

Exploration of the Survival Predicament of Contemporary Chinese Girls

—Focusing on *Fang Siqu's First Love Paradise*

Xin Liu

Macau University of Science and Technology, Taipa, Macau, China

email: Cynthia07281002@163.com

ABSTRACT

The suicide of literary girl Lin Yihan has drawn great attention to *Fang Siqu's First Love Paradise*, in which Lin wrote a magnificent strong song about death and hope. This paper takes this as center to analyze Fang Siqu's plight, and furthermore explores reasons from society, literature and psychology, and renders that schools, societies and families should work together to help girls escape from plights.

Keywords: *Fang Siqu's First Love Paradise*; sexual assault; Chinese contemporary girls

1. INTRODUCTION

As a blockbuster novel in 2017, *Fang Siqu's First Love Paradise*, authored by a little known, scarred, young female writer named Lin Yihan, hit the market and became the best-seller. This novel describes the tragedy of Fang Siqu, a young girl from Taiwan Province, who was sexually assaulted by her teacher Li Guohua for 5 years and finally went crazy. Since the ending coupled with the suicide of Lin Yihan triggered the immense popular debate on Fang Siqu's existential dilemma, this essay takes it as the principle research object of inquiry. The other reason relates to some cases of sexual assault against Chinese girls in recent years. This paper explains Fang's plight in minute detail, taking her as a snapshot of thousands of Chinese girls to further explore the plight of this group who lack enough attention and consider general solutions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The studies on *Fang Siqu's First Love Paradise* are mainly divided into linguistic-artistic, sociological and psychological interpretations. In terms of linguistic art, Zhao Xinyue analyzed the metaphorization of "paradise" and the complex reading experience[2]; Cai Haowei proposes the shift in narrators between male and female[3]. Anna Cheng analyzes the scarcity of Chinese sexual education[4]. While Wang Yu explains the suppression of patriarchal society and the politics of sex[5]. Liu Koon[6] explores the causes of Fangsiqu-style

rape. In terms of psychology, Wang Jiapeng[7] examined shame culture, which makes girls forbidden, unable and afraid to speak.

With the popularity of social media, increasing girls deprived of clothing and lives have appeared in public's vision. On February 15, the complicated case of "a mother of 8 children" in Feng County, some netizens found in the last ten years, there have been at least 7 women died in rivers or wells in this hell. Notably, these are just the tip of the great iceberg.

However, Chinese contemporary girls is still not fully discussed in prior researches. Only a few scholars like Fan Hui[8] and Shen Yue[9] based on girls' physical development and spiritual growth to define girlhood. This paper applies text analysis method, taking as case study the protagonists of *Fang Siqu's First Love Paradise* to address the need for investigating causes of Chinese girls' predicament and consider possible measures. Applies survey method about relevant cases and statistics of Chinese girls as supporting arguments.

3. FANG SIQU'S DILEMMA

3.1. Shielding and promoting of "guilt"

Seated before a map of Taiwan Province, which is influenced greatly by Japanese shame culture[7]. Fang Siqu, an self-esteem, sophisticated high-born girl was bound tightly by it and lived in a "pure world" where sex had been filtered out.

Albeit she once tried to break this sexual taboo after been assaulted, asking "there seems to be no sex education in our family" to her parents, they were too dull to hear her soundless crying, just said "only who needs sex needs sex education", which made Siqi hopeless, because "they had already absent from school, but think classes have not started." [1]:63.

After this failure, Siqi was too overwhelmed to speak, even to her closest sister Yi wen, she just said in an overage bass: " I think Mr. Li is weird." [1]:88 She was kidnapped by shame, and finally kept silence.

Li Guohua, however, made improper advantage of her excessive forbearance and self-esteem, which cleared him from psychological obstacles.

3.2. The male-dominated society

Li Guohua is a devoted lover of traditional Chinese culture, to be more specific, the Emperor system and requisition of women's bodies in ancient China[6]. He considered Siqi as an instrument to satisfy his dreams of emperor.

Moreover, Chinese traditional ethics of respecting teachers were misused by him, he deliberately planned one-by-one lessons with Siqi and arranged the composition of "Honesty" to guarantee his evil plan success. Besides, double standards of chastity between male and female also are the accomplice of his evil plan.

On the contrary, the chastity standards are extremely strict for girls[10]. When they are violated, the public always blame them instead of men. There are cases in the text: after Xiaoqi posting her relationship with Li Guohua, she was lambasted by her parents, "You are an extremely home-wrecker, we don't have a daughter like you". [1]:212 These terrible comments and injustices made unvoiced victims more tolerant and silent.

3.3. Li Guohua takes literature as a fig leaf

Strutting in borrowed plumes of Chinese classical literature and thousands of poets while misused these as false pretenses to back him up[6], Li Guohua pushed Siqi, this literate girl who regarded him as "rare bosom friend", into the encirclement paved by literature.

Citing a large number of Chinese classical poems plus fake morality, Li Guohua showed the consequences of combination of power and knowledge.

On the other hand, Li Guohua, an flannelmouth, cheated Siqi he loved her to conceal his crime. He never tired of cheating in a love game, quite the opposite, he fanatically enjoyed this feeling of saying fake love. He did this for covering up his villainy and make the evil legalized, rationalized and sustainable.

3.4. Literature becomes a curtain to blind Siqi

Owing to her childhood exposure to *Crime and Punishment* and *Madame Bovary*, Siqi was influenced mainly by the Western view of love. While situated in the contradictory interpretations of love in Chinese and Western literature, growing up in a society where sex education was seriously lacking.

When the evil happened, Siqi had to apply her immature understanding of love. However, this self-deceiving love was perverted and distorted, and was oppression instead[10], which was precisely her "love dilemma". Actually, Siqi's dilemma owing to her confusion of the world inside and outside books, she did not understand that love in reality need mutual respect, equality, sincerity and legal protection[7].

On one hand, unlike Li Guohua, Siqi believed in the sameness of linguistic knowledge and the object of expression[6]. What She saw love in reality was Yiwen and Qian Yiwei: Yiwen gave up literature to please her mother-in-law, but suffered from domestic violence. Siqi originally worshiped Li Guohua, but was he made her struggle to fall in love with rapist but failed. The huge difference between literature and reality shattered Siqi's illusions completely.

4. CAUSES OF CHINESE GIRLS' PLIGHT (COMPARE WITH WOMEN)

4.1. Immature Psychological state

Adolescent girls are in the stage of psychological growth and need more protection. Especially in China, where the popularity of sex education is not optimistic, and the age of sexual consent at 14 is a major defect in law. Since many rapists between 14 and 18 are exempted, which greatly indulges harm of girls.[11]

In addition, the mental health of Chinese adolescents is a concern. In "MLA 2021-2025: Adolescent Mental Health," UNICEF noted at least 30 million Chinese teenagers face emotional or behavioral problems.[12]

Adolescence's immature understanding of love is also a trouble. Ren Shuai[13] explored it among teenagers aged 14-28: 45.28% of contemporary teenagers easily falls in love when they meet someone they like. It can be seen that nearly half teenagers lack cautious considerations about love.

4.2. Excessive dependence on family

The "child-centered" family view, one-child policy and the modern principle of "richly raising girls" have made too many parents pamper and protect girls excessively since they are little, so some girls "even do not touch dish-washing water with their little fingers".

As Zhang Yan pointed out through the questionnaires of universities in Ganzhou, without parents' protection, 39.9% of students had a negative attitude of "just fool around next time", and 43.8% was "upset and dissatisfied" about their failure. Clearly, the over-protection families are important driving forces of contemporary students' "learned helplessness"[14].

On the other hand, unlike adults, who can wine down by traveling or gathering with friends. Family is the main vent channel and the most powerful backing for them. However, under the pressure of public, many infringed girls unable to express their pain, so their dilemma can not be solved timely.

4.3. The confused self-cognition

Erikson is the father of identity, who emphasized the interaction between self, society and cultural environment in human development and growth. Marcia improved Erikson's theory in 1966 and rendered that ego-identity marked the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood. He defined which refers to teenagers' exploration of possibilities and identity of individuals' roles in society.[15]

In fact, most Chinese teenagers are confused of ego-identity. In the study which takes teenagers in Hubei Province as examples, pointed out that most teenagers had vague understanding of ego-identity, and nearly one fifth of them was in a state of passivity and negativity[16]. Since infringed girls are often biased by public opinion, thinking that they are guilty and out of place with the world. As a result, they are easily tend to be in the state of delay identity.

4.4. Girl's long recuperation period of psychological trauma

Public need to consider the double restrictions of girls in terms of gender and age. Many studies at home and abroad show the incidence of PTSD among girls is the highest. In the study investigated 205 middle school students after the earthquake, concluded that the average incidence of PTSD was 9.4% while 15.5% of females[17]. Clearly girl's incidence of post-traumatic disorder is significantly higher than that in boys.

5. ESTABLISH EFFECTIVE MECHANISM

5.1. Schools' pre- and post-measures

As important sites for Chinese teenage, schools need to protect students from sexual abuse of teachers, which happened in the novel. Thus before the violation, schools should improve warning measures and reporting processes, standardize teacher's way of interaction with students, focus on the cultivating and screening of teachers' ethics. In the aftermath of assault, on the other

hand, schools should arrange psychologists to relieve victims from self-blame.

5.2. Improve the bilateral sexual consciousness cultivation system of family and society.

Parents are the initiate source of children's sex-related knowledge. Advocating parents' enthusiasm and promoting their sex-educational ability is necessary, which can be carried out through materials and classes.

In term of development of sex education in China, not only some relevant laws have been established, but also the emergence of civil social organizations have brought dawn: such as "Girls Protection" Foundation, Hu Ping's Workshop, and Marie Stops (MSIC).

6. CONCLUSION

Focusing on *Fang Siqu's First Love Paradise*, this paper applies text analysis, exploring Siqu's dilemma of sexual and spiritual harm from perspectives of shame, patriarchal society and dual roles literature played, and analyzes the same plights of Chinese girls from subtle differences between girls and women, and renders third-party effective solutions.

The shortcomings lies in the lack of quantitative research and data support, and research methods are relatively simple. Later research may apply interview method and experiment method to continue digging more deeply into this topic. This paper means to investigates practical significance of this kind of literary genre and expects to solve girls' real problems.

Lin Yihan has written her last hope into the book instead of keeping it to herself. While Fang Siqu and Lin Yihan have fallen, millions of such Chinese girls need to stand up, to fight, and to live well for themselves.

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