

"Nisu" Culture in Chinese Fandom Under the Rise of Female Gaze

-- A Word of Honor (2021) Case Study

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ABSTRACT

After the online series *Word of Honor* aired in 2021, "nisu (泥塑)", which refers to fans giving male characters traditional feminine traits in their second creations, became more frequent in Chinese fan culture. This "idiosyncrasy", once marginalized by mainstream fans, seems to be going mainstream. This study attempts to take the image of Zishu Zhou in *Word of Honor* (2021) as a starting point to explain the emergence of this phenomenon from the perspective of female gaze. Its significance for the development of feminism and gender issues in China will be discussed as well. Online observation and semi-structure interview were both used in this study. 10 straight female fans of Zishu Zhou were interviewed to analyze their behavior, discourse and attitude. It is found that the rise of nisu culture on the one hand reflects the increasing awareness of female empowerment and the rebellion against reality. On the other hand, the stereotype of gender dualism has not been completely broken. Gender mobility still has a long way to go.

Keywords: Fan Fiction, Gender, Sex, Transgender, Feminism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Word of Honor is a web series adapted from a Chinese boys' love novel *Tian Ya Ke* (《天涯客》) [1]. It tells the story about a "Jianghu (江湖)" dispute, which pushes the two male protagonists to meet, get acquainted, and gradually fall in love with each other. Due to the relevant policies and censorship of the communication of cultural works in China, some of the content about same-sex love can only be revealed in an ambiguous way. However, since it aired on February 22, *Word of Honor* has enjoyed high popularity. According to Maoyan, *Word of Honor* has topped the Chinese online series' daily popularity ranking list for 27 times by March 29. By May 14, the hashtag #Word of Honor# had received more than 17.45 billion reading and 15.49 million discussions on Sina Weibo [2].

The show also made the two leading men, Zhehan Zhang and Jun Gong, an instant hit. In particular, the actor Zhehan Zhang, who plays Zishu Zhou in the show, set off a wave of "laopo (老婆)" in Chinese fandom due to the tenderness of the character setting. A growing number of female fans are calling male celebrities "laopo" on public platforms or places. "Laopo (老婆)" is

a word commonly used by husbands to address their wives in spoken Chinese. It can not only reflect the identity of "wife" but also express the intimacy and love of men for women in a romantic relationship. Similarly, women often call their husbands or lovers "laogong (老公)". Therefore, calling a male celebrity "laopo" has always been a kind of "nisu (泥塑)" behavior.

"Nisu (泥塑)" means "reverse Sue (逆苏)" in Chinese. Sue comes from "Mary Sue (玛丽苏)" in western fan culture. Mary Sue is a kind of fictional character portrayed in an idealized way, with no noteworthy flaws [3]. Mary Sue often wins the male characters' affection with the slightest effort. Then, "Sue (苏)" evolved into a term associated with male attractiveness in Chinese, with meanings such as "provocative" and "voluptuous." "Sue" is only used to describe a sexually attractive man in Chinese. Thus, "reverse Sue" means that the female fans wish to be described as "Sue" by the male characters. That is, female fans imagine themselves as the male role in a heterosexual relationship, and the male character as girlfriends or wives. This kind of fans are called "nisu" fans.

In Chinese fandom, there are many sub-groups of a

certain celebrity's fans divided by their attributes. This paragraph will only briefly introduce the concepts that may be covered in this study because the situation is much more varied and complex in reality. First, a "wei fan (唯粉)" only adores one of the many celebrities who have conflicts of interest. "CP (coupling) fan" refers to the fans who support the atmosphere and affection between two celebrities. Secondly, fans substitute their idols into different identities and fantasize about the virtual relationship between themselves and their idols. For example, female fans who regard their male idols as sons are "mother fans", female fans who regard their male idols as boyfriends are "girlfriend fans" and so on. Additionally, "zhengsu (整肃)" fans are those who refuse any nisu behaviors. In the past, most of the fans were zhengsu fans.

Wei fans and CP fans are often incompatible with each other. Mainstream fans also extremely repelled nisu fans in disgust, believing that their behavior is sexual harassment and a personal insult to celebrities. In March 2020, the famous "227" incident broke out on the Chinese Internet [4]. Archive of Our Own (AO3), which is an international fan community, was reported by a celebrity's fans because of a fan fiction involving genderswap elements produced by a CP fan. As a result, AO3 was blocked by the Chinese Internet, which also affected other subcultural communities. The essence of the 227 incident is the conflict between wei fans and CP fans, as well as the collective sanction of the mainstream fans to the minority nisu fans.

It can be seen that nisu are not recognized by the mainstream and are not allowed to be public. However, since the broadcast of *Word of Honor*, female fans have become comfortable and even addicted to calling their male idols "laopo", and regard it as a term of endearment and praise. The author believes that behind the sharp change of fans' attitude lies the developing aesthetic concept, sexual desire, identity recognition, and gender consciousness of Chinese female audiences.

Gaze theory is often used in feminism and cultural studies. How cultural products are produced, consumed, and reproduced reflects, influences, and reshapes the status, desires, and power structures of the gazer and the gazed. The connotation of the female gaze has also been enriched and improved in the process of understanding, exploration, and analysis of specific cases. Therefore, this research will use *Word of Honor* as a case study and the gaze theory as a bridge to understand and analyze the nisu culture in Chinese fandom and its embodiment of feminine consciousness and gender empowerment.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

"The signifier represents the subject for another signifier" [5]. Based on this, gaze theory has been enriched and developed by western philosophers and

has been widely used in literary criticism and film criticism. Lacan defined "gaze" as a mirror relationship between the ego and the other [6]. That is, the representation of an individual is constituted by the reflection of others' views. Foucault intensified gaze as an antagonism between gazing and being gazed [7]. He claimed that gaze is not only a perceptual means but also a power mechanism [8, 9]. It verifies and emphasizes the gazers' subjectivity, and at the same time supervises and disciplines the thoughts and deeds of "the object of the gaze" [8, 9].

In unequal social gender relations, men have been in the upper position of power, playing the role of the gazer [10, 11]. Based on this, the concept of the "male gaze" was proposed by Mulvey (1975) and used in film narrative analysis [11]. The male gaze is an act of objectifying women as objects to obtain sexual pleasure [12], and also a need for males to gain identity, win masculinity, and consolidate privilege [13]. Mulvey argued that men, as the master of power, often become the subject of the gaze in mainstream movies [11]. Women, as the object of the gaze, were usually being gazed at by the camera, the male characters in the movie, and the audience [11]. The actresses also presented themselves in patriarchal expectations [11]. Furthermore, women's manners and self-expression in public spaces are not up to women themselves [14]. In this case, social aesthetic standards tend to conform to men's expectations [15].

Then, the term of female gaze was used by feminists as a response to the male gaze [16], and appeared in many feminist art exhibitions and movies [17]. Doane argued that "women's film" or melodramas in midcentury provided female audiences with opportunities for identity that did not replicate the male gaze [18]. However, Cowie believed that a female gazer can also enjoy a male gaze [19]. Then Hustvedt defined two types of the female gaze [20]. One follows the patriarchal logic, that is, women look at women in the males' position, and the other is subversive and feminist gaze, which dares to face the patriarchal culture and needs great self-examination consciousness [20]. It can be seen that the way, content, and meaning of female gaze have been changing with the development of the times and different demands of women, and have been discussed by scholars for many years [21]. Therefore, it is meaningful to explore the expression of female gaze in contemporary society.

With the further advancement of modern women's social and economic status, the female gaze began to exert greater power [22]. By studying porn websites, Schauer found that online porn had combined the symbolic tradition of male gay porn and couple-oriented heterosexual male porn, which indicated that the female erotic market was growing and attracting more attention [23]. Goddard believed that the female gaze also

constructs new masculinity. "Nan Se consumption", which means "the consumption of sexualized men" in Chinese, has become popular in East Asia [22, 24]. In South Korea, many businesses advertise male bodies to cater to the female gaze, but research suggests that the social gender order will not be fundamentally altered, as catering to this aesthetic is not a priority for men [25]. Similarly, Korean reality shows use the female gaze, especially the mother gaze, to persuade Korean women to perform their biological functions and increase the country's birth rate, which essentially still serves the patriarchal social structure [26]. In Japan, Yaoi, which refers to a genre of male-male relationship narratives created by Japanese female writers, has become increasingly popular [27]. In this context, Hemmann also noted and discussed the role of the female gaze in the creation, consumption, and popularity of Yaoi [28].

The spread of Korean entertainment culture has aroused the upsurge of female audiences' pursuit of "fresh meat" in China. Japanese Yaoi culture also brought the prevalence of CP culture. The combination of the two has created a Chinese fandom phenomenon, where CP fans are obsessed with fantasizing about romantic relationships between male idols. The Chinese government's censorship of homosexual content further encourages the development of this subculture to some extent [29]. Moreover, the nisu culture developed in Chinese fandom on this basis also has some similarities with genderswap in Western fan culture. For example, Sherlock's fans who wished Sherlock could be a woman produced many genderswap fan fictions [30]. Baker believes that the emergence of regendered characters in fanwork has re-engraved the duality of gender, which is a positive creative resistance to the male narrative concept [31]. Although genderswap fan fiction still replicates the mainstream focus on male characters and traditional male narrative norms, those were realized through the female lens [32].

However, Chinese nisu culture is just beginning to attract people's attention. There is a gap in the study of nisu culture in the Chinese context. Therefore, this paper tries to give an insight into nisu culture in China, and discuss the connections between nisu and the rise of female gaze. In this case, some support for the subsequent research on Chinese fan culture and feminism can also be provided.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What is "nisu"?

Why "nisu" culture becomes popular in "straight girl" fans group?

How "nisu" culture reflects and influences feminine consciousness and empowerment?

4. RESEARCH METHODS

Qualitative research methods were used in this study due to their effectiveness to capture the increasingly personalized lifestyle and biographical patterns in modern society [33]. 'Nisu' is a unique, emerging phenomenon in East Asian fan culture. Therefore, "sensitizing concepts" are needed to understand and explore the specific social context and individual biography [34].

Word of Honor was glossed as a case study. The show's popularity saw the change of mainstream audience's attitude towards "nisu". Therefore, this event is a unique, typical, and revealing example for the study of nisu culture. This paper focuses on the image of the main character, Zishu Zhou, and its actor, Zhehan Zhang. Most western researches are used to study media fans (fans of particular texts or cultural products) and celebrity fans separately. However, the observation and interview in the early stage of this study found that Chinese fans tend to discuss the two together. They "love Zishou played by Zhehan and Zhehan playing Zishou (我爱的是小哲演的子舒, 演子舒的小哲)" (Hu, pers. comm., April 30th, 2021). Therefore, this peculiarity of the Chinese context has been taken into account in this study.

Online participant observation and semi-structured interviews were the two main methods in this case study. Nisu is a niche subculture. There may be two sets of their activities that "one presented to outsiders and the other reserved for insiders" [35]. In this case, participants are expected to have a level of disclosure about their daily lives that they have no control over in advance. Participant observation supports open research subjects and diverse daily life scenarios [34]. Therefore, the real interaction and practice of nisu fans in their daily life can be revealed and considered from its logic.

The researcher made the online observation on Sina Weibo, Lofter, Archive of Our Own, and fans' groupchats. First, Sina Weibo is the most popular microblogging platform in China. Super topic on Sina Weibo has functions of both hashtag and forum, so fans' interaction, discussion, and activities can be seen here every day [36]. Therefore, *Word of Honor* super topic, Zhehan Zhang super topic, and Langlangding super topic were involved. Second, Lofter and Archive of Our Own are two main fandom communities in China, where various kinds of fanworks are posted and shared. Third, the observations were also done in two fans groupchats on Sina Weibo, four fans groupchats on Wechat, and interviewees' personal Weibo homepage, where are more private than Sina Weibo super topics, in order to capture inner states of nisu fans.

Due to its flexibility, semi-structured interviews are designed based on the observations to gain more

insights and generate more ideas about the subculture and individuals involved [37]. Purposive sampling method and convenience sampling method were used to select in total 10 Chinese heterosexual females from *Word of Honor's* fans group. They are between 18 and 32 years old and include different professions of high school student, college student, designer, teacher, writer, and freelance, which made the sample highly representative. In addition, both "wei fans (唯粉)" and "CP fans (CP粉)" were contained in order to collect various data from different subgroups of fans.

Grounded theory was used to analyze the data. First, the researcher scanned the interview transcripts and observation notes and label relevant information for initial coding. Second, the most important codes were reserved and categorized. Then, the connections between the categories were studied by the researcher to answer the research questions. Finally, the explanation and demonstration were written up, and the limitations were also be discussed. All the verbal data are originally in Chinese and translated by the author.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 Common nisu behaviors and their characteristics

According to the research, there are four main forms of nisu in Chinese fan culture, including names with feminine color, re-created idol photos, fan fictions, fan videos and short fan texts posted on social platforms.

First, most nisu fans design feminine names for their male idols. The first type is the words that are only used to address women in traditional Chinese culture, such as wife, sister, princess, fairy, etc. Second, they also use a common female name that sounds the same as the male idol's original name. For example, some nisu fans call Zhehan (哲瀚) Zhehan (折菡). Han (瀚) is a common character used for male names in Chinese, while Han (菡) is usually seen in female names. Nisu fans give the idol a new personality by giving him a new name. The third is the change of the third-person reference. Nisu fans often refer to the male celebrity as "she" or "her". The following is a WeChat chatting transcript of a nisu fan (A) and a zhengsu fan (G):

A: When I saw this picture this morning, I just thought it looked little bit pretty. I didn't expect to see it so beautiful next to her (the male idol) face.

G: "His" (face).

(pers. comm., April 30th, 2021)

Second, nisu fans recreate pictures of the male celebrity to highlight his femininity. They usually use

software such as Photoshop to soften the facial lines, lighten the skin tone, and add makeup and stickers to hint the femininity. Below shows that a fan added the princess's crown to Zhehan Zhang.



Figure 1 Photos retouched by fan (From Sina Weibo)

In this case, much of the masculinity of the original image remains. However, some pictures contain more genderswap elements, in which masculinity was almost completely cut down. Such images often involve lengthening his hair and changing into feminine outfits. In addition, nisu fans also use AI face-changing software to feminize male celebrities more intuitively. Take the picture below as an example:



Figure 2 Fans give Zhang a more direct and distinctly traditional femininity (From Lofter)

However, manga works, which have been one of the most common forms of fan works, are rarely used by nisu fans. The reason may be that this format usually has obscured the gender characteristics of the character to a certain extent. As a result, nisu fans cannot enjoy the visual shock from the comparison of the pre and post sexual transition.

Third, fan fiction is also one of the important media of nisu expression. It allows the author to present the nisu setting in a more free, comprehensive, and vivid way through characterization, plot design, text style, and narrative techniques. Also, the author's own aesthetic and values can be conveyed. It is worth noting that nisu in fan fictions are not completely equal to sexual change. Nisu fan fictions pay more attention to the social gender roles than the biological characteristics. For example, the nisu fan fiction *Xiazhui*, which is the trigger of the 227 incident, sets its main character as a gender identity disorder person. In this case, while retaining the characters' biological gender characteristics, the social gender of the character is blurred to explain his deviation from the traditional male characteristics. This study did not find any nisu fan fiction that directly depicts the transformation of biological sex, which may be due to the limitations of the survey sample. However, it can be seen that nisu fans enjoy the resetting of social gender relations more than the biological gender in fan fictions. In addition, some nisu fans also like to fantasize about male celebrities getting pregnant and giving birth to a child. It was observed that nisu fans often borrowed the ABO setting from Western fan culture to satisfy these fantasies.

The following is a transcript of an interview that partly illustrates the motivation behind the creation of nisu fan fictions. The interviewee is Tushouangua, a fan fiction writer on Lofter.

...in my opinion, the motivation of nisu lies in the fact that the audiences think women are beautiful. We are willing to impart this beauty to him, but most people do not regard him as a girl. No physical nisu. Crazy mental nisu. Except, of course, for intersex fan works.

(Tushouangua, pers. comm., April 29th, 2021)

Fourth, short texts posted by nisu fans on social platforms and fan communities are also common forms of nisu. These short texts are often seen in conjunction with the other three forms, and used to brief and quickly annotate or comment on nisu fan works. Such texts usually use names and adjectives with distinct feminine colors to express the meaning and atmosphere of nisu in a short time, which is easy to attract attention and create pleasure.

5.2 Reasons of nisu

5.2.1 *The object of nisu has a sense of traditional female characteristics*

The appearance and figure of actor Zhang provided the raw material for the nisu works. Among them, the most mentioned by fans are the exquisite facial features and beautiful buttock. Below are transcripts of the interviews:

Wang: Zhang's face, in fact, looks a little feminine. There are so many delicate parts in his face. Big eyes, fewer blemishes on the face, and relatively thick lips give the person a soft, waxy look.

(Wang, pers. comm., April 28th, 2021)

Xi: I was really excited by his "A4 waist". He had a really thin waist without a serious inverted triangle. His butt is especially beautiful. He looks like a European princess when wearing a skirt because his beautiful buttock makes the skirt bouffant.

(Xi, pers. comm., April 28th, 2021)

Secondly, the character of Zhou in the show contains beautiful feminine traits. "Gentle and powerful" was the most popular phrase used by fans to describe Zhou's image in the discussions initiated by researchers on Weibo. The following is a transcript of the interview:

Researcher: What is your favorite characteristic of Zhou?

Duan: Gentle, tolerant, and cunning. He takes good care of his apprentice. He trusts his lover decisively and wholeheartedly when his heart is confirmed. When acting in pettish to the lover, he is particularly cunning, especially like a little girl.

(Duan, pers. comm., April 29th, 2021)

Boys' love fandom allows female audiences to gaze at male characters in a voyeuristic way (Zhang, 2016) [38]. On the one hand, female audiences get pleasure from gazing at Zhang and Zhou. On the other hand, the gaze is also reshaping themselves, as they sometimes envy Zhang's appearance, figure, and personality. Zhou is a projection of their ideal self. In this case, Zhou's image was created, consumed, and reproduced to cater to the female gaze in order to conquer the female market. For example, Xi (pers. comm., April 28th, 2021) became a fan of Zhang and Zhou because of the short videos on TikTok. Those videos are designed to catch women's attention by slowing down and zooming in on sexually charged scenes.

5.2.2 *Multiple identities for gazing are allowed*

Boys' love stories often take advantage of perspective shifts and establish a shareable subjectivity [39]. Since in the show Zhou is the bottom, on the one hand, the audience can substitute the perspective of Wen (top) and obtain a kind of male identity. Nisu fans usually think Zhang and Zhou can arouse their desire for protection and aggression.

I think I'm looking at Zhou from a male perspective. I sometimes feel like if I were a man, I might like this guy. When I watch the show, I also take the perspective of Wen. I'm excited when Zhou turns the charm on me.

(Wang, pers. comm., April 28th, 2021)

Actually I call Zhou "laopo" for Wen. I want to fuck him but I don't have a penis. I hope Wen can do those what I cannot do for me.

(Tushouangua, pers. comm., April 29th, 2021)

On the other hand, Zhang and Zhou can also serve as objects of heterosexual fantasy for female audiences.

I think most girls want a partner like Zhou. Although he has a sharp tongue, he is always in front of you when you are in trouble. Such a gentle and strong person.

(Chen, pers. comm., April 27th, 2021)

The premise of nisu is love. Most girls are attracted to a strong candidate. It was because Zhou first attracted me as an attractive male character that I began to discover the feminine part of him.

(Tushouangua, pers. comm., April 29th, 2021)

In addition, female audiences will also gaze at the atmosphere and affection between the two male characters from an outsider's perspective. The love between two men circumvents the inequalities of the social gender structure, which cannot be realized in the mainstream cultural commodities describing heterosexual love. According to their own needs and desires, female audiences gaze at Zhou in different identities, which reflects their power consciousness when consuming cultural works.

5.2.3 Nisu becomes a means for women to escape or resist the reality

First, some nisu fans admitted that calling Zhang and Zhou "laopo" was partly for fun, but also out of a rebellious mentality.

On the one hand, "laopo" is a term of endearment for a person, Duan (pers. comm., April 29th, 2021) said. But for women, it's a sense of imprisonment. It is believed that a good woman should be gentle, considerate, kind, and family-oriented. However, people begin to believe that women are shaped by society. Zhou is a gentle male figure who conforms to the traditional ideal of a wife. "Laopo" can be used to indicate intimacy. At the same time, the female audience tries to break the stigma of this word by using it for a male.

It is often said that nisu is intended to "praise you by my gender". I do not want to use "laopo" to praise Zhou, but I hope this word can be a compliment. Traditionally, "laogong" stands for control and "laopo" stands for submission. I hope to break down this idea of submissiveness.

(Duan, pers. comm., April 29th, 2021)

Secondly, nisu can bring female audiences a kind of pleasure to challenge taboos. In nisu fan works, there are often settings that violate ethics and morals. As a

result, nisu has become a spiritual utopia for fans to escape the pressures and punishments of reality.

5.2.4 Nisu becomes a way for fans to promote their idols

Since the 227 incident, nisu fans, once a small group, have gradually entered the public's vision. Nisu has also set off a new aesthetic trend among Chinese fandom. Some of Zhang's fans believe the nisu can give Zhang a unique label and stand out from the homogenous star image of the Chinese entertainment circle. This confirms that nisu has risk and potential at the same time.

5.3 Significance and limitation of nisu in terms of feminism

The rise of nisu culture has positive impacts on feminism.

First, nisu is one of the results of the rise of female gaze. Nisu provides innovative perspectives and diverse aesthetics. By exploring and amplifying the femininity of male idols, it has broadened the dimension of charm expression and broken down gender stereotypes to some extent. Also, nisu praises male idols with femininity, which to some extent reflects the female audience's recognition and praise of their own gender.

Second, nisu fans can express their secret desire more freely with nisu. Nisu fan works often contain a large number of sexual fantasies, erotic descriptions, and settings that violate human ethics. The nisu culture with genderswap as its core provides a new erotic experience. Women are allowed to gaze at men from the perspective of the master in a fantastic romantic relationship. It reflects women's fantasy and desire for male power in reality. In addition, consumers of nisu culture can get a kind of unconventional pleasure from it. Many contents challenging the tradition are reflected and pursued in the nisu fan works, and the desires that cannot be realized in reality are satisfied as well.

Third, nisu is a kind of deconstruction and subversion to the traditional social gender order. It encourages the creation of femininity for male celebrities, which strikes gender dualism and enhances gender fluidity to some extent. Nisu also reflects women's anxiety and rebellion against the unequal social gender structure in reality. Therefore, the female audience attempts to empower themselves in the process of nisu production and consumption, which also reflects the progress of female consciousness.

However, nisu also has its limitation in terms of gender politics.

First, nisu replicates male supremacy. As a way of empowering women under the pressure of patriarchal

power, the nisu reflects a kind of reverse gaze of females towards males. However, the essence of this kind of gaze is the same as that of the male gaze, which is a reproduction of gender hegemonism. Some nisu fans satisfy the desire and proclaim power by objectifying males instead of pursuing reconciliation of gender conflict and reconstruction of gender order. Moreover, the current nisu culture in Chinese fandom is more for entertainment. "I think it is funny to call him 'laopo', and everyone does" (Chen, pers. Comm., April 27th, 2021). There is little further exploration of gender politics in nisu culture.

Second, nisu also reflects and reiterates the traditional gender norms when trying to break through them. First, the rigid requirements of female images such as white skin, beautiful appearance, thin waist, and slender legs are still the aesthetic mainstream in nisu culture. It can be seen that the nisu culture has not fundamentally gotten rid of the restriction of the male gaze. Moreover, while giving femininity to male celebrities, nisu fans acquiesce and reaffirm this gender stereotype. In the process of gazing at the male celebrity, the feminized celebrity becomes their self-projection, which to some extent reflects their desire and anxiety for traditional femininity.

Finally, slut-shame still exists. First, some of the interviewees involved in this study were too shy to express their desires and were reluctant to admit that they were nisu fans in interviews. However, the fact that they post erotic statements on their social media accounts confirms the existence of their desires. Second, although nisu provide a secret space for women to relieve their desires, such desires need to be realized through male power. Nisu fans legitimize their desires by emphasizing their male identity in a virtual relationship. Words used to describe men's sexual reactions are plentiful in nisu culture, while women's sexual pleasures remain hidden.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper took *Word of Honor* as a case study to explain the phenomenon and meanings of nisu culture in Chinese fandom from the perspective of the female gaze, and evaluated its positive impact and limitations on female empowerment and gender consciousness. However, nisu is a minority cultural circle and has been rejected by the mainstream fan culture for a long time due to its special erotic attributes. As a result, it is difficult for the researcher to get in touch with the core members and contributors in a short period of time and gain the full trust of all the respondents. Therefore, this study is more exposed to the part of nisu culture that has been or is being recognized and accepted by mainstream culture. The parts that are hard to be revealed still need to be explored further. In addition, this study also noted that

the nisu fan fiction focuses more on social gender change, but rarely directly depicts the biological gender change. However, due to the limitations of samples and time, this conjecture needs more data and research to support in the future.

The spread of Korean wave, Yaoi, fresh meat, CP culture, and nisu in China has witnessed the continuous replacement and upgrading of nansu consumption under the female gaze. The rise of nisu culture reflects the enhancement of female empowerment and the rebellion against reality. However, most nisu fans do not intend to use nisu as a tool to explore gender issues. Nisu has not completely broken the stereotype of gender dualism. There is still a long way to go to achieve gender mobility. What is worth expecting is that the 227 incident has brought the nisu culture, which was originally a minority culture, into the public. The broadcast of *Word of Honor* also allowed some nisu behaviors to be recognized by the mainstream culture, instead of always being the secret taboos and quirks of the minority groups. Therefore, it is worthwhile to carry out more studies on nisu culture from more perspectives, which will play a significant role in the study of Chinese fan culture and the gender significance it implied.

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