (Taisei retsujoden)*, published in 1876. *Biographies of Western Women* is believed to be the first Japanese work to introduce the achievements of Western heroines<sup>[9]</sup>. The biography was then edited by Tokutomi Roka under the title of *Flower of the French Revolution*. What made Madame Roland a household name in China is Liang Qichao's (1873–1929) *Biography of Madame Roland*, which was published in a journal edited by Liang himself in Yokohama, *Xinmin Congbao (New People's Miscellany)*. Although Liang did not explicate the source of *Biography of Madame Roland*, it is highly likely to be based on the Japanese original<sup>[10]</sup>.

A translation as it is, *Biography of Madame Roland* is by no means faithful to its original as it omits all the details of Madame Roland's household affairs, her love affairs, her suitors, friends in salon, and her life in prison<sup>[11]</sup>, while focusing on her patriotism and self-sacrifice. Such partiality in depicting historical figures, as Liang himself realized, violated a journalist's code of ethics<sup>[12]</sup>. However, it can be justified by Liang's unique view on historiography. Historiography, according to Liang, should serve the mission of strengthening the nation and preserving the race, but Chinese traditional historiography was full of plain recounting without selective narration and clung to tradition without originality. A symptom of these defects is that historiography only accumulates facts rather than embodying the ideals of historical figures<sup>[13]</sup>. Liang differs from traditional historiographers in that his historiography is to benefit citizens rather than merely recording historical figures<sup>[13]</sup>. Historiography is supposed to move and persuade people as "the persuasive power of pathos is far greater than logical reasoning"<sup>[14]</sup>. Historiography for him is a vehicle to circulate his political ideology and boost people's morale. He defined himself as a "historian-orator"<sup>[12]</sup>, who selectively narrated historical events rather than faithfully recounting them.

In fact, the partiality in representing Madame Roland is not only a political necessity, but also a narrative one, as argued by Hu Ying<sup>[8]</sup>. Liang's selective narrative of historical events endows meaning to historical events while achieving his political purposes, which may find explanations in Hayden White's (1928–2018) elaboration on the interconnection between narrative and historical analysis.

A discourse/rhetoric turn emerged in contemporary Western historical philosophy in 1970s. Hayden White was a key figure in this turn who highlighted narrative in historical study. Each narrative has two parts: a story and a discourse. The former consists of the content, actions and happenings, characters and settings, as well as the background of the story. The latter is the expression of the content<sup>[15]</sup>. Historical events are arranged into identifiable, interpretable, and meaningful discourse configuration through certain narrative strategies. In other words, historical materials do not automatically constitute a meaningful story; instead, it is the discourse mode chosen by the historiographers to sequence these materials that transforms them into a cognitively meaningful story, thus satisfying certain purposes<sup>[16]</sup>. This may be convincingly illustrated by the fact that the historical events of the French Revolution were framed into a romance or a tragedy by different historiographers. The underlying cause for these two contrasting interpretations to the French Revolution lies not in the level of the story, but in the level of discourse<sup>[17]</sup>.

Historical events are to be framed according to certain discourse mode, thereby relate to other historical events and wider historical background. The discourse mode or story type determines the meaning of the historical events and their relations to other historical events. Without any discourse mode, the accumulation of historical materials will only result in chaos. In brief, it is the discourse modes that impose "a certain formal coherence on a virtual chaos of 'events' <sup>[18]</sup>." Historical analysis and historical narration

are thus connected by White, who quoted Gay (1923–2015) to illustrate the interconnection between the two: “Historical narration without analysis is trivial, and historical analysis without narration is incomplete [22].” White even rewrote the quote in Kantian style: “Historical narration without analysis is empty, while historical analyses without narrative is blind [16].”

White went further to relate historiography with literature, contending that history writing is in essence a literary artifact. Historiographers have to employ literary skills like selection, imagination, and construction to narrate history [19]. In other words, fiction is an indisputable element of historiography. It must be pointed out that by legitimizing the literary elements of historical writing, White intends not to deny the truthfulness of historical events, but rather to distinguish real history and representation of history. He attempts to highlight the imposing force of discourse mode, or more specific, the story type on the historical events:

*Since no given set or sequence of real events is intrinsically tragic, comic, farcical, and so on, but can be constructed as such only by the imposition of the structure of a given story type on the events, it is the choice of the story type and its imposition upon the events that endow them with meaning [16].*

The story type imposed on certain historical events depends not on the historical event itself. It is chosen by the narrators according to the interpretation strategies, ethics, and aesthetic taste of the expected readers. In order to illustrate the imposing force of story types, White quoted Bachelard (1884–1962) in the preface of *Metahistory*, “One can study only what one has first dreamed about [19].”

The story type of “heroines save the nation” thrived rapidly in late Qing in line with the urgent need of “strengthening the nation and preserving the race,” and was finally established as a popular genre. Liang’s historiography writing was to appropriate the historical events of the French Revolution and Madame Roland to serve his political purposes.

### **3. Constructing a heroine: Rewriting the story of Madame Roland**

As discussed, a qualified heroine in late Qing China was expected to be featured with the following traits: manhood, patriotism, and femininity. Liang’s historiography about Madame Roland reframed the historical materials of the French Revolution and Madame Roland according to the story type of “heroines save the nation.” Therefore, Liang focused on several episodes of Madame Roland while omitting others that are irrelevant to the theme and constructed an ideal model of heroines.

In order to highlight the manhood of Madame Roland, Liang depicted “her strength of principle and resoluteness [20],” and eulogized her as follows:

*Self-disciplined, energetic and dignified, Madame Rolland is just like an outstanding man [21].*

Manhood is most distinctly embodied in Madame Roland’s affinity to heroes. The heroes whom she worshiped fervently served as her spiritual mentors, leading her toward the path of saving the nation and benefiting the citizens. The episode of Madame Roland’s reading of Plutarch’s (ca. 45–125) *Parallel Lives* (known as *Biographies of Heroes*, and in Chinese, *Yingxiong zhuan*) has been elaborated five times in *Biography of Madame Roland*.

Madame Roland was pictured as an avid reader of Plutarch since her girlhood. She could hardly take her eyes away from it, and she read it furtively even in church, which was a shock to her parents. To highlight the critical role that *Parallel Lives* played in Madame Roland’s growth into a heroine, Liang added a detailed footnote to this collection where it first appeared:

*Plutarch (ca. 45–125) was born in Rome. His “Biographies of Heroes” is a collection of 50 heroes in Greece and Rome, including armymen, politicians, and legislators. He paired a Greek hero with a Roman one, producing 25 volumes in total. Each volume has more than 10,000 words. This collection ranks first in historiographies. It is so inspiring as to magnetize heroes like Napoleon and Bismarck. Napoleon hardly left it in a single day. So is Madame Roland* <sup>[21]</sup>.

The great figures function as mirror images of Madame Roland, which established affinity between those prestigious men and herself. *Parallel Lives* appeared at different stages of Madame Roland’s life, exerting a growing impact on her. The aspiration of being a heroine budded when Madame Roland was only ten because of this book. The endeavor of the heroes moved her so greatly that she regretted not having been born in Sparta <sup>[21]</sup>, a nation where citizens took pride in enduring extreme physical torture <sup>[22]</sup>. After she married Roland and engaged in political affairs, Plutarch influenced her in developing republican ideas. *Parallel Lives* accompanied her when she was in prison. It seemed that her courage of confronting the danger was rooted in the heroes of this hagiography <sup>[8]</sup>.

The episodes of reading and imitating heroes were focused in *Biography of Madame Roland* to reveal the root causes of Madame Roland’s exceptionally strong willpower, lofty aspiration, and self-discipline. Emulating these outstanding male exemplars plays a critical role in Madame Roland’s assiduous journey in becoming a heroine. This may also be taken as an indicator of Madame Roland’s manhood because imitating her male counterparts is a necessary step in her transformation into a heroine.

The second trait of Madame Roland, as highlighted by Liang, is patriotism. As mentioned above, heroines were constructed to serve the political purpose of strengthening the nation and preserving the race in late Qing China. Patriotism is consequently prioritized as the aim of women’s education. “Patriotic thought” qualified “female citizens” who should pursue to “enrich the country and benefit the people, and make up for the deficiencies in the world <sup>[23]</sup>.”

The French Revolution caused catastrophe with its uncontrollable destructiveness, devouring Madame Roland, a launcher of the revolution. The tragic and somewhat ironic ending devalued her endeavor. Liang therefore justified her efforts with patriotism. “Madame Roland has determined to devote herself to her nation; hence, dying for it is to fulfil her aspiration <sup>[21]</sup>.” Patriotic thought is the thread of *Biography of Madame Roland*, sequencing all the relevant materials.

Liang even flied his imagination in picturing Madame Roland’s last moment when she was sent to the guillotine:

*At that moment, all the worldly thoughts vanished, leaving her heart overflowed with a pure, lofty, and indescribable feeling. Madame Roland asked for a paper and pen to write it down but was refused. What a pity!* <sup>[21]</sup>.

Such a feeling, according to Liang, is Madame Roland’s passion for her country. Patriotism not only justified Madame Roland’s sacrifice, but also qualified her as a heroine and a role model for Chinese “female citizens” to emulate.

Finally, femininity is an indispensable trait of heroines. Liang, like the majority of the male reformers of late Qing, did not sanction women’s overstepping the gender boundary in fear of social upheaval <sup>[7]</sup>. In feudal China, a woman was expected to be an instructive mother, a filial daughter, and a helpful wife rather than assuming an independent stance. Madame Roland had a daughter, but there was no description on how she raised her child, as it may be too trivial compared with the endeavor of saving the nation. Liang skillfully substituted the concept of a biological mother with a metaphorical, political mother. He highlighted the enormous impact of Madame Roland on the majority of the European revolutionary heroes, referring her

as their mother metaphorically:

*Who was Madame Roland? Freedom derived from her, and she died for freedom. Who was Madame Roland? She was the mother of Napoleon, the mother of Metternich, the mother of Mazzini, the mother of Kossuth, the mother of Bismarck, and the mother of Cavour. In short, all great men of nineteenth-century Europe could not but regard her as mother; all civilizations of nineteenth-century Europe could not but regard her as mother. Why was this so? Because the French Revolution was the mother of nineteenth-century Europe, and Madame Roland was the mother of the French Revolution* <sup>[21]</sup>.

Such a metaphor highlighted Madame Roland's influence and femininity. It conforms to another aim of women education: to foster "mother of the citizens." Moreover, it aligns with Liang's aspiration of rejuvenating Chinese culture and improving Chinese people's character by introducing Western culture. The twentieth century, predicted by Liang, would be "an age in which Eastern and Western civilizations would marry," thus "Western beauties would be able to breed ideal babies for us to rejuvenate our race <sup>[24]</sup>."

Another trait demonstrating the femininity of heroines is the submissiveness. Liang depicted Madame Roland as a helpmate to her husband. A minister of the interior as her husband Jean Marie Roland was, it was Madame Roland who petitioned the French government for the reform; thus, she was labelled as the "shadow leader" of the Girondist Party <sup>[8]</sup>.

Although she played such a critical role, Madame Roland did this in the limelight, fearing that she might overshadow her husband. She made a great effort in restraining herself from publicly projecting opinions. This conforms to the standard of a submissive wife. Liang illustrated the submissiveness of Madame Roland with her own account:

*I am fully aware of my duty as a woman. Every day I participated in the meetings, but never allowed myself to air my opinion. Instead, I bore my comrades' words and deeds in my mind, never neglecting any details. Even when I had the impulse to speak, I hold back my tongue tightly* <sup>[21]</sup>.

The image of a submissive wife, however, did not conform to some recounts of Madame Roland. She had been accused of abusing male power, and worse still, corrupting the body politic by the female body <sup>[8]</sup>. She was even compared to the notoriously despised woman, Marie-Antoinette. Such inaccuracy, as argued by Hu Ying, was a necessity to create a heroine model for Chinese women to imitate <sup>[8]</sup>. It may also result from the male reformers' defense of the traditional gender order.

Other female features of Madame Roland like benevolence and tenderness are also highlighted. On their way to the execution ground, a male prisoner who shared the same prison van with Madame Roland was so scared that he could not stop trembling. According to customs, female prisoners were executed before male prisoners to spare the women the terror of the bloody scene. However, Madame Roland pledged to be executed after the male prisoner to lessen the plight of the poor man. Such tenderness may remind readers that despite her outstanding courage, she is after all, a soft-hearted woman.

Her female feature is also embodied in her beauty. Liang flied his imagination in depicting the matchless beauty of Madame Roland:

*Madame Roland was in pure white when she was in the court. Her golden, lustrous hair flows like wave on her shoulder with her green eyes glinting. At the first glance, she looks like an incomparable young beauty* <sup>[21]</sup>.

Beauty, in fact, had nothing to do with Madame Roland's endeavor. Liang's depiction of her as a beautiful lady may be influenced by a popular literary genre, "talented scholar and beautiful ladies" ("caizi jiaren"). More importantly, it may result from his male gaze in observing women. Women, heroines, or ordinary housewives are constantly the objects of man's observation. The popularity of Madame Roland bred a little weird aesthetic taste: the fever for "crimson blood," as illustrated by the lines of the poem:

*I admire heroes but beauties, I love more; beauties are more enchanting in blood* <sup>[25]</sup>.

In conformity to the story type of "heroines save the nation," Liang created a prototypical heroine, which is urgently needed in late Qing China, through his narrative translation. Madame Roland's manhood was embodied through her affinity to heroes. Her patriotism is the thread of the story, around which all historical materials spin and are endowed with meaning. Her femininity was highlighted by the image of a metaphorical, political mother, and a helpful but submissive wife. Madame Roland was thereby canonized and replicated in numerous literary works in late Qing China.

#### **4. The derivatives of Madame Roland in late Qing China**

Madame Roland, as a heroine, was unreservedly accepted by Chinese literati, inspiring them to create many heroines in various genres like novels, dramas, or storytelling in Suzhou dialect ("Tanci"). The year of 1903 was even named as "the year of Madame Roland" <sup>[26]</sup>.

A typical example of a localized Chinese heroine is Huang Xiuqiu, the female protagonist in a 1905 novel named after her <sup>[8]</sup>. Like Madame Roland, she is a "self-constituting" <sup>[27]</sup> heroine, who used to be a mediocre, feet bound, illiterate, and submissive housewife. She was instructed to serve her husband dutifully and bring up her children as the majority of women in feudal China. She had never thought of receiving education and growing into a heroine even in her wildest dream. What triggered her rebirth was a mysterious dream, where she met her mentor Madame Roland, who transmitted the notion of equality to her:

*It is long believed that women are subordinate to men. How ridiculous it is! Men and women are the same in having four limbs and five organs. They have the same need for food and clothing. They are the same in being citizens of the nation. Where are the differences?* <sup>[28]</sup>.

This mysterious dream is an apocalypse to Xiuqiu. All of a sudden, she was ambitious to achieve equality, and more importantly, to reform the society. She was inevitably mocked by her husband for overrating her ability, but she was not disheartened at all:

*Mediocre as I am now, one day I will transform our village into such a splendid and beautiful place as to astonish people around the world. It may dawn on them that our village, tiny as it is, is of great significance to the new world. At that time, people from near and far will learn the method of transformation from me. I will readily share with them, and the whole world will also be transformed into a splendid place* <sup>[28]</sup>.

As Madame Roland's Chinese student <sup>[8]</sup>, Xiuqiu is also featured with heroine traits. Her awareness of gender equality and ambition to reform the society may indicate manhood. Besides aspiration, Xiuqiu is featured with resolution for she insisted on her reformation, no matter how much trouble she encountered.

Her patriotism is also evident as her dream is to reform her hometown to benefit the people, which aligns with the aim of women's education. She inspired two nuns and instructed them to organize a

propaganda for the reformation. She then set up schools and established cooperation between the local government and people. With their efforts, their village took on a new look, fulfilling her aspiration of beautifying her hometown.

It must be pointed out that despite her great achievements, her subordination to her husband is plain. If Madame Roland is her spiritual mentor who led her toward rebirth, her husband then is undoubtedly her worldly teacher who imparted new knowledge to her, which made her qualified as a new heroine. When she was framed and put into jail, it was her husband who bailed her out. Moreover, some of Xiuqiu's revolutionary advocacy was too radical to be practical; it was again her husband who mediated these new ideas with the surrounding people. Her husband, who is open-minded, knowledgeable, and full of wit, is the "necessary authority"<sup>[29]</sup> who lends her authority. The husband of the heroine may reflect the male radicals' intention of forbidding heroines from transgressing the gender boundary.

Xiuqiu also mirrored the male creators' desire to localize heroine, which is illustrated at the end of the narrative. Xiuqiu, after accomplishing so much, dreamed of Madame Roland again but strangely enough, her spiritual mentor disappeared before Xiuqiu could talk to her. Xiuqiu is now a well accomplished heroine, rather than a single-minded, mediocre housewife. She was confident enough to serve as a role model for her female compatriots:

*Indeed, I am now on stage. All the other roles are also ready. I will put forth a good performance and ask Madame Roland to come and watch it*<sup>[28]</sup>.

The growth of Xiuqiu is symbolic as it demonstrates that Chinese women are fully capable of undertaking the mission of strengthening the nation and preserving the race. Inspiring as the story is, its characterization of Xiuqiu may be far from perfect. Unlike Madame Roland, who went through a tedious journey before emerging as a heroine, Xiuqiu grew into a heroine almost overnight. Such prosy plot revealed the male writers' poor imagination of women's power. It also reflects their burning desire to rejuvenate the nation with some supernatural force. The story type of "heroines save the nation" is consequently characterized as unrealistic and utilitarian. Under such a trend, heroines are mushroomed in literary works. They are quite homogeneous as they are generally featured with stunning beauty besides the characteristics they share with their male compatriots, such as bravery, determination, and patriotism. Ironically, beauty outweighs their other heroic traits in serving their patriot purpose, as illustrated by the following quote:

*A man's ability can only result in proportionally equal force. Women, however, are different, their ability, supplemented with their beauty and tricks of bewitching men, may generate tremendous power*<sup>[30]</sup>.

Heroines in such stories are usually employed in sex-traps. They are sometimes even mixed with prostitutes in brothels to ensnare men. Ironically, these heroines adhered to asceticism. They did not marry or have children, and both their bodies and souls belong to the country. *Stone of Nü Wa*<sup>[30]</sup> serves as a typical example. Chunrong Party, a revolutionary organization, set up thousands of brothels across the country and recruited beautiful, patriotic women to ensnare men. These heroines, on the other hand, did not ever allow themselves to be involved in love affairs as they have vowed to devote themselves fully to the nation. Such plots may cater to the popular taste. It also reflected the male writers' poor imagination to women's power of saving the nation. A deep reason, however, may lie in the male radicals' elaborate precaution against new women's overstepping the gender boundary.



## 5. Conclusion

The fad of constructing heroines emerged in late Qing China to serve the political mission of strengthening the nation and preserving the race. Heroine traits were ascribed to them to demonstrate the male radicals' expectation of female power. Rather than unshackling Chinese women from feudal yokes, they attempted to exploit women to fulfil their political purposes, which led to a controversy in the female emancipation movement. On the one hand, they equated femininity with weakness and attributed the national crisis partly to the weakness of women. They advocated eliminating women's weakness and emulation to their outstanding male counterparts. However, they forbade women's gender transgression in fear of social chaos.

Liang Qichao, who contended that historiography is to persuade readers and benefit people, treated historical figures with partiality. He focused on some episodes of Madame Roland, while omitting the others in creating a role model of heroines, highlighting the traits of manhood, patriotism, and femininity. This image inspired numerous localized heroines, and the story type of "heroines save the nation" was established. However, due to inner controversy, this story type declined rapidly, illustrating that the male advocates' concerns to the women's movement were "more nationalist than feminist<sup>[27]</sup>."

This study may also resonate with an under-discussed theme of translation study, which is "translation is inventive"<sup>[8]</sup>. The vehicle of introducing the image of others inevitably turns into a process of self-imagining<sup>[31]</sup>, especially when a certain image is absent or urgently needed in the target culture.

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