

# Reconstructing the Fictional Character of Fourteenth Daughter Xin (Xin Shisi Niang) in the English Translation of *Liaozhai Zhiyi*

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**Abstract**—*Fourteenth Daughter Xin (Xin Shisi Niang)* is one of the unusual tales in the anthology *Liaozhai Zhiyi* by Chinese novelist Pu Songling. The characterization of Fourteenth Daughter Xin, crafted to portray both the character development of the memorable female protagonist and the story's structure, contains numerous Chinese literary and cultural elements that present challenges in English translation. This study, based on a systematic examination of the original *Liaozhai Zhiyi* and its complete English version, aims to investigate how the translator reconstructs Fourteenth Daughter Xin's character image in English renderings. Through analysis of Fourteenth Daughter Xin's appellation, appearance, speech, and action, the findings reveal that the translator enhances emotional descriptions, emphasizes the elegance and beauty of Fourteenth Daughter Xin, and simplifies some action descriptions through omissions and adaptations. It can be observed that the translator tends to preserve cultural nuances closely while effectively conveying the overall characterization of Fourteenth Daughter Xin. This research aspires to serve as a reference for the English translation of literary fictional characters, facilitating the international dissemination of ancient Chinese literature.

**Index Terms**—fictional character, literary translation, Fourteenth Daughter Xin, Xin Shisi Niang, *Liaozhai Zhiyi*

## I. INTRODUCTION

As one of the ancient Chinese classics, *Liaozhai Zhiyi* 聊斋志异, authored by Chinese novelist Pu Songling 蒲松龄 (1640-1715), is widely regarded as the preeminent example of *zhiguai* 志怪 [records of the strange] (Yuan, 2009, p. 120; Li & Jiang, 2017, p. 126). *Liaozhai Zhiyi* has garnered acclaim not only within China but also among international readers. Its translation into more than 20 languages has facilitated its broad dissemination and circulation to a global audience (Fan, 2020, p. 123).

Within the anthology of *Liaozhai Zhiyi*, which comprises nearly 500 unusual narratives, the tale of *Xin Shisi Niang* 辛十四娘, or *Fourteenth Daughter Xin*, stands out for its cultural significance and widespread appeal, primarily due to the portrayal of its female protagonist. The original text of *FOURTEENTH DAUGHTER XIN* encompasses approximately 3800 Chinese characters, considerably surpassing the length of most tales in *Liaozhai Zhiyi*. This extended length provides the foundational framework for a comprehensive demonstration of its narrative artistry in terms of textual capacity (Gu, 2020, p. 78).

Fourteenth Daughter Xin, a fox spirit who transforms into a beauty adorned in red, is depicted with a notable degree of affection and emotional depth. She is particularly distinguished by her striking beauty, intellect, compassion, frugality, determination, and autonomy. The narrative of Fourteenth Daughter Xin is intellectually stimulating, emphasizing her character development, experiences, and the emergence of female self-awareness. Fourteenth Daughter Xin's self-determination, quiet perseverance, and strategic planning are central elements throughout the tale, from its inception to the final revelation of the overarching scheme (Yin, 2023, p. 7). From her initial refusal of scholar Feng's proposal to her ultimate transcendent departure, Fourteenth Daughter Xin's autonomy is consistently underscored from various perspectives (Yin, 2023, p. 7). Zhao (2016, p. 925) commended Pu Songling's artistic prowess, evident in both

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character portrayal and plot construction in the tale of *Fourteenth Daughter Xin*. Influenced by the narrative, the characterization of Fourteenth Daughter Xin is depicted as “noble, virtuous, industrious, economical, perceptive, strategically adept, and committed to self-improvement” (Gu, 2020, p. 77).

The successful characterization in the tale has led to the recognition of Fourteenth Daughter Xin in *Liaozhai Zhiyi*. However, despite being one of the numerous fox spirits with distinct personalities in *Liaozhai Zhiyi*, Fourteenth Daughter Xin has received limited scholarly attention (Zhang, 2013, p. 48). There is a scarcity of translation studies focusing exclusively on the story of *Fourteenth Daughter Xin* and its fictional characters. Translators face two primary challenges. The first is comprehending the literary and philosophical portrayal of character images in *Liaozhai Zhiyi*. Character depiction in this work carries profound meanings, revealing the inequitable social reality of ancient times and human nature. The second challenge involves the intra-lingual translation within Chinese and the inter-lingual translation between Chinese and English. *Liaozhai Zhiyi* is composed in ancient classical Chinese, necessitating initial translation into modern vernacular Chinese before rendering it into a foreign language.

This study aims to investigate the reconstruction of the character image of Fourteenth Daughter Xin in English translations. The research posits that examining characterization through translation offers valuable insights into the translator’s detailed considerations. Furthermore, this study aspires to contribute to the Chinese-English translation of literary character images in fiction, potentially facilitating the international dissemination of classical Chinese literature.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Characterization in Literary Translation

Literary translation represents a unique and subjective endeavor situated at the core of a complex network of social and cultural practices (Bush, 2001, p. 127). It can also be conceptualized as a form of action within a real-world context or as a communication process (Jones, 2011, pp. 154-155). The field of literary translation studies primarily focuses on the relationships between source and target texts, with theoretical discussions centering on two closely interrelated issues: equivalence and communicative purpose (Jones, 2011, p. 153). In this context, literary translators can be viewed as cultural mediators, facilitating communication between different cultures (Jones, 2011, p. 156).

In literary studies and fictional narratives, a character denotes an individual in a literary work possessing a distinct identity constructed through appearance, dialogue, actions, name, and thoughts (Gill, 1995, p. 127). Characterization encompasses the methods by which a character is developed (Gill, 1995, p. 127; Li, 2019, p. 56). The depiction of characters’ traits is a crucial component of literary texts, and it is essential for literary translators to comprehend and interpret during the translation process (Darta et al., 2021). If a character in the translated text deviates from the portrayal in the original text, it can be argued that the characteristics and development of that character are altered, resulting in disparate and unequal dramatic effects between the original and translated versions (Darta et al., 2021). Through the faithful representation of character traits, the translated version must maintain the same objective as the original in conveying the author’s intent to readers (Darta et al., 2021).

Hu (1997) emphasized the significance of character names in characterization. He argued that researchers must recognize the cultural influences embedded in character names within classical Chinese fiction, acknowledge the distinctive role of naming techniques in character development, and appreciate the contribution of naming artistry to the aesthetic value of fiction (Hu, 1997, p. 74).

The physical appearance of a character is seldom described in isolation; rather, it serves to convey or illustrate the character’s inner personality to readers (Gill, 1995, p. 138). Culpeper (2001, p. 221) emphasized that elements of appearance, such as stature, attire, facial expressions, and posture, play a crucial role in characterization. Facial expressions are linked to specific facial features, including the eyes, nose, cheeks, mouth, and chin (Culpeper, 2001, p. 222). Stature may provide insights into a character’s physical height and social status (Culpeper, 2001, p. 224).

Clothing represents a significant aspect of appearance in literary characterization. Readers can form visual impressions of characters based on their attire and external features (Li, 2019, p. 73). Culpeper (2001, p. 225) noted that clothing, being changeable, is more dynamic than other appearance attributes. A character’s attire may vary according to factors such as social status, age, occupation, and income. Gill (1995, pp. 138-140) identified four functions of characters’ clothing in novels: (1) Clothes can serve as an extension or expression of personality. (2) Particularly in nineteenth-century novels, clothes often indicate social status. (3) Clothing can contribute to the novel’s atmosphere. (4) Attire can play a crucial role in plot development.

Action also plays a prominent role in portraying fictional characters. The actions are intricately linked to their motives, behaviors, and personalities (Culler, 2002, p. 167). Rimmon-Kenan (2002, p. 63) distinguished between a character’s one-time actions and habitual actions, noting that habitual actions often reveal the character’s static aspects, potentially creating a comic or ironic effect. Conversely, one-time actions may reflect specific characteristics and evoke the dynamic aspect of the character, frequently playing a more pivotal role in narrative turning points than habitual actions.

Speech serves as a prevalent method of characterization in literature (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002, p. 66). It can indicate a character’s age, gender, upbringing, education, profession, and emotional state (Shcherbak, 2015, p. 25; Rodionova, 2018, p. 823). Furthermore, speech can reveal a literary personage’s personality, inner world, and psychology, as well

as distinguish characters from one another (Shcherbak, 2015, p. 25; Rodionova, 2018, p. 823). Consequently, meticulous reproduction is essential in translation (Shcherbak, 2015, p. 25). Translators should strive to convey the features of a character's speech as accurately as possible to ensure that the rendered speech characterization closely matches the original (Shcherbak, 2015, p. 25; Rodionova, 2018, p. 828). Rodionova (2018, pp. 823-824) identified four key functions of speech characterization: (1) The characterizing function, which individualizes characters and manifests their unique traits; (2) The distinctive function, which differentiates characters from one another and highlights contrasts between them; (3) The comparative function, which compares the reactions and behavior of different characters in the same scene; and (4) The psychological function, which reflects a character's mental state and cognitive processes.

#### B. *Fourteenth Daughter Xin (Xin Shisi Niang)*

The narrative of *Fourteenth Daughter Xin* depicts the journey of the beautiful Fourteenth Daughter Xin, a transformed female fox spirit, who is compelled to experience mortal life before ultimately achieving immortality through diligence and cultivation. While the majority of research on *Fourteenth Daughter Xin* has been conducted from the perspective of Chinese literature, there is a notable scarcity of translation studies focusing exclusively on the story and characters of *Fourteenth Daughter Xin*. Within the Chinese academic sphere, a limited number of scholars have examined the representation of Fourteenth Daughter Xin. These studies indicate that the portrayal of Fourteenth Daughter Xin encompasses a diverse array of elements.

Xing (2006) and Xu (2014) examined the cultural significance of the “扑满 pū mǎn [ceramic coin bank]” in the characterization of Fourteenth Daughter Xin. Zhang (2013) analyzed Xin's portrayal through the lens of traditional cultural values, particularly Confucianism and Taoism. Wang (2022) investigated the representation of female consciousness in Xin's character development. Yin (2023) explored the relationship between Xin's characterization and contemporary social issues during Pu Songling's era. Yin (2023) further suggested that Xin's unwavering resolve, the complex trials she endured, and her intense, silent struggle reflect Pu Songling's empathy and lament for women in feudal society who lacked control over their destinies.

Several studies have focused on the narrative art in the tale of Fourteenth Daughter Xin. Gu (2020) examined the influence of plot structure on character development. He emphasized the interplay between overt and covert plots, as well as the combination of third-person omniscient and limited perspectives in the narrative structure of Fourteenth Daughter Xin's tale (Gu, 2020, p. 77). The overt plots delineate scholar Feng's fate, from his encounter with Fourteenth Daughter Xin to their forced marriage, his framing by acquaintances, and ultimately his rescue by Fourteenth Daughter Xin and her maidservant (Gu, 2020, p. 77). Concurrently, the covert plots trace Fourteenth Daughter Xin's journey, encompassing her unintended marriage, her rescue of scholar Feng from imprisonment, and her eventual transformation into an immortal being (Gu, 2020, p. 77).

### III. METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes Zhu Qikai's 朱其铠 annotated version of Pu Songling's *Liaozhai Zhiyi* as its source text. The edition, titled *Quanben xinzhū Liaozhai Zhiyi [New annotated complete edition of Liaozhai Zhiyi]*, was published by People's Literature Publishing House in 1989 and reprinted in 1995. The target text for this study is the complete English translation of *Liaozhai Zhiyi*, entitled *Strange Tales from Liaozhai*, a six-volume work in progress by Sondergard from 2008 to 2014. The selection of Zhu Qikai's 1995 edition of *Liaozhai Zhiyi* as the source text is justified by Sondergard's reference to this edition in his translation (Sondergard, 2008, vol. I, p. ix). Furthermore, this study incorporates annotations and comments from scholars and experts on *Liaozhai Zhiyi*.

This study examines the characterization of Fourteenth Daughter Xin (Xin Shisi Niang) through Chinese-to-English translation, employing qualitative thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a flexible, foundational method for qualitative analysis that identifies, analyzes, and reports patterns and themes while minimally organizing and describing data in rich detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). The study's data consist of words, phrases, and clauses used to portray the character of Fourteenth Daughter Xin, both directly and indirectly. The characterization data are categorized into four themes: (1) appellation, (2) appearance, (3) speech, and (4) action. These data are extracted and analyzed to determine the preservation of the source text's original features.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. *Translating Appellation*

Xin Shisi Niang 辛十四娘 is a benevolent fox spirit residing in an abandoned Buddhist temple with her fox father and eighteen fox sisters. “辛 xīn” represents the family name, while “十四 shí sì” translates to “fourteen”, indicating her position as the fourteenth sister in the Xin Family (Wan, 2010, p. 24). “娘 niáng” is a versatile term for women, encompassing meanings such as “mother” and “young woman” or “girl”, depending on the context (Zhang & Yin, 2014, p. 1045; Wang et al., 2016, p. 292). Throughout the tale, the female protagonist is primarily referred to as “辛十四娘 xīn shí sì niáng” or simply “十四娘 shí sì niáng”. Sondergard translates these appellations as “Fourteenth Daughter Xin”

and “Fourteenth Daughter”, respectively, preserving the literal meaning. Notably, “辛 xīn” is homonymous with “心 xīn [heart]”, “十 shí” with “识 shí [know]”, and “四 sì” with “士 shì [intelligentsia]”. Zhang (1992, pp. 62-63) observed that Fourteenth Daughter Xin demonstrates a keen ability to understand individuals such as scholar Feng and gentleman Chu. Pu Songling bestows upon Fourteenth Daughter Xin a name that is both homophonic and cryptic: “辛 xīn (心 xīn [heart]) 十 shí (识 shí [know]) 四 sì (士 shì [intelligentsia]) 娘 niáng [lady]” (Zhang, 1992, pp. 62-63). The use of Fourteenth Daughter Xin’s name as the article’s title serves to allude to her character traits and encapsulate the narrative’s central theme (Zhang, 1992, pp. 62-63).

TABLE 1  
FOURTEENTH DAUGHTER XIN’S APPELLATION

Source Text	Target Text
阴念：丽者何得在禅院中？(Pu, p. 542)	Feng wondered to himself: What’s a <u>beauty</u> like that doing in this rundown temple? (Sondergard, p. 731)
阴念：若得丽人，狐亦自佳。(Pu, p. 544)	He thought to himself: As long as I can marry <u>that beauty</u> , I’ll be happy, even if she’s a fox. (Sondergard, p. 738)
生喜得佳丽偶，并不疑其异类。(Pu, p. 544)	Feng joyfully received <u>the beauty</u> and actually didn’t think it anything strange. (Sondergard, p. 738)

Furthermore, the appellation of Fourteenth Daughter Xin is associated with the Chinese character “丽 lì” (beautiful), as evidenced by phrases such as “丽者 lì zhě”, “丽人 lì rén” and “丽偶 lì ǒu”. These examples illustrate scholar Feng’s intuitive evaluation of Fourteenth Daughter Xin, which is intrinsically linked to the concept of beauty. A character’s physical surroundings, including their room, house, street, town, and human environment (family, social class), often serve as trait-connoting metonymies (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002, p. 68). The presence of a beauty like Fourteenth Daughter Xin in a desolate temple is unusual, imparting a sense of peculiarity. Nevertheless, scholar Feng concentrates on Fourteenth Daughter Xin’s beauty, disregarding her unconventional setting. Both “者 zhě” and “人 rén” encompass the meaning of “person” (Zhang & Yin, 2014, p. 1906; Wang et al., 2016, p. 524). Sondergard translates “丽者 lì zhě” and “丽人 lì rén” as “beauty”, maintaining the original meaning of the source text. However, “偶 ǒu”, which denotes mate or spouse, differs from “者 zhě” and “人 rén” (Zhang & Yin, 2014, p. 1062; Wang et al., 2016, p. 298). “丽偶 lì ǒu” can be literally translated as a beautiful mate or spouse. Sondergard’s translation of “丽偶 lì ǒu” as “beauty” omits the connotation of “mate”, resulting in a semantic shift between the source and target texts.

B. Translating Appearance

Pu Songling portrays the striking beauty of Fourteenth Daughter Xin in a fragmented manner (Xing, 2006, p. 23). Throughout the narrative, her appearance, physique, attire, footwear, earrings, and golden floral adornments are interspersed, serving as subtle plot devices to illustrate Xin’s character (Xing, 2006, p. 23). Unlike typical alluring fox spirits from remote mountainous regions, Fourteenth Daughter Xin embodies the pure qualities of a fairy (Gu, 2020, p. 76; Wang, 2022, p. 79).

TABLE 2  
FOURTEENTH DAUGHTER XIN’S APPEARANCE

Source Text	Target Text
味爽偶行，遇一少女，着红帔，容色娟好。(Pu, p. 542)	One dawn, he went out for a walk and met a young woman, <u>dressed in a short red cape, her happy, serene face quite lovely.</u> (Sondergard, p. 731)
果有红衣人，振袖倾鬟，亭亭拈带。(Pu, p. 542)	[...] <u>the young woman in red shook out her sleeves, bowed her head, and stood gracefully erect as she gently touched her robe’s belt.</u> (Sondergard, p. 734)
姬笑曰：“是非刻莲瓣为高履，实以香屑，蒙纱而步者乎？”(Pu, p. 543)	The old lady laughed and said, “Isn’t she the one <u>with the engravings of lotus petals on the bottom of her shoes,</u> who covered her face with gauze while walking?” (Sondergard, p. 736)
女子起，娉娉而立，红袖低垂。(Pu, p. 543)	The young woman got up, <u>revealing her slim beauty as she stood, her red sleeves hanging at her sides.</u> (Sondergard, pp. 736-737)
乃拔女头上金花一朵，付生收之。(Pu, p. 544)	Then she took a <u>garland of golden flowers from the girl’s head</u> and handed it to Feng, who accepted it. (Sondergard, p. 737)

Through scholar Feng’s perspective, the clothing, hairstyle, figure, and posture of Fourteenth Daughter Xin are portrayed. Xin’s attire is associated with “红 hóng [red]”. Her garments serve as an extension of her personality and an expression of her beauty. Upon scholar Feng’s initial encounter with Xin, her red clothing and countenance were particularly striking. The phrases “红帔 hóng pèi” and “容色娟好 róng sè juān hǎo” emphasize Xin’s exceptional appearance. “帔 pèi” refers to a short embroidered cape worn over a woman’s shoulders in ancient China (Yu & Sun, 2015, p. 1064; Zhao, 2016, p. 913). Sondergard translates “红帔 hóng pèi” as “a short red cape”, preserving the original meaning. In the source text, “娟好 juān hǎo” is akin to “娟秀 juān xiù”, denoting beauty, grace, and elegance (Yu & Sun, 2015, p. 1064; Zhang & Yin, 2014, p. 788; Wang et al., 2016, p. 213). In the target text, Sondergard renders “容色娟好 róng sè juān hǎo” with the addition of “happy, serene face quite lovely”, characterizing Xin’s face with a series of

favorable descriptors. It is evident that while the source text emphasizes Xin's beautiful and elegant facial features, Sondergard's translation highlights her facial expressions.

When scholar Feng encountered Fourteenth Daughter Xin at her residence, she remained attired in red. The phrase “振袖倾鬟 zhèn xiù qīng huán” describes Fourteenth Daughter Xin adjusting and shaking her sleeves, with her circular hair bun leaning forward and her head bowed (Yu & Sun, 2015, p. 1066; Zhao, 2016, p. 915). In the target text, Sondergard renders “振袖倾鬟 zhèn xiù qīng huán” as “shook out her sleeves, bowed her head”, preserving the original meaning. The phrase “亭亭拈带 tíng tíng niān dài” depicts the elegant and graceful standing posture of Fourteenth Daughter Xin as she touches her belt with her fingers (Yu & Sun, 2015, p. 1066). Sondergard's characterization portrays Fourteenth Daughter Xin as she “stood gracefully erect as she gently touched her robe's belt”. The addition of “gently” in the target text emphasizes Fourteenth Daughter Xin's elegance. In an effort to create a more compelling characterization, Sondergard accentuates Fourteenth Daughter Xin's grace and leaves evidence of the translator's reconstruction of the character image.

According to the old lady ghost's narration, the accessories of Fourteenth Daughter Xin are described. The phrases “刻莲瓣为高履 kè lián bàn wéi gāo lǚ, 实以香屑 shí yǐ xiāng xiè” refer to a specific type of high-soled embroidered shoes in ancient China (Zhao, 2016, p. 917). These shoes feature a hollow sole engraved with lotus flowers and filled with fragrant powder. As the wearer walks, lotus petal-shaped fragrant powder is left on the ground, creating the effect known as “步步生香 bù bù shēng xiāng [step by step fragrant]” (Zhao, 2016, p. 917). Lotus petals symbolize emerging from mud unstained, representing the beauty, purity, and resilience of Fourteenth Daughter Xin (Wang, 2022, p. 79). In the target text, Sondergard preserves the original meaning of “刻莲瓣为高履 kè lián bàn wéi gāo lǚ” by translating it as “with the engravings of lotus petals on the bottom of her shoes”. However, “实以香屑 shí yǐ xiāng xiè”, which denotes the fragrant powder filling, is omitted in Sondergard's translation. This omission may diminish the distinctive features of Fourteenth Daughter Xin's shoes, potentially affecting the characterization.

Upon encountering Fourteenth Daughter Xin in the residence of the elderly ghostly woman, scholar Feng observed that Xin remained attired in red. The phrase “娉婷而立 pīng pīng ér lì” denotes a “slim and graceful figure and standing posture” (Yu & Sun, 2015, p. 1071; Zhao, 2016, p. 917). In the target text, Sondergard translates this as “revealing her slim beauty as she stood”, effectively preserving the original connotation. The phrase “红袖低垂 hóng xiù dī chuí”, which initially describes the low-hanging red sleeves of Fourteenth Daughter Xin, is rendered in the target text as “her red sleeves hanging at her sides”. The addition of “at her sides” as a modifier to the verb “hanging” provides a more precise description of Xin's attire, thereby accentuating her elegance.

Furthermore, Fourteenth Daughter Xin adorns her head with a golden flower. The classifier “朵 duǒ” is employed for flowers or flower-shaped objects (Zhang & Yin, 2014, p. 316). The phrase “金花一朵 jīn huā yī duǒ” signifies a single golden flower (Yu & Sun, 2015, p. 1072). In the target text, this is translated as “a garland of golden flowers”, denoting a circular arrangement of blossoms, which illustrates the translator's reinterpretation of the character image. Consequently, the portrayal of Fourteenth Daughter Xin's headwear in the source text and Sondergard's translation offers readers distinct aesthetic experiences.

### C. Translating Speech

Another indicator of the translator's reconstruction of the character image is Fourteenth Daughter Xin's speech. In the target text, Sondergard's characterization skills are evident in his renderings of the Chinese character “曰 yuē [say]”, which relates to the female protagonist Fourteenth Daughter Xin. The English equivalent of the Chinese character “曰 yuē [say]” has multiple alternatives that convey the meaning. Sondergard employs additions or alterations to Fourteenth Daughter Xin's speech. “曰 yuē” is accompanied by a diverse range of expressions, collocating with various modifiers or utilizing other alternatives to the verb “曰 yuē”. Through these varied expressions of “曰 yuē”, Sondergard effectively portrays Fourteenth Daughter Xin's speech and enhances the appeal of her intrinsic personality and emotions.

TABLE 3  
FOURTEENTH DAUGHTER XIN'S SPEECH

Source Text	Target Text
女 <u>颯然</u> 曰：“还以告之父母。” (Pu, p. 544)	The young woman <u>blushed, and said</u> , “I have to go back and report this to my parents.” (Sondergard, p. 737)
女曰：“郡君之命，父母当不敢违。然如此草草，婢子即死，不敢奉命！” (Pu, p. 544)	“My parents wouldn't dare to disobey your ladyship,” <u>replied</u> the girl, “but I won't accept such a hasty marriage, even if it means sacrificing my life!” (Sondergard, p. 737)
女 <u>惨然</u> 曰：“公子豺狼，不可狎也！子不听吾言，将及于难！” (Pu, p. 544)	His worried wife <u>declared</u> , “Chu is such a wicked, cruel man—how could you have been friendly with him! If you don't listen to what I'm telling you, you'll suffer for it later!” (Sondergard, p. 739)
隔日，十四娘始知， <u>潜然</u> 曰：“早知今日矣！” (Pu, p. 545)	The following day, fourteenth daughter recognized what had happened, and <u>tearfully cried</u> , “Early on, I knew a day like this would come!” (Sondergard, p. 742)
居无几何，女忽谓生曰：“妾不为情缘，何处得烦恼？君被逮时，妾奔走戚眷间，并无一人代一谋者。[...]" (Pu, p. 546)	Feng hadn't been home for long when fourteenth daughter <u>suddenly told him</u> , “I haven't been terribly fortunate in my relationship with you, have I? When you were arrested, I devoted myself to planning how to save you, without anyone else stepping in to help out. [...]" (Sondergard, p. 745)

Fourteenth Daughter Xin declined scholar Feng's marriage proposals on two occasions. Initially, when scholar Feng presented himself to her father as a potential son-in-law, Fourteenth Daughter Xin resolutely refused (Yin, 2023, p. 7). Subsequently, when the old lady ghost attempted to arrange a marriage forcibly, Fourteenth Daughter Xin conveyed her wishes through her parents' directives (Yin, 2023, p. 7). In the source text, “颯然 tiǎn rán”, which encompasses feelings of shyness, shame, and embarrassment (Zhang & Yin, 2014, p. 788), modifies the verb “曰 yuē”. Notably, the original meaning of “颯然 tiǎn rán” does not emphasize facial coloration. In the target text, Sondergard translates “颯然 tiǎn rán” as “blushed”, highlighting a rosy facial hue associated with shyness, embarrassment, and shame. The phrase “颯然曰 tiǎn rán yuē” is rendered as “blushed and said”, demonstrating the translator's reconstruction of the character image. This translation may lead target readers to envision Fourteenth Daughter Xin as blushing while gently expressing her refusal.

Furthermore, when the elderly female spirit intensified her demands for marriage, Fourteenth Daughter Xin responded with a more resolute refusal, stating that she “would not accept such a precipitous union, even at the cost of her life”. In the target text, the verb “曰 yuē” is rendered as “reply”, which underscores Xin's response to the elderly female spirit. Sondergard endeavors to transform the abstract and implicit verb “曰 yuē [say]” into the more specific and explicit verb “reply”, thereby establishing Xin's character as one who firmly rejects the proposed marriage. It is worth noting that the verb “reply” more explicitly conveys the content of the speech compared to “say”.

Despite initially postponing the wedding, Fourteenth Daughter Xin ultimately succumbed to the old lady ghost's influence and married scholar Feng. Following their union, she diligently tended to his family's needs. Fourteenth Daughter Xin repeatedly cautioned scholar Feng against associating with unscrupulous individuals. In the source text, “惨然 cǎn rán”, denoting sorrowful and tragic (Zhang & Yin, 2014, p. 111), modifies the verb “曰 yuē”. The target text renders “惨然曰 cǎn rán yuē” as “declared”, emphasizing Fourteenth Daughter Xin's clear and emphatic speech. Sondergard opts for a more specific verb to convey both the modifier's and verb's meanings. The content of the utterance, pertaining to Fourteenth Daughter Xin's advice to scholar Feng, may have prompted Sondergard's alterations. These variations reveal the translator's reconstruction of the character image.

Nevertheless, circumstances proved unpredictable and beyond control. Ultimately, scholar Feng was falsely accused and imprisoned by his acquaintance Chu, causing Fourteenth Daughter Xin to fall into despair. In the source text, “潜然 shān rán”, which denotes shedding tears (Yu & Sun, 2015, p. 1080), functions as a modifier of the verb “曰 yuē”. In Sondergard's translation, “潜然曰 shān rán yuē” is rendered as “tearfully cried”, effectively preserving the original meaning of the source text. Sondergard endeavors to emphasize the sorrowful emotion of Fourteenth Daughter Xin, successfully maintaining fidelity to the original characterization.

Despite her inability to escape marriage, Fourteenth Daughter Xin remained unyielding and continued to resist in her own manner. Through rescuing her husband, she experienced the full spectrum of mortal emotions. The trials and tribulations in Xin's life reinforced her resolve to cultivate herself into an immortal (Yin, 2023, p. 8). Following her husband's rescue, she decided to disclose her experiences to him. In the target text, “忽谓生曰 hū wèi shēng yuē” is rendered as “suddenly told him”, preserving the original meaning of the source text. Sondergard opts for the alternative verb “tell” instead of “say”. “Tell” more accurately conveys Xin's intention to reveal her arduous mortal life compared to “say”. Furthermore, the content of the utterance may necessitate the translator to alter the verb, leaving traces of the translator's reconstruction of the character image. In comparison to the source text, Sondergard ensures that Xin's speech is not confined to a single verb but rather exhibits a range of variations that engage target readers.

#### D. Translating Action

The portrayal of internal and external action can unveil the concealed inner world of characters (Uspensky, 1973, p. 81). In this context, changes in characters' psychological states may be discerned through the interpretation of their action.

TABLE 4  
FOURTEENTH DAUGHTER XIN'S ACTIONS

Source Text	Target Text
忽见生来，即转身入。(Pu, p. 542)	When she noticed him suddenly approaching, she <u>turned around and went back inside</u> . (Sondergard, p. 731)
十四娘为人勤俭洒脱，日以织为事。[...] 日有赢余，辄投扑满。(Pu, p. 545)	Fourteenth daughter Xin was a <u>hardworking and thrifty</u> person, who spent her days spinning and weaving. [...] Each day's profits were tossed into the ceramic coin bank. (Sondergard, p. 741)
归家咨惋，遽遣婢子去。(Pu, p. 545)	She returned home, and following <u>consultation and sighs</u> , she hastily dispatched a maidservant on business. (Sondergard, p. 743)
每于寂所，於邑悲哀，至损眠食。(Pu, p. 546)	Each lonely day, she was so <u>sorrowful</u> that she couldn't sleep and eat. (Sondergard, p. 743)
后苍头至太华，遇十四娘，乘青骡，婢子跨 蹇以从[...] (Pu, p. 547)	Later on, when some of their servants were near the western summit of Mt. Hua, they ran across fourteenth daughter, <u>riding on a dark mule</u> , with the maidservant straddling the mule behind her [...] (Sondergard, p. 746)

Fourteenth Daughter Xin exhibited a strong aversion to marriage from the outset. Upon seeing scholar Feng from afar, she promptly turned away. Her swift actions demonstrated her resolute determination to eschew mortal life (Yin, 2023, p. 7). In the source text, “即 jí” denotes “immediately” (Yu & Sun, 2015, p. 1080). In Sondergard’s translation, “即转身入 jí zhuǎn shēn rù” is rendered as “turned around and went back inside” without emphasizing the immediacy, somewhat diminishing Xin’s rejection stance and revealing traces of the translator’s reconstruction of the character image.

Despite being unable to avoid marriage, Fourteenth Daughter Xin maintained her resolve and continued to resist in her own manner. She generated wealth through her own efforts, without depending on her fox family or resorting to magical means for personal gain (Yin, 2023, p. 7). The phrase “勤俭 qín jiǎn” is accurately translated as “hardworking and thrifty”, preserving its original meaning. In the source text, the term “洒脱 sǎ tuō”, which denotes “handling affairs efficiently and neatly” (Yu & Sun, 2015, p. 1078; Zhao, 2016, p. 921), is omitted in the target text. Sondergard’s exclusion of Fourteenth Daughter Xin’s actions somewhat diminishes the unique charm and inclination she exhibited.

Upon learning of scholar Feng’s imprisonment, Fourteenth Daughter Xin promptly devised a meticulous rescue plan and dispatched her trusted fox maidservant to execute it. In the source text, “咨惋 zī wǎn” denotes “sigh with regret” (Yu & Sun, 2015, p. 1081; Zhao, 2016, p. 922). In the target text, Sondergard renders this as “consultation and sighs”, which includes some additions. As the concept of “consultation” is absent from the source text, Sondergard’s translation suggests elements of character image reconstruction.

Fourteenth Daughter Xin endured numerous hardships during scholar Feng’s imprisonment. While outwardly maintaining composure and managing various affairs, she harbored profound sadness and anxiety. The phrase “於邑 wū yì” signifies “making mournful sounds such as sob or whimper” (Zhao, 2016, p. 922). In the target text, “於邑悲哀 wū yì bēi āi” is rendered as “sorrowful”, which conveys the essence of “悲哀 bēi āi” but omits the specific connotation of “於邑 wū yì”. These translational variations reveal the translator’s reconstruction of character portrayal, offering target readers a distinct aesthetic experience.

Despite her inability to escape marriage, Fourteenth Daughter Xin maintained her aspiration to transcend mortal life and her resolve to cultivate herself into an immortal (Yin, 2023, p. 8). When scholar Feng was imprisoned, only the fox maidservant, who loyally followed Fourteenth Daughter Xin, offered assistance. After rescuing scholar Feng and finding him a new companion, the maidservant accompanied Fourteenth Daughter Xin in departing the mortal realm. The phrase “乘青骡 chéng qīng luó” is rendered as “riding on a dark mule”, preserving the original meaning of the source text. “骡 luó” denotes a mule, while “蹇 jiǎn” signifies a donkey (Zhao, 2016, p. 924). The phrase “跨蹇以从 kuà jiǎn yǐ cóng” is translated as “straddling the mule behind her”, where the distinction between mule and donkey evokes different visual imagery for readers.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study has examined the reconstruction of Fourteenth Daughter Xin (Xin Shisi Niang) in Sondergard’s English translation of Pu Songling’s collection of strange tales, *Liaozhai Zhiyi*. Through an analysis of her appellation, appearance, speech, and action, the character image of Fourteenth Daughter Xin, as reshaped in Sondergard’s rendition, can be characterized by three distinct portrayal features.

The target text incorporates more nuanced and detailed emotional descriptions. Notable examples are found in the speech descriptions of Fourteenth Daughter Xin. In Sondergard’s translation, the term “曰 yuē [say]” is accompanied by a variety of modifiers or alternatives such as “cry”, “reply”, “declare”, and “tell”. This approach enhances the portrayal of Xin’s intrinsic personality and emotional depth.

Secondly, the target text emphasizes the elegance and beauty of Fourteenth Daughter Xin more prominently. The most notable examples are found in the descriptions of Xin’s appearance. For instance, the phrase “拈带 niān dài” is translated as “gently touched her robe’s belt”. The inclusion of “gently” accentuates Xin’s refined demeanor. Consequently, Sondergard’s additions enhance the target readers’ aesthetic experience of the text.

Thirdly, several omissions and adaptations in the target text intentionally simplify aspects of Fourteenth Daughter Xin's personality traits, particularly in action descriptions. For example, Sondergard omits the phrase “洒脱 sǎ tuō [handling affairs efficiently and neatly]”, which to some degree diminishes the unique charm and characteristic tendencies that Fourteenth Daughter Xin exhibited.

In conclusion, Sondergard emphasizes faithfulness and detailed description in his translation and characterization of Fourteenth Daughter Xin. In most instances, Sondergard successfully retains and conveys the essence of the original characterization during the translation process. He makes a limited number of omissions and adaptations in characterization, which slightly alters the features of Fourteenth Daughter Xin. These subtle differences in his reconstruction approaches and choices reflect his understanding of cultural nuances and character personalities. The findings indicate that Sondergard's translation tends to preserve cultural nuances closely and effectively conveys the overall characterization of Fourteenth Daughter Xin. Sondergard's emphasis on faithfulness facilitates an exotic aesthetic experience for the target readers. Furthermore, this study's significance is twofold. Firstly, it delineates Sondergard's approaches to reproducing Fourteenth Daughter Xin's character image. Secondly, it examines the translation of *Liaozhai Zhiyi* from the perspective of characterization, thereby enriching the current research field of *Liaozhai Zhiyi*.

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