

The Evolution of Bai Liusu's Female Subject Consciousness: Gender and Identity Construction in "Love in a Fallen City"

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Abstract

Using Simone de Beauvoir's theory of female identity in *The Second Sex* as the core perspective, combined with research methods from psychology and sociology, this paper analyzes the evolution of Bai Liusu's female subject consciousness in *Love in a Fallen City*—from her status as the "Other" under traditional patriarchal discipline to her gradual awakening and reconstruction of self amid gender power struggles and historical upheavals. This study particularly focuses on Bai Liusu's persistent focus on "self-preservation" within relationships, and how she uses marriage, a seemingly traditional vehicle, to actually confirm her sense of self-worth and existence. This process is less a pure act of "female liberation" and more an individual's attempt to construct a low-energy, sustainable emotional self-preservation system within a limited space of existence—she needs to be needed, but this need ultimately serves the confirmation of her own subjectivity.

Keywords

Love in a Fallen City, Bai Liusu, gender construction, subject consciousness

1. Introduction

The marriage depicted in Eileen Chang's *Love in a Fallen City* is often seen as one "fulfilled" by war, a narrative of a woman breaking through the cracks of patriarchy through wit and luck. However, beneath the surface "happy ending," the text contains a more complex interplay of gendered power structures and individual survival strategies. Bai Liusu's "success" is not a subversion of the traditional gender order, but a delicate performance conducted under the premise of acknowledging its rules. The sense of security, independence, and most importantly—the confirmation of her own existence—that she gains through marriage is essentially an optimal survival strategy under constrained conditions. This strategy resonates deeply with the pattern in which individuals confirm self-worth and maintain psychological stability through "being needed" in intimate relationships. Studying this process helps us understand that female subject consciousness is not an abstract, pure "awakening," but a pragmatic identity gradually constructed through strategic action within specific historical, economic, and interpersonal contexts.

Domestic research has primarily approached this topic from feminist and socio-historical critical perspectives. Chen Sihe emphasizes the "folk nature" in Chang's novels, placing Bai Liusu's struggles within

a broader social context. Yuan Shaochong focuses on Chang's "self-seeking and self-confinement," partly projecting Bai Liusu's predicament onto the author's creative psychology. Li Xianyu, from an intertextual perspective between text and classics, proposes that the dissolution of traditional romantic poeticism in *Love in a Fallen City* resonates with the spiritual condition of "losing *The Book of Songs*," providing a unique literary lens for interpreting Bai Liusu's emotional plight [6]. Liu Renfeng insightfully points out the coexistence of "construction and deconstruction" in Chang's portrayal of this romance—seemingly a fulfillment, yet filled with reservations and doubts [8]. These studies largely position Bai Liusu as a "rebel" or "seeker." Furthermore, Li Cong, from a communication perspective, notes that Bai Liusu and Fan Liuyuan's relationship always harbors a deep communicative gap, which precisely becomes the core arena for their power struggles [4]. Yuan Mei focuses on the tragic core of the work, arguing that Bai Liusu's marriage is essentially a loveless compromise, a helpless choice under the pressures of the era [12]. Wei Hongmei, through textual detail analysis, suggests their love is like "a shadow imprinted on a wall," illusory and lacking substance [10]. Yang Xueye, from the perspective of the survival genealogy of Republican-era urban women, confirms that Bai Liusu's style of dependent breakthrough is a typical choice for women of that specific era [11]. These studies provide important references for the multifaceted analysis in this paper.

In international research, de Beauvoir's theory of the "Other" is widely used to analyze female characters in modern Chinese literature, effectively helping us understand Bai Liusu's initial marginalized and silenced state within the family. Li M., from the perspective of urban space and female agency, elucidates the construction paths of female subjectivity in Eileen Chang's works, providing important theoretical reference from outside China for this analysis [5]. However, this paper attempts to transcend the pure binary framework of resistance versus oppression, further exploring how Bai Liusu leverages existing gender rules—such as the marriage system and common male expectations of ideal femininity—to construct a relatively stable and subjective living space for herself. Her subject consciousness gradually forms precisely under the premise of practically acknowledging the importance of dependency relationships, through autonomously choosing the manner and object of her dependency.

This paper takes the evolution of Bai Liusu's subject consciousness as the main thread, connecting her period as the "Other" in the feudal family, her period of emotional game-playing with Fan Liuyuan in Hong Kong, and the period following the upheaval caused by the war.

Methodologically, in addition to close reading and literature review, this paper introduces an analytical perspective informed by personal observations of power dynamics, emotional avoidance in interpersonal relationships, and phenomena like "how individuals with a weak sense of self-worth confirm themselves through external feedback." Based on the position that all intimate emotional interactions involve, to some degree, exchange and self-preservation, the research purpose of this paper is: through analyzing Bai Liusu's behavioral choices under the pressures of emotional games and survival, to reveal her sober cognition and rational application of the underlying "exchange-self-preservation" rule in interpersonal interactions. This aims to explore how individuals, especially women under structural constraints, can, through strategic emotional and identity practices, construct a sustainable self-preservation system and, in this process, achieve limited but tangible confirmation of subjectivity within limited realistic conditions.

2. The Era and Gender Context of Love in a Fallen City

During the Republican era, old and new ideas clashed intensely in Shanghai and Hong Kong. Traditional feudal family ethics, represented by the Bai mansion, remained stubborn, while modern urban life also offered new spaces and possibilities for individual survival and development, especially for women. Bai Liusu was situated precisely within this clash of old and new. Her family of origin was a typical microcosm of patriarchy; a divorced daughter who returned home had lost her original value, becoming a burden and a disgrace to the family. Her very existence constantly signified the family's failure and moral deficiency.

In such a living environment, women's self-worth was systematically eroded and destroyed. Women lacked independent economic capabilities, and their social identity was tightly bound to their family identity. When the family refused to accept her and pushed her to the margins, the spiritual world she relied on for survival was on the verge of collapse. For her, the only way out was to re-establish a family, relying on remarriage to gain new belonging and acceptance. This became the most primitive driving force for all her

actions. What propelled her forward was not romantic love, but profound fear of survival and an urgent thirst for self-identity.

3. The Silencing of Subjectivity in the Patriarchal Context

3.1 The Objectified Female Existence

Bai Liusu's situation in her natal home is a typical portrayal of a woman as an exchangeable object. After her former husband's death, she returned to her natal home. Once the valuables she brought were exhausted by her brother and sister-in-law, she became a "superfluous person." The cold words and neglect from her brother and sister-in-law, coupled with her mother's helplessness, constructed a system that excluded her. Her meaning for existence lay solely in whether she could, through remarriage, bring new benefits to the family or at least cleanse the former "stain." Within this family structure, Bai Liusu's existential value was simplified into a potential resource for remarriage pairing. Her significance depended mainly on whether she could restore the family's reputation or exchange for practical benefits.

This external positioning caused her individual emotions and inner desires to remain long neglected, her subjective human value weakened, and her social instrumental value continuously reinforced. Her joys and sorrows, her needs and wishes, were irrelevant. Only her exchange value mattered.

3.2 Psychological Perspective on Self-Cognition Predicament

Living under such discipline for a long time, Bai Liusu's self-cognition was inevitably vague and fragile. Her sense of self-worth was extremely dependent on external feedback—initially, the family's recognition, and after that failed, shifting towards a potential husband's acceptance. She viewed remarriage as a "path to redemption," not merely due to social pressure, but also because her cognitive framework offered no alternative. Psychologically, this is a state of inner weakness caused by prolonged oppression. It is not that she lacked self-awareness, but that her self-awareness was disciplined to exist only by attaching itself to an external object of recognition (a husband, a family).

3.3 The Essence of the "Other" from a Feminist Perspective

De Beauvoir proposed that women are often confined to immanence, trapped in repetitive life cycles centered on maintaining basic survival, while men more often engage in transcendent creative and practical activities. At this point, Bai Liusu could barely secure the basic rights to sustain immanence; the value of the domestic labor she performed at home was consistently devalued, and she could not access the transcendence representing self-realization. She became the complete Other. Her meaning for existence was merely to serve as a negative example contrasting her brother and sister-in-law, as a disposable kinship resource to meet family needs, ultimately awaiting a man to become her final destination. Her subjectivity was completely suspended, becoming an empty existence awaiting external meaning. This predicament, as explained by Li Xianyu, is the state of "losing The Book of Songs" after the poetry and warmth in traditional romantic narratives gradually dissolved in the modern context. Bai Liusu lost the cultural foundation in which women were cherished and endowed with spiritual significance in traditional romantic narratives, reduced to an insignificant appendage in a patriarchal family [6]. Lin Xiaofeng also reinterprets, from a feminist perspective, the suppressing and alienating effect of such patriarchal discipline on female subjectivity [7].

4. The Germination of Subject Consciousness in Gender Interaction

The trip to Hong Kong and meeting Fan Liuyuan marked a shift in Bai Liusu's logic of action from passive endurance to active game-playing. The essence of this relationship was a deep emotional power game centered on the logic of "self-preservation." Bai Liusu's goal was not to pursue abstract "love liberation," but to use Fan Liuyuan—a male figure possessing social and economic advantages—as a key reference system for confirming and reconstructing her self-worth. By being needed and pursued by him, she aimed to fill the deep self-identity fissures caused by her original family trauma.

This strategy aligns with the primary operational logic of the dynamic balance of power in interpersonal interactions. During the probing and maneuvering phase, she successfully constructed an image of the

“gentle and reserved” Oriental woman that matched Fan Liuyuan’s imagination, while also firmly maintaining her initiative as the “choosing party” by adhering to the bottom line of marriage, thereby effectively avoiding the emotional risks and value depreciation that deep involvement might

trigger. As Li Cong points out, communication between Bai Liusu and Fan Liuyuan was always in a state of “misalignment.” Both parties tested each other's boundaries through language while deliberately avoiding substantive emotional honesty [4]. This communication strategy was precisely the core manifestation of their power game. This interaction, lacking sincerity and poeticism, once again confirms the “loss of The Book of Songs” textual characteristic explained by Li Xianyu. The beautiful connotations of traditional love were completely dissolved in this utilitarian game of survival strategies [6].

4.1 Strategic Performance in Gender Games

The interaction between Bai Liusu and Fan Liuyuan was a tacit “emotional exchange.” She keenly discerned Fan Liuyuan's needs: a woman who retained the charm and elegance of an old-style lady, yet possessed the discretion and allure of a modern socialite, satisfying his dual imagination of both spirit and sensuality, without bringing heavy emotional burdens. For this, she meticulously managed her image and behavior. For example, the novel describes her wearing “a pale moon-white chanyi sha (cicada-wing gauze) qipao,” displaying allure while maintaining a sense of distance. This bodily display was a strategic “value presentation,” aimed at precisely responding to the male gaze. Chen Xi points out that the qipao here becomes an important symbolic tool for Bai Liusu in constructing gender identity and participating in the emotional game [2]. Fan Liuyuan, on the other hand, constructed an illusory spiritual connection through words filled with existentialist nihilism (such as discussing the destruction of civilization and meeting on ruins), attempting to elevate the relationship to a plane transcending the mundane. Liu Renfeng notes that Eileen Chang's writing of this romance is a coexistence of “construction and deconstruction” [8]. The “construction” here is precisely the strategic collusion based on their respective needs: Fan needed a poetic object to carry his sense of nihilism, and Bai Liusu needed a tangible object that could provide the social recognition and status of marriage. Wang Y., through a Cinderella archetype comparison, reveals the deep structure of gendered power and marital expectations in this relationship [9].

Bai Liusu’s firm rejection of the “mistress” identity profoundly exposes her fear of power imbalance in the relationship. In her view, being a “mistress” meant losing bargaining power and security guarantees, degenerating from an equal “game player” to a passive “appendage,” which directly violated her core principle of “self-preservation.” What she sought was not love itself, but its socially institutionalized form—marriage. The “legitimate wife” status provided by marriage could give her a stable sense of “being needed” and social standing, while allowing her to control emotional investment at a safe, superficial level. This choice deviated from the traditional female narrative of “sacrifice for love,” carrying an existentialist sense of “self-choice”: she actively chose the “narrow path” of marriage, not because she believed in the myth of love, but because under the conditions of the time, this was the path she could find that best guaranteed her existential security and value confirmation. Yuan Mei defines this choice as a “survival compromise without a foundation of love,” aptly revealing the realistic logic behind it [12].

4.2 Initial Establishment of the “Self-Preservation” Logic

The initial awakening of Bai Liusu’s self-consciousness was driven not by grand notions of women’s liberation, but by the most instinctive survival anxiety. Being cast out by her family made her painfully realize: “self-worth must attach to a stable and socially recognized relational structure.” Marriage, in the social context of the Republican era, was the most ready-made and reliable such structure. From a psychological perspective, this is an identity construction based on “prioritizing safety needs”—when foundational needs like belonging and security are severely lacking, higher-level emotional needs and the pursuit of independence become inaccessible.

All her “probing” of Fan Liuyuan was essentially a cautious assessment of her own “degree of being needed” and the other party's “willingness to invest”: Was he willing to abandon his playful posture for her? Was he willing to give her the marriage commitment she most craved? These evaluation criteria had little to do with romantic love; the core concern was the possibility and feasibility of the “self-preservation” plan. As the interaction deepened, Bai Liusu gradually saw through the nihilistic essence behind Fan Liuyuan’s

romantic rhetoric. His pursuit of “spiritual resonance” was largely a one-dimensional definition and projection onto women, as de Beauvoir criticized: men often wish for women to become mirrors reflecting their own ideals [3]. When Bai Liusu realized she might merely be a “high-end plaything” for Fan Liuyuan to dispel loneliness and project his fantasies, she did not fall into the pain of emotional injury. Instead, she became more resolute in her negotiation strategy with “marriage” as the explicit bargaining chip—since emotion itself was illusory and unreliable, then legally and socially recognized identity, along with the accompanying material security, became the only graspable reality. This cognitive shift marked a step forward in her subject consciousness from “passively awaiting salvation” to “actively utilizing rules”: men were no longer seen as absolute “saviors,” but could be incorporated into her own survival strategy as “cooperators” or “resources.” Wei Hongmei aptly captures the nature of their relationship at this point by describing it as “shadow-like companionship,” highlighting its lack of substantial emotional connection and its remaining at the level of superficial probing [10].

4.3 Strategic Breakthrough of “Immanence”

Bai Liusu’s trip to Hong Kong was not only a geographical relocation but also a strategic breakthrough of the female “immanence” dilemma discussed by de Beauvoir. She actively jumped out of the closed cage of the Bai mansion, entered the urban social arena, and participated in the game of constructing heterosexual relationships, attempting to achieve a form of “external transcendence” through personal choice and maneuvering. However, this “transcendence” was fundamentally different from the “transcendence” de Beauvoir idealistically envisioned women gaining through creative work. The purpose of Bai Liusu’s breakthrough was not to rid herself of dependence on men, but to transform “dependence” from a helpless fate into a survival strategy with active choice and calculation. She pursued not absolute economic and spiritual independence, but the maximization of her own autonomy and security within dependent relationships.

This is clearly revealed in her conversations with Fan Liuyuan. When Fan was engrossed in metaphysical spiritual dialogue, Bai Liusu remained clear-headed and clung tightly to the practical demand of “marriage,” refusing to be drawn into illusory and intangible emotional games. The “right to equal dialogue” she fought for aimed not at intellectual resonance, but at the reciprocity of interest exchange: you give me status and security, I give you companionship and aesthetic pleasure that meets your expectations. This highly pragmatic interactive logic aligns with what Chen Sihe identifies as the “folk nature” characteristic of Eileen Chang’s novels: focusing on concrete survival, not indulging in empty idealism [1]. The embryonic subject consciousness in Bai Liusu at this stage was precisely the embodiment of this folk survival wisdom in gender relations: she did not challenge the marriage institution itself, but strived to secure the most advantageous position for herself within its framework, exchanging for the most stable foundation for survival at the minimum emotional cost.

5. The Formation of Subject Consciousness in the “Upheaval of the Fallen City”

The sudden outbreak of war, contrary to appearances, did not fulfill a romantic love story. Instead, it violently tore apart the romantic pretense and meticulous calculation of the previous gender games, pulling individuals back to the most primitive level of survival. Under the extreme life-and-death circumstances, all worldly emotions and power calculations quickly dissolved. Bai Liusu’s subject consciousness completed its final construction under the logic of survival first. She no longer obsessed over the internal power struggle of the relationship, but instead constructed and consolidated a closed emotional-survival system with marriage as its legal shell and self-preservation at its core. Marriage provided her with identity, legitimacy and scarce wartime survival guarantees. The uncertainty of war dissolved the necessity for a deep emotional connection, stabilizing their relationship at the level of mutual assistance guided by practical needs. This marriage, catalyzed by war, also became the ultimate manifestation of the “loss of The Book of Songs” condition in an extreme environment, as interpreted by Li Xianyu [6].

5.1 The Impact of Extreme Circumstances on Gender Structure

War, as an extreme historical upheaval, while destroying urban material civilization, also temporarily overturned the solidified gendered power structures of peacetime.

Under the shadow of death, the sense of superiority Fan Liuyuan had built upon wealth, style, and masculine aura lost its support. He could no longer play the role of conqueror and protector, and likewise fell into a craving for companionship and solace. Bai Liusu, relying on the resilience and practical abilities honed through long-term suppression, demonstrated extremely strong survival adaptability amidst the ruins, transforming from a cared-for person into a co-responder and spiritual comforter. This transformation was essentially a temporary rebalancing of gendered power under extreme conditions. When survival became the core proposition, the heterosexual relationship simplified into mutual survival assistance, with past calculations replaced by the practical need of depending on each other for life. The tenacity of the folk world stubbornly surviving in turbulent times, as described by Chen Sihe [1], finds concrete manifestation in Bai Liusu. Her subject consciousness also matured, supported by this resilience.

5.2 The Return to the Essence of Relationship

War cruelly stripped away the romantic illusion of love, forcing the heterosexual relationship to return to its essential level. Fan Liuyuan's final decision to marry did not stem from a sudden deepening of affection, but from an urgent need for a stable connection and emotional solace in the turbulent situation. Bai Liusu became his reliance for maintaining mental stability in chaotic times, precisely satisfying Bai Liusu's internal craving for self-value confirmation through being needed. The union of their marriage was essentially a survival mutual assistance contract formed under special external pressure. Fan Liuyuan gained daily care and spiritual companionship, while Bai Liusu gained legal status, economic security, and self-value confirmation. Eileen Chang, with her cold and stern tone, deconstructed the myth of love conquering all, presenting individual choices based on survival instinct, stripped of romanticism, within the historical torrent. As Yuan Mei emphasizes, this marriage lacks any trace of love; it is merely a survival transaction where each takes what they need, deeply revealing its tragic essence [12].

5.3 Final Construction of Subject Identity

At this point, Bai Liusu's subject identity was finally established, can be summarized as a highly self-consistent self-preserver under the protection of the marriage institution. She obtained an independent family identity through marriage in legal and social terms, completely rid herself of the shackles of her natal family, achieving the limited transformation from Other to subject as described by de Beauvoir [3]. However, this subjectivity was limited and strategic, not a complete form of economic self-sufficiency and spiritual freedom, but autonomy within the relational structure. Within the marriage, she controlled the rhythm and depth of emotional investment, maintaining the relationship in a low-energy-consumption state that satisfied security and value needs without requiring high emotional costs, forming a closed system with self-preservation at its core. Marriage provided her with a continuous sense of being needed and social recognition; in return, she maintained the form of marriage with basic companionship. Both parties took what they needed, achieving stable coexistence. The closed nature of this system is the most core characteristic of Bai Liusu's subject consciousness. She is both the constructor and beneficiary of the system, yet to some extent also becomes its prisoner. She uses marriage to avoid external risks and the emotional harm that deep intimacy might bring, but in doing so also isolates herself from the possibility of richer life experiences, deeper connections, and creative growth. The maturation of her subjectivity marks the completion of a survival strategy, not the opening of a broader self. Wei Hongmei refers to this state as a "photocopy-like marriage" [10], vividly revealing its essence of lacking an emotional core and merely maintaining form. This form is also the core manifestation of the "loss of The Book of Songs" in *Love in a Fallen City* [6]. The spiritual core of traditional marriage and romance completely gives way to practical and utilitarian needs in Bai Liusu's survival strategy.

6. Modern Revelations of Bai Liusu's Subject Consciousness

In the final analysis, the evolution of Bai Liusu's female subject consciousness is a "strategic awakening" driven by the fundamental logic of "self-preservation." In the crevices of patriarchal society, relying on personal clarity, calculation, and resilience, she successfully won a place and a confirmation for her own existence. Her survival wisdom is worthy of acknowledgment. However, this process of consciousness construction also deeply exposes its historical limitations and internal dilemmas: she never managed to escape the cognitive framework that "value must be confirmed through relationships (especially marriage

relationships with men”); what she constructed is a low-energy but also low-intensity, highly stable but also highly isolated emotional self-preservation system. Eileen Chang precisely captured and presented the real predicament faced by some urban women in the transition era when the traditional gender order had not fundamentally collapsed and the modern path to female independence was still fraught with thorns, as well as the complexity of their coping strategies: a kind of “strategic survival” infused with rational calculation and tinged with helpless compromise. This dilemma of Bai Liusu is also connected to the cultural condition of “losing The Book of Songs” in the modern context, as revealed by Li Xianyu [6]. When traditional emotional and value systems collapsed, and new systems of female independence were not yet established, women could only find footholds for survival in a utilitarian reality.

6.1 The Duality of Eileen Chang’s Writing: Construction and Deconstruction

Liu Renfeng points out that Eileen Chang's treatment of the Bai-Fan romance is one of “both construction and deconstruction” [8]. This same duality runs through her portrayal of Bai Liusu’s subject consciousness. Chang “constructs” an image of a woman using her wits to fight for living space in chaotic times, affirming her practical agency. Simultaneously, she mercilessly “deconstructs” any simplistic, romanticized grand narrative about “women’s liberation” or “the victory of love.” She lets the reader see that Bai Liusu’s “victory” is concrete, limited, and comes with clear costs. Her subject consciousness is always bound together with her dependency on marriage and her cautious control of emotions; it is an “incomplete awakening.” This writing aims not to deny women’s efforts to pursue self-worth, but to discard any vague liberation slogans divorced from specific historical contexts, coldly revealing the heaviness of survival itself and the difficulty of choices. This position of refusing to offer cheap comfort and confronting life’s desolation is precisely a profound manifestation of the modernity of Eileen Chang’s literature.

6.2 Psychological Perspective on Identity Limitations

From the perspective of developmental or personality psychology, there is a clear “incompleteness of identification” in Bai Liusu’s subject consciousness. The stable source of her self-esteem and sense of self-worth remains external to herself, dependent on obtaining the “wife” status and the husband’s “need.” This external dependency pattern is rooted in the long-term value depreciation and emotional neglect she suffered in her early family of origin. Even after gaining a relatively stable position in her marriage to Fan Liuyuan, the internal cognitive pattern of “conditional self-worth” (i.e., “I am only valuable if I am needed and have status”) did not undergo fundamental change. Her awakening and maturation are more evident in transforming this unhealthy cognitive mode into a behaviorally effective strategy for maximizing self-protection in reality, rather than in innovating and healing the cognitive mode itself. This reminds us that social structural oppression can be internalized as individual psychological dilemmas, and an individual’s coping strategies, even if “successful,” may only constitute a kind of symbiosis with the internal dilemma, not a true transcendence.

6.3 Complex Revelations for Modern Female Identity Construction

Firstly, Bai Liusu’s story provides multiple and complex revelations for contemplating modern female identity construction. In environments where structural constraints still exist, female subject practice does not always manifest as direct confrontation. Clever strategic calculation and finding the maximum space for action within existing rules are also significant manifestations of agency and survival wisdom in difficult times.

Secondly, this image also triggers profound reflection on “independence within relationships,” prompting us to rethink the true meaning of “independence.” Absolute independence isolated from others may be an ideal, but under realistic conditions, the more practically meaningful “independence” question is how to maintain one’s mental boundaries, protect initiative in choice, and avoid complete dependency of self-worth on others within various connections, such as intimate relationships and social relationships.

Finally, Bai Liusu’s case also acts as a mirror, clearly reflecting the potential side effects of excessive self-preservation: emotional detachment, narrowed experiences, and stagnation of self-growth. How to seek a dynamic balance between self-protection and open experience, between security needs and growth needs, also becomes a psychological issue faced in common by modern people, regardless of gender.

Eileen Chang did not provide standard answers to these dilemmas. She merely realistically displayed the dilemmatic situations of individual survival with her cold and stern brushwork. This is precisely the key reason her works continue to resonate. She allows readers to see, beneath the grand historical narratives and gender politics, the specific and minute struggles, calculations, compromises, and persistence of individual lives, as well as the complex and authentic human brilliance of striving to maintain the warmth of one's own existence in a desolate world.

7. Conclusions

The analysis based on de Beauvoir's theory of the "Other" and sociological and psychological perspectives indicates that Bai Liusu's subject consciousness was not achieved through the traditional "oppression-resistance" path. Instead, it unfolded as a precise, strategic identity construction driven by the core motive of "self-preservation" within the specific historical crevices of the Republican era. The research results further show that she underwent an evolutionary process: from the completely objectified "Other" in the feudal family, to a "rational actor" holding initiative in gender games, and finally, catalyzed by the external force of war, constructing a closed self-preservation system through the marriage institution that featured low emotional energy consumption and high survival guarantees. Thus, a further research conclusion drawn is that Bai Liusu's confirmation of her sense of existence, although limited, was crucial. However, her entire process of emotional and identity construction was always situated within the cultural context of "losing The Book of Songs," where the poetry and warmth of traditional marriage and romance were completely dissolved by utilitarian survival strategies. This image demonstrates that the emergence of female subject consciousness is a complex outcome interwoven with rational calculation, survival compromise, and life resilience, not an abstract liberation declaration. This study breaks through the traditional dualistic interpretation mode, emphasizing the core characteristics of "strategic" and "pragmatic" within subject consciousness, and linking its behavioral logic to deep psychological and social mechanisms. This study provides valuable reference significance for future research in this direction. It primarily influences the research path of feminist literary criticism regarding the construction of modern female subjectivity. It deepens the understanding of the complexity of female characters in *Love in a Fallen City* and other works by Eileen Chang, aiding academia in more thoroughly seeing through Chang's unique revelation of modern survival predicaments. Simultaneously, by combining the "loss of the Book of Songs" textual perspective with recent feminist research outcomes, this study also offers useful theoretical reference for discussing the strategic survival of women under specific historical contexts.

Future research should focus more on in-depth exploration in the direction of cross-textual comparative research. For example, a horizontal comparison of Bai Liusu's identity construction strategies with other female characters in Eileen Chang's works (such as Wang Qiyao) could more systematically sort out the evolutionary spectrum of female subject consciousness in the author's writing. Furthermore, future research could also combine cutting-edge theories in contemporary social psychology to further analyze how urban women in modern society cope with similar identity crises and survival anxiety, thereby continuing the in-depth exploration of this theme against a broader historical background.

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