

“Yellow-White Sex and Love” Writing of Chinese Female Writers in the Late 20th Century —Taking The Lost Daughter of Happiness and K: The Art of Love as examples

Wang Yangjing^{1, a, *}

¹Yunnan University, No. 2 Cuihu Road, Wuhua District, Kunming City, Yunnan Province, China

^a1750028181@qq.com

^{*}1750028181@qq.com

Keywords: “Yellow-White Sex and Love”, Chinese female writer, post-colonialism, The Lost Daughter of Happiness, K: The Art of Love.

Abstract. Chinese female writers who wrote in Chinese in the late 20th century have a similar theme, that is, for the writing of “Yellow-White Sex and Love” across ethnic groups. This paper takes Yan Geling’s *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* and Hong Ying’s *K: The Art of Love* as examples to analyze narrative pattern of “Yellow-White Sex and Love” in these two works from the perspective of post-colonialism, and to tease out power relations and emotional changes in the beginning, development, climax and ending of “Yellow-White” love story. Compared with the writings of “Yellow-White Sex and Love” written by western writers in the past, Chinese female writers have both self-orientalism and rebellion against post-colonial discourse hegemony, reflecting that Chinese female writers use “Yellow-White Sex and Love” as a bridge which communicates Chinese and western culture and the desire for promoting understanding and communication between two heterogeneous cultures.

1. The Origin

Chinese female writers who wrote in Chinese in the late 20th century were a special group. They were all born in Mainland China. After having received higher education, they moved overseas and became diaspora writers in their middle age. In their writing, they are in the middle of a place between home country (the East) and foreign country (the West). For the home country, they are absent from the presence. For the foreign country, they are changed from absence to presence. According to the change of the situation of “absence/presence”, the writing of Chinese female writers will have the characteristics of two cultures and move between the two cultural fields. In the gap between the East and the West, on the one hand, they want to gain a foothold in the western world. On the one hand, they do not want to lose the root of their own culture. In their life experiences or works, they regard the inter-ethnic exotic relationship as a link which communicates Chinese and western cultures and write “Yellow-White Sex and Love” between men and woman of different races in the “East-West” reference system.

The concept of “Yellow-White Sex and Love” is quoted from Wu Weihua and Zhen Tao’s article “The Invisible Writing of Ideological Discourse — “Yellow-White Sex and Love” Model of Hollywood Films” published in *Literary contention* in 2007. This article defines Chinese and western cross-cultural love stories about Chinese backgrounds in Hollywood Films as “Yellow-White Sex and Love”, which can be subdivided into four modes of transnational romance writing between Chinese and western men and women: white male yellow female, white female yellow male, white male yellow male and white female yellow female. In the love story of men and women of different colors between the East and the West, there is no unified concept definition in the academic world. After looking up the information, authors have found out that there are many expressions about transnational love, exotic love, interracial love, and inter-ethnic love etc.. This

paper adopts the concept of “Yellow-White Sex and Love”. On the one hand, it uses the distinctive color difference of “Yellow-White” to highlight the differences of race. On the other hand, combining “Sex” with “Love” also reflects that the factors of desire and seeking novelty occupy a large proportion in “Yellow-White” love story.

This paper focuses on the Chinese female writers who wrote in Chinese in the late 20th century. Through reading, the author found that their works have a similar theme, namely the writing of “Yellow-White Sex and Love” across ethnic groups. Such works include Yan Geling’s *The Lost Daughter of Happiness*, *Siao Yu*, *No Exit Cafe*, Hong Ying’s *K: The Art of Love*, Lv Hong’s *American Lover*, Lin Mei’s *Tian Wang*, Zhang Ling’s *Yang, Beyond the Ocean*, Chen Qian’s *Gone as Falling Water* etc.. This paper selects more representative *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* and *K: The Art of Love* in this series of works as examples to analyze the work in terms of race, gender, imagology and cultural levels by combining historic features, the writer’s situation and the text analysis from the perspective of post-colonialism.

2. Exotic Imagination

At the beginning of “Yellow-White Sex and Love” story, men and women in the book do not know each other through contact. Before they know each other, there is already a preconceived view of foreign countries. These preconceptions are from the social environment in which they live. In imagology theory, this is called social collective imagination. It embodies the collective imagination of a certain period and a society for a foreign country. This kind of imagination is influenced unconsciously, fixed in the minds of a generation, and affects the next generation, thus becoming a kind of conventional opinion. All the beginnings of “Yellow-White” love start with the imagination of foreign countries as preludes whether it is the white male imagination of the East or the yellow female imagination of the West.

Yan Geling’s *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* wrote a love story between a Chinese prostitute and a white boy. The male and female protagonists in the book have already had their knowledge of foreign countries when they have not met each other. “East, this word is enough to be the origin of all mystery, at least in the minds of this twelve-year-old boy.” [1] For the white boy Chris, the Chinese are despicable people in his society who are like ants, surrounding the city. They hate these Chinese who smoke opium with long braids, and want them to go out. Chinese women in the eyes of Chris is an oriental obscurity: silks, palace lantern, mottled door with red paint, paper bamboo and wax lotus, long black hair, feet wearing red embroidery shoes.... In the eyes of Fusang, the original impression of the white boy Chris “is one of hundreds of thousands of little white guys who come to Chinatown brothel to look for cheap prostitutes.” [1] She thinks he is the same as other who remasters but when she saw the soul in Chris’ blue eyes, she changed her mind. In the beginning of the story, Hong Ying’s novel *K: The Art of Love* also wrote about the white Julian’s observations echo exoticism in his mind’s eye when he first stepped on Chinese land. Chinese coolie, red sedan chair, the bride like “porcelain doll” made him feel novel, and he realized that he may have another result after he came to this distant eastern country: “affair, exoticism, porcelain doll-like.” [2]

All the imagination of these white males about eastern foreign country can trace to the oriental image in the western literature of 19th century. The description about Chinese appliances and accessories (wood lacquer cabinets, antique and playthings, paintings and fans, cheongsam and colored drawing), Chinese appearance characteristics (woman’s bound feet, man’s braids, yellow skin, long fingernails, upswept eyes) and Chinese lifestyle (marriage and funeral, rickshaw driver, opium den) all cater to the oriental imagination of a generation of westerners. Said in its magnum opus *Orientalism* believes Orientalism belongs to product the West constructs. It aims to establish an obvious division between things, thus highlighting the superiority of Western culture. The East is

almost a place created by Europeans without foundation, which represents exoticism, beautiful scenery, extraordinary experience.[3]

“Yellow-White” love story unfolds in the judgment and curiosity about unfamiliar country. The encounter between the East and the West is unequal at the beginning. In the subconscious of the West, the East has been listed as an inferior race in a lofty manner. At the beginning of the story, both sides of the relationship are in an unequal position. Fusang’s identity is a prostitute, which makes her lowly enough not to mention her Chinese identity. In *K: The Art of Love*, Julian is a top student in Cambridge King’s College, the “second generation” poet of the Bloomsbury Cultural Circle. He lived in the circle Chinese intellectuals praise highly and scramble for. Besides, he is both tall and burly. The author’s settings give white men a sense of superiority. In contrast, the Yellow women, they do not have much right to speak at the beginning of the story. Readers only see a large section of description about observations of foreign countries from the male perspective while women do not have much opportunity to express themselves at the beginning of the story. They are treated more like an attribute of “things”, which are carefully looked and observed by men’s eyes. As a prostitute, Fusang was first sold to San Francisco in the way where she was brought to the stage like caged goods on sale. Min, as a Chinese female intellectual, first appears in the book also by the eyes of Julian. At the beginning of “Yellow-White” love, the purpose of seeking novelty is more than the simple purpose of love. The oriental women are presented as a kind of object sought novelty in front of western males. Many Chinese elements with oriental characteristics in the book also cater to the white society’s exotic imagination of the East. Chinese female writers use the western mode of thinking to start a “Yellow-White” love, which is caused by their position on the edge of Chinese and western culture, and not being accepted by western mainstream society. They tried to use western discourse power to gain western audiences and markets, thus entering western mainstream culture. They portrayed the East according to the imagination and insights of the East in the West. This “Oriental Orientalism” [4] was called self-orientalism by post-colonialism theorists.

3. The Sex Game

The writing of “self-orientalism” by Chinese female writers is reflected in not only the portrayal of male superiority and imagination of exotic East in the initial period of “Yellow-White Sex and Love”, but also the description of the sexual desire of both sides. Different from the normal manner of man-woman relationship, “Yellow-White Sex and Love” is mostly carried out in the order of love after sex. Taking oriental women as objects of desire is a consistent attitude of western men towards oriental women. Montesquieu, Herder, Hegel, Flaubert, Malraux and others have all regarded the East as lascivious and libidinal utterance. Flaubert once said “Oriental women are nothing but machines. They can have sex with one man after another indiscriminately.” [3] Roman Regulus also evaluated Chinese women in *The Escape and Narrative Poetry*: “Choose her to seek her / as if she is the only one/ the woman who is willing to be a slave / lowly and even low-priced.” [5] The short story *Mrs. Butterfly* by American writer John Luther Lang in 1898 opened the narrative routine of using oriental women as objects of desire. The opera *Mrs. Butterfly* adapted from this novel tells a love story of a Japanese prostitute and a white officer. In the story, the oriental woman as incarnation of flesh and desire is willing to be conquered by western men. After being abandoned, she never leaves or forsakes, raising the child of the white male. With the great success of this narrative, similar “Yellow-White” love stories were created by western writers on the basis of this routine. There are *Miss Saigon* about Vietnamese women and white males, as well as *The World of Suzie Wong* about Chinese women and white males. These stories are all invariably depicting the image of a yellow woman who never leaves or forsakes after abandoned by white males. These yellow women were labeled as: prostitutes, mistresses, playthings, and sex objects. They were obedient, effeminate, delicate and charming, projected the sexual fantasies of white males. This is what Said said:

“Orientalism itself is an out-and-out male field.... It wears gender-discriminating colored glasses when examining itself and its objects. This is obvious specially in the works of travelers and novelists: Women are often the product of male power fantasies. They represent endless desires. Besides, they are more or less stupid, and most importantly, are willing to sacrifice.” [3]

Chinese female writers know very well western males’ sexual fantasies about oriental women. Therefore, in the writing of “Yellow-White” love, sex relationship is a key word for men and women. The relationship between Julian and Min in *K: The Art of Love* is carried out and change with their lust relationship. Julian is a womanizer who does not fall in love but wants sexual freedom. His initial interest in Chinese women was only seeking novelty. In his contact with Min, he took the lead in making sexual innuendos and mastering initiative in their relationship. When he visited Min’ s home, Julian boldly teased her in words and behaviors after Min’ s husband left. Although she resisted, she catered to him more. “She only slightly struggled without any protest, and then was helplessly held to his chest.” [2] In this scene: Julian’ s active attack (the strong majesty of white males), Min’ s husband’ s existing in name (Chinese men’ s feminization), Min’ s heeling (Yellow women’ s obedience and yield) are in line with “Yellow-White” love routine in western discourse. The development of the next relationship is different from the traditional narrative. Min took the initiative in their relationship. She wrote a letter to invite Julian to meet her in Beijing on winter vacation. They officially became lovers. With the deepening of their relationship, the power relations between both sides have been reversed. Mastering sexual therapy *Jade Woman* of Taoism, Min has grasped the initiative. In front of her, Julian behaves “like a boy who has sex for the first time and is clumsy seeming to have no previous sexual experience.” [2] White males here completely lost the inherent high posture of western men, and turned into a desire object for yellow women. In the book, Julian also confessed that he has become the woman’ s tool. When the relationship develops to this stage, the yellow women are driven from passive to active, from inferior to superior, from obedience to control. Discourse power of “Yellow-White” love is transferred from the white male to the yellow female through the carrier of love.

In *The Lost Daughter of Happiness*, the power relations between Yellow and White also changed in the sex game. When Fusang and Chris first met each other, Fusang was a 20-year-old prostitute and Chris was only a 12-year-old boy. The Chinese lowliness and prostitutes’ lowliness recognized by western society made the white children unscrupulous. Chris initially entered the Chinese brothel with curiosity of looking for toys. “With the similar original intention with other white boys. he buys a live toy for himself with the money for snacks.” [1] Their relationship is a prostitute and a sex worker client, with the difference between a noble nation and a lowly nation. After the contact, the oriental charm brought by Fusang made the white boy lost. The 20-year-old Fusang was his sexual enlightenment teacher. The maturity of her body made the boy forget his skin color and the pride that his society gave him. His blue eyes are filled with souls. He takes Fusang as an ideal projection. He fantasizes himself as “a brave and amorous horseman and a strange oriental woman in the dark cage is waiting for him.” [1] Fusang became the embodiment, inspiring Chris’ manhood, urging Chris to grow from a boy to a man.

4. Utopia Settings

If “Yellow-White Sex and Love” written by Chinese female writers starts with sex and seeking novelty, catering to western writing tradition of taking oriental women as the object of desire, the transition from sex to love reflects the Chinese women writers’ reversion of the western inherent thinking mode. According to the western writing routine of “Yellow-White” love, after having sex, the white male should abandon the yellow female like abandoning a plaything, while the yellow female not only does not blame the white male, but also waits for him. Under the pen of Chinese female writers, this routine has been fundamentally subverted.

In *K: The Art of Love*, after Julian and Min became lovers in Beijing, they reached a balance on the consensus of only sex. At this stage, both Yellow and White were equal in the sex game. In Qingdao where they are trapped in restrictions such as their social identity, family background and working environment etc., both of them could not totally devote themselves to the relationship. Hong Ying set an environment with Utopia attributes in Beijing, they are far from the outside restrictions and interference so that not only the physiological distance but also psychological distance is infinitely close like the man and women who are placed on an isolated island. They exclude the interference of gender, race, identity, status, and cultural differences, attracting each other because of the most primitive sex with combination of Yin and Yang. This Utopian-style plot shaping reflects the beautiful expectation of Chinese female writers for “Yellow-White Sex and Love”. That is, both sides of love can exclude and break away from all solidified stereotypes, social values, and identity restrictions, like original man and woman who stand together equally. Just like the words that Jane said to Mr. Rochester in *Jane Eyre*: “This is my heart talking to your heart, as if we have all passed away. Both stand together in front of God and are equal to each other—just as we were!” [6]

It happens that there is a similar case. Yan Geling also expressed this expectation in *The Lost Daughter of Happiness*. Yan Geling created the image of a white boy. Chris was only 12 years old when he first met Fusang. His young thoughts and souls were not affected by social prejudice. Although he also had racial differences in his subconscious, the identity of the child made him unable to understand the hatred of the Yellow people in his society, then he fell in love with Fusang. In writing the relationship between the young Chris and Fusang, Yan Geling repeatedly used the primitive, simple and animal language to describe: the words in Fusang mouth “become a confession before the human language”. “Fusang’s black hair is too ‘black’ to see through like originality.” [1] He often talks with Fusang in his imagination with “innocent and pure language like the language of birds and beasts, such as the symbolic language of the ancestors. The language of Adam and Eve must be so simple.” [1] These statements express that Chris’s feeling towards Fusang is a primitive desire for life instinct. In this initial attraction of life, Chris and Fusang are equal, like human ancestors in the Garden of Eden where all the conventions, social norms, lowliness and nobleness don’t exist. They are not prostitutes and sex worker clients, not whites and yellows, but equal men and women.

Some scholars believe that the early model of Said’s theory “established a unilateral power restriction mechanism between the colonist and the colonized, ignoring subjective initiative and the possibility of secret resistance possessed by the colonized.[7] Therefore, later post-colonialism theorists will avoid using a way of single dualism to interpret the texts of post-colonialism writers. They will pay more attention to the multi-faceted tendencies in colonial discourse. As female intellectuals born in the third world, after learning the discourse system of the first world, the essence of Chinese female writers’ works is still the East, although they have a certain tendency to self-orientalism. They want to resist western discourse hegemony, voicing for the third world. These intentions are revealed in the story with the Utopia setting.

5. Brand is Difficult to be Removed

Whether it is a utopia that can make people forget the social background and identity stereotypes, or children who are not cultured and not influenced by racial consciousness, it reflects the desire of Chinese female writers to eliminate social prejudice and hierarchical consciousness. Besides, it reflects the hope that they want to shape the equal status in “Yellow-White” love. Despite this beautiful ideal, the female writers did not wishfully set the story as a superficial fairy tale in which every Jack has his Jill. Their own experience and history told them that as brand existing in two civilizations for centuries, racial awareness and cultural differences are not easy to be removed. The incomprehensibility between the two skin colors makes the development of “Yellow-White Sex and Love” doomed to be tortuous.

In *K: The Art of Love*, the difference of the growth environment between Min and Julian makes their way of dealing with feelings very different. Living in the Bloomsbury Cultural Circle from a young age, Julian learned the tradition of sexual freedom from his elder generation, taking no marriage, sexual freedom, no love as the norm. However, Min who were born in the Chinese intellectual family also received western style education, but she still hopes that the relationship can be confirmed in marriage form when it develops to a certain degree. When she proposed to Julian, he retreated. He was afraid to accept the love of Min and in the end, their private passion was exposed. Then Julian left China. On the ship leaving China, Julian finally figured out why their relationship die a natural death: “He can’ t really get rid of racism.... His soul hides the contempt for the Chinese, even if the other is his beloved woman. In front of Min and Zheng, his decision is hardhearted, after all with the arrogance of westerners.” [2] Hong Ying takes the irreconcilability of race and culture between both sides as the end of “Yellow-White Sex and Love” . Despite full of helplessness, it again proved to the readers that racism is a deep-rooted existence. Although Chinese female writers intend to reverse the racism through their own writings, the brand of cultural differences is still difficult to be removed.

In *The Lost Daughter of Happiness*, the love between Fusang and Chris is the same as that in *K: The Art of Love*, dying a natural death. With language difficulties, two people communicate with each other through body language such as eyes and movements. The feelings based on this foundation must be fragile. Chris once rescued Fusang into the Operation Rescue, but later he found that Fusang in a white linen robes seemed to have lost her true quality, which made Chris feel unfamiliar. Chris tried to take Fusang away like a knight, but Fusang’ s rejection made him almost annoyed. When Chris who has grown up met Fusang again, he wanted to marry Fusang for atonement. However, Fusang still did not agree. Chris’ s repeated failures made him understand that there was always an obscure line between them. After Fusang left, “Chris realized that he had never understood Fusang.” [1] This is the end of “Yellow-White” love, ending with one’ s incomprehension to the other.

6. Conclusion

Throughout two texts of *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* and *K: The Art of Love*, it is not difficult to see that the narrative clues of these two “Yellow-White Sex and Love” have similarities. Both start with the imagination of a foreign country, the man and woman with two skin colors meet each other with the prejudice of the society in which they live. In the initial stage of love, the white men have a congenital dominant position and take oriental women as the object of seeking novelty and desire. With the in-depth development of love, the power relationship between Yellow and White has been exchanged. The yellow females have conquered white males because of their talents, or because of sexual relationships, or because of maternal temperament. In front of them, white males lost his racial arrogance like a child. In the next stage, Chinese female writers set their utopian plots with their expectations. Both sides are either in an environment where no one knows them and they are not subject to social norms, or in the situation where white males wasn’ t immersed in the racial consciousness of western society because of his young age. At this time, the power relationship between Yellow and White was balanced. The two people without social prejudice and outside interference stood together and attracted each other like the original man and woman. However, cultural differences and ethnic brand are still a gap that cannot be smoothed between them. The “Yellow-White” love in the two stories eventually lead to helpless endings because they cannot understand each other.

Although the end of “Yellow-White Sex and Love” is a failure, the Chinese female writers group implicitly or explicitly issued their call for the co-fusion of the two cultures in the conflict by “Yellow-White” love under their pen. If the two nations can abandon “pride and prejudice” , hand in hand in the common life forms and emotional experiences of human beings, the shackle of race, gender, region and culture can be broken. Many Chinese female writers, such as Yan Geling,

Rong Rong, Nie Hualing, etc. have also chosen to combine with white males in their actual marriage life. They practice their own experience and use their own experience to tell the world that “Yellow-White Sex and Love” can be used as a bridge which communicates Chinese and western cultures, promoting understanding and communication between two heterogeneous cultures. With the deepening of contact between East and West in the 21st century, “Yellow-White” love is also widely spread in social life. From the texts of these Chinese female writers, we can gain some lessons to cope with this multi-centric world where race, gender, and territory restrictions are vague while mobility and openness is constantly growing.

References

- [1] G. Yan, *The Lost Daughter of Happiness*, Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, pp. 14, 53, 18, 13, 97, 262, 2015.
- [2] Y. Hong, K: *The Art of Love*, Sichuan: Sichuan Literature Publishing House, pp. 8, 35, 82, 225, 2017.
- [3] Edward W. Said. *Orientalism* Translated by Wang Yugen, Beijing: Life • Reading • Xinzhi Sanlian Bookstore, pp. 8, 242, 264, 1999.
- [4] A. Derek, *Post-Revolutionary Atmosphere* Translated by Wang Ning etc, Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, pp. 281-282, 1999.
- [5] H. Meng, *Comparative Literature Imagology*, Beijing: Peking University Press, pp. 246, 2001.
- [6] C. Bronte. *Jane Eyre* Translated by Wu Junxie, Beijing: People's Literature Publishing, pp. 300, 2012.
- [7] W. Deng, *On the Construction of Post-colonial Subjects from the Critical Scale of "Self-Orientalism"—A Case Study of the Criticism of “New Immigrant Literature”*, *Jiangnan Tribune*, vol. 12, pp. 134-139, 2017.