

# Image of Oriental Chinese in *English Lover* by Hong Ying

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**Abstract**—*English Lover* is a famous novel by Hong Ying. This paper studies the image of eastern China in the *English Lover*, the image of British people reflected in the book and the cultural mentality of British people towards China, and analyzes the reasons from the perspectives of national history, culture and author's personal factors.

**Keywords:** *English Lover*, Hong Ying, image of oriental Chinese

## I. INTRODUCTION

Hong Ying, a famous writer and poet, is one of the representatives of Chinese feminist literature. *English Lover* is Hong Ying's novel, which obviously involves Chinese factors. *English Lover* tells of the story of Virginia Woolf's nephew, Julian Bell, who is liberal and unscrupulous. Disappointed by the tedium of Europe before World War II, he went to China to join the revolution. He accepted an offer from National Qingdao University (Ocean University of China and Shandong University now) to come to China, where he was attracted by the dean's wife, Min. There was a strong love between the two, and Min invites him to Beijing. In Beijing, Min fully reveals her other side: a female with oriental beauty who was practicing sexual therapy, and charming. In Min, the overlap of new culture and ancient Chinese tradition can be seen. Through Julian's understanding of the east, people can see the image of Britain.

## II. IMAGE OF ORIENTAL CHINA

Hong Ying's important works are more or less permeated with the spirit of Chinese culture. The image of China or Chinese people, after artistic processing, is often reflected as a utopian image in the prism of literary works.

Julian lives a comfortable life in China. His residence is elegant in style. It was a separate two-story German building with a courtyard in front and a garden behind. Each professor at National Qingdao University has a garden house. The whole university occupies a large part of a leafy green hillside, with green tile and silver walls, facing a bay of brilliant light. Julian's house is well furnished and tidy. From the window he could see the vast Yellow Sea changing color in the setting sun, almost a Mediterranean landscape. Julian thinks "Chinese people really know how to live comfortably.

Even architecture is the pursuit of the most beautiful colors. The garden is the most elegant pattern." Even Julian, who belongs to the upper class in Britain, which is more developed than China, was pleased with the place. Julian has a good job in China. He had never taken money seriously since he was a child, but he had never had a lot of it, and when he came to China he felt he had never had so much. "He was another Columbus, who found the east full of gold and silver, the magnificent and beautiful ancient land of China." [1]

There are many symbols of eastern China. First, opium, in a sense, plays an important role in cultural life, reflecting the romanticization of real life. Min takes Julian to the opium hall and sees the magical picture of the opium hall. "He remembered seeing documentary films about China, with scenes of opium dens, all dirty, horrible and crowded." [2] The second is Chinese tea. Julian returned to the bedroom with the tea bowl. He, too, was in the habit of drinking tea every day in China, and was particularly fond of Dragon Well tea and the like, which was elegant and pure, unlike the Darjeeling tea, which the English drank. Chinese silk is also one of them. If mother receives the most beautiful Chinese silk sent by Min, she will be pleasantly surprised, and she will surely let silk satin hang all over her studio to touch the smooth and comfortable Oriental fantastic works of art. The third is Chinese sexual therapy. "He has yet to master sexual therapy, not because of his incompetence, but because of cultural differences. Since it is difficult for the culture of one nation to communicate with that of another nation, so multiple futunios doesn't help?" [3] Double Ninth Festival, a classic festival in eastern China. "He carried his luggage up the stone steps, the road was covered with flowers, mainly chrysanthemum, and he liked the smell. He has picked up some books on Chinese festivals and customs. If so, these days should be a time to climb mountains, pick flowers and drink wine in memory of friends and relatives. The weather in early October didn't feel hot at all. It is the grace of god." [4] The fourth is Chinese opera. "Chinese drama is so interesting, and the stage setting is too simple, only a table and a chair also better than the French master Gupo's bold minimalist set." [5] Chinese painting also worth attention. Min explained, "Chinese paintings require good pens and inks. It's a must to pay attention to the meaning of painting, painting title and signature." [6] "Do Chinese paintings value white space? However, this statement is interesting and

seems very mysterious. Julian can't catch it at once. There is no similar theory of art in the west, nor is there picture with such a large vacancy." [7]

With its colonial color, Qingdao shows the confrontation and interweaving of the beauty of the ancient capital and the danger of the politics. Qingdao was also a jumble of colonies and structures. "Yifengxiang Restaurant is almost as luxurious as the Dorchester hotel in London. Qingdao was a German colony until it was invaded by Japan for years. There are thousands of foreigners in Qingdao, most of them do business. There are nearly 100 British companies here alone. This place is a combination of Chinese and western culture, with a lively nightlife. When the evening came, men and women dressed up in high spirits." [8] Qingdao used to be the German Bismarck barracks, so the whole campus is still dominated by German architecture.

His previous impression of China was revolutionary China. Julian's trip to China is a cultural act as well as an activity of spatial displacement. Revolutions are violent and politically passionate: in their hallowed places, they become the focus of Julian's research. However, the vast majority of China is poor. "While the life of Chinese workers is difficult, the poverty in China's countryside is almost suffocating." Oriental rickshaws are also a major symbol of China. A rickshaw came up to Julian, and the young, sincere face of the driver made a good impression on him. He had seen such a man-drawn taxi in documentary films about the Far East, and he was curious.

In the novel, Min is young and beautiful, full of female brilliance. Min is the wife of the dean of National Qingdao University and has received a good education. She is a poet and editor of the literary magazine Qingdao Literature. She likes Japan and is deeply influenced by European and American culture. She is full of sentiment, deeply versed in sexual therapy. Her understanding of sensual pleasure is from a western perspective. She has been influenced by western culture.

The other's perspective is also worth discussion. The east presented in the novel is not the real east that exists objectively in history, but a cultural conception of westerners, who construct the "other" in order to confirm the "self".

### III. JULIAN: THE IMAGE OF BRITISH

Julian, a young British poet, nephew of Virginia Woolf, the son of the painter Vanessa Bell, travelled thousands of miles to Qingdao, China.

Julian was born in upper class in Britain, with a strong artistic atmosphere and a good culture. English literary creation occupies a prominent position in the world literature treasure house, and Julian was influenced by the traditional culture of his country. Born into a family of artists, he grew up in culturally dense Bloomsbury. He was a brilliant student at King's college, Cambridge, a Bloomsbury "second generation" poet who knew English literature well. He "soon covered the blackboard with great works of English literature, from Belwoof to Virginia Woolf." [9]

He is an English gentleman. Industrial society, democratic politics, rational thinking, the British way and the so-called "English gentleman" are all familiar British characteristics we are familiar with. "Good manners" is a good impression made by the British. Men are happy to offer these services to women, and this behavior is generally considered gentlemanly, cultured, and manly. This gentlemanly style is cultivated from an early age. On the whole, British people value self-cultivation, treat people sincerely, have good manners, and do things with grace. "The biggest purpose of British education is to make everyone a gentleman." [10]

He is also a liberal. "The British people have a very weak concept of equality, but they have been fighting for and defending freedom for thousands of years." [11] "His family, his background as a strong anti-Victorian moralist and their free-spirited sexual relationship are truly exceptional and something to be proud of." [12] They advocate humanism. In terms of political standpoint, they tend to be more liberal in advocating individuality.

Immigration is also worth pondering. "In history, Britain is a country of outward migration. At one time, a large number of British people emigrated to overseas countries, either to seek wealth, or to seek religious freedom, or to serve the overseas colonies of the British Empire." [13] "In an age when passports were not needed, many people went overseas from Britain." [14] The English are naturally adventurous. Julian was deeply influenced by the immigrant culture. Finally, in the world anti-fascist war, as an ambulance driver, he was hit by a German bomb and died of serious injuries.

Westerners have a subtle attitude towards China. The first is curiosity. In appearance, Min's marriage was successful, and Julian was just curious to destroy it. Julian is more inclined to regard his psychological feelings towards Min as sexual curiosity. The desire for Oriental woman stimulated him to imagine Min as the eleventh lover who had an affair with him.

The second is love for China. Julian feels that the Chinese woman Min is the perfect woman, the perfect lover, and the woman who will be satisfied after having it. The Oriental handkerchief was treasured by Julian as a token of love. Before he died, Julian said that he wanted two things in life: to have the most beautiful mistress and to go to war. He was satisfied that he had done both. The things written in the Oriental script were left to his mother as relics, which show his love for these things. The third is the celebration of the ancient Chinese civilization. Julian is very interested in Chinese culture. He understands and appreciates China from a cultural perspective.

The fourth is arrogance. Although Julian likes Min very much, he will not marry Min as she wishes because of his arrogance to Min. The weakness of the East is just a tool to verify the powerful myths of the West. Julian is dissatisfied with China in real life, such as economy and politics, because China is backward in these areas. And Britain is a powerful empire.

The fifth is to strengthen the advancement and superiority of the British English and Chinese are teachers and students. Julian became a teacher for more than forty Chinese students, and even a Chinese teacher, Min, wanted to hear about British Modern Literature taught by him. Chinese students are very respectful to British teachers, a little too respectful.

#### IV. REASONS FOR IMAGE CONSTRUCTION

The complicated image of China in Hong Ying's book is related to the complicated relations and history of the country.

The first is the British collective imagination of China. According to the theory of imagery, in order to know how the subject feels about the foreign country, it is also necessary to understand the collective imagination of the subject's home country towards a foreign country. China is a country with an ancient civilization and a long history. Its ancient civilization, once admired by Europeans and Americans, is still desirable even in the 20th century. *The Travels of Marco Polo* in the 13th century are the most sensational book about China. The 14th-century British *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* described China as a paradise on earth. The image of China in Europe in the 15th and 17th centuries was still idealized. Europe in the Enlightenment era highly valued Chinese culture. In the 18th century, China, as a model, created a strong "China fever" throughout Europe. From the late 18th century to the 19th century, science and technology in Europe developed rapidly, steam power was widely used in industry and marine industry, and human life greatly changed. As more and more businessmen and travelers came to China, their stories and the reports of the Jesuits differed greatly, and the idealized image of China began to fade.

Modern China was unquestionably backward, with many disasters and sudden changes. In the early 20th century, China was faced with domestic political turbulence, and colonial aggression had left a deep imprint. Turbulence and revolution became the most frequent words to describe China.

Britain was irretrievably a second-rate country after World War II, but it was the world's leading power before it. Julian's exposure to Chinese culture was more or less influenced by Victorian background. During this period Britain reached the height of its greatest period in history. "The reign of Queen Victoria created the most glorious page in British history." [15] It dominates about a quarter of the world's territory and population, and almost all ocean. The Victorian era became the universal dream and belief of an age.

Britain is a modern country. Britain in the 19th century was a pioneer of modernization. "Britain was the first industrialized country in history and was once in the forefront of the world in terms of economy and trade." [16] Britain is a colonial country. "From the 16th century to the beginning of the 20th century, Britain has been implementing colonial aggression and expansion to the outside world. It is the largest colonial empire. It is the largest colonial empire with colonies all over the world and

known as the 'empire on which the sun never sets.'" [17] The British are proud of their institutions, their industrial civilization and their imperial history.

British culture, from Shakespeare, Newton to Churchill, is quite influential. The British consider themselves the most civilized human beings on the planet, with a good education and courtesy. Britain is famous for its gentleman culture. The British love freedom in particular. "The British believe in freedom of thought, which is reflected in the free study of all kinds of knowledge in schools, the tolerance of society for dissent, and the family in which parents direct and do not force their children's careers and love affairs." [18]

Personally, Hong Ying had a good impression on Britain before going to Britain. During her ten years in Britain, she was immersed in British culture. Writers incorporate real experience into their artistic creations. On the other hand, Hong Ying loves China's ancient civilization. Like most Chinese who drift abroad, she has a bold imagination and cherishes the hometown, and has also become the keeper of the traditional culture. Her imagination of Julian who came to China is accurate. Julian came to China, lived in China, worked in China, and met Chinese people. Only through personal contact with foreign countries can one say that one has his own understanding of this country.

#### V. CONCLUSION

*English Lover*, written by Hong Ying, is a famous novel. It's not just a love story between a British man and a Chinese woman. The cultural meaning between lines is obvious. Oriental color is reflected in Chinese cities, food, clothing, housing, Chinese and many other aspects. The Englishman Julian was curious, admiring, and arrogant about China, while Julian himself is an artistic, free and passionate young man. This has a lot to do with the actual situation in China and Britain and personal experience of the writer, Hong Ying.

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