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# Forum for World Literature Studies

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# **Forum for World Literature Studies**

Vol.5 No.3 December 2013

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# 世界文学研究论坛

2013 年第 3 期

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## **Poetry Studies**

Edited by Bo Lin

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## **Book Reviews**

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诗歌研究

柏 灵（栏目主持）

小说研究

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书 评

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# Poetry, Poetics and the Senses: An Interview with Prof. Susan Stewart

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**Abstract** Susan Stewart is the Avalon Foundation University Professor of the Humanities and Director of the Society of Fellows in the Liberal Arts at Princeton University, USA. She is fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a former MacArthur Fellow, and a former Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets. Her most recent books are *The Poet's Freedom: A Notebook on Making* (2011), *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (2002), which won the Christian Gauss Award for Literary Criticism in 2003 from Phi Beta Kappa and the Truman Capote Award for Literary Criticism in 2004; and *The Open Studio: Essays on Art and Aesthetics* (2004), etc. Her most recent books of poetry are *Red Rover* (2012), and *Columbarium*, winner of 2003 National Book Critics Circle Award. This interview begins with a talk about her book *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*, the Chinese translation of which came out in February 2013, and covers issues concerning poetry, poetic creation and the role of the senses. Stewart argues that the human senses have a history and that works of art provide an enduring record of that history. She also expresses her idea about how poetry can create meanings between persons and counter the denigration and degeneration of the senses in contemporary culture as it expands our imagination of the range of human expression.

**Key words** Susan Stewart; poetry; poetics; the senses

I have had a correspondence with Prof. Susan Stewart since 2010, when I began to translate her book: *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*. In June 2013, when she was making a scholarly tour in China and as chairperson attended the 2<sup>nd</sup> Convention of Chinese/American Association for Poetry and Poetics in Wuhan, we had an opportunity to meet each other for the first time. My interview with her began then and continued by email in the following months. Our talk focused on her aesthetic and philosophical ideas about poetry and the senses, involving both her poetry and her criticism.

**Shi:** Prof. Stewart, thank you very much for accepting my interview. My first question is concerned with the book title, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*. Each of the three substantive words, I think, bears multiple meanings. Would you please clarify and illustrate the title in general? What do you want to emphasize or suggest to readers, or what particular implications you want to convey?

**Stewart:** The title of my book is designed to indicate that the human senses have a history and that works of art provide an enduring record of that history. The term “aesthetic” itself is derived from the family of Greek terms for sense perception, just as the word “poetry” is derived from the Greek word “poiesis,” or making. I was concerned with this relation between sense perception and the intended creation of forms of art, for such forms are both a response to sense impressions and new occasions for sense impressions.

The idea that human beings literally “have a hand” in, or determine the fate and development of their own senses was first expressed in Karl Marx’s *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, where he writes “The forming of the five senses is a labour of the entire history of the world down to the present.” Marx day-dreamed that we might develop new senses—he proposed, for example, a “mineral sense,” that might emerge as we evolve as a species.

As I was writing my book, I felt, and I still feel, that I was writing at a moment of enormous changes in our use of our senses. In the developed, and developing, world, we’ve come to live more and more within a realm of the visual, spending much of our time attached to secondary images viewed on two dimensional screens. I did not want to write an elegy for the full array of sense experience, but I did want to call attention to the choices we are making at this moment in history and to the loss of a certain alertness, an awareness of the natural world and appreciation of its beauty and complexity, that has followed these changes.

Throughout my book, I am interested in art works in general [all of which are created through “poiesis”], but I am a poet and so I focused for the most part on lyric poetry—that is, first person expressions organized by lines and/or measured duration. It is the work of lyric poetry to create the terms of face to face communication, to preserve the memory of persons by registering how and why we speak to one another under the compulsions of rhythm and physical presence.

**Shi:** According to Marx, we might develop new senses as we evolve as a species, such as the “mineral sense” in the eye of mineralogists. Does this mean the senses of human beings can be multiplicative if we keep alert enough to make “proper” choices in natural world? In this changing world today, do you think what choices we should make to keep our sensibility? Is this what you want to call our attention to by this book?

**Stewart:** Yes, it seems that Marx meant we could attune our senses in new ways—and of course we have opportunities not only to use the traditional categories of the five senses (seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling), but also to explore our capacities for synaesthesia. I don't think we can make "proper" choices, for that indicates we already would know what we might develop or discover, rather than finding ourselves surprised by, and newly open to, sense experiences. But I do agree that we can be alert against numbing ourselves and actively try to use our senses. For example, listening only to very loud music or letting cameras "see" for us are ways of suppressing our powers of hearing and seeing. I fear that our technology devoted to very brief messages—"texting" and "tweeting"—will do damage to our ability to engage in conversation and to appreciate the many forms of written literature. In contrast, learning to play an instrument, to draw, to cook, or to recognize bird songs; immersing ourselves in the qualities of materials—the flowers and fabrics and clouds and barks and stones and shapes of water we see in an ordinary day; learning about the art forms of cultures that are strange to us; reading the literature of the past and writing imitations—all these activities might awaken our senses.

**Shi:** There have been many conflicting viewpoints since Plato's time concerning the relation of mind and body, or senses and reason, and you have discussed and quoted a good few of great philosophers and writers in your book, I think, some of them must have had more influence on your way of thinking about art, such as Allen Grossman, whom you have made a special mention of in the very beginning chapter. May I ask you to talk a bit more about those figures by naming a few of them who have meant a great deal in shaping your aesthetic idea as a critic and a poet?

**Stewart:** I would say that the entire history of writing on poetry has had an impact on me. To mention a few figures in chronological order, I would say Aristotle's emphasis on close observation of the art work and his interest in art objects as made forms that otherwise would not exist have been foundational for me. I also have learned a great deal about English meter and stanza forms from Renaissance debates on the subject and have taken many devices of metaphor and ode form from the Baroque. Giambattista Vico's theory of poetic wisdom, with its emphasis on "verum factum" and the role of metaphor in building culture and institutions, has also been important. Kant's positions on the disinterestedness of beauty, the mental experience of sublimity, and the freedom of reason; Hegel's account of the role of making in consciousness; Wordsworth's approach to diction and to the social life of poetry; Coleridge's interest in the imagination all have been great resources to me. Of the poets I have known in my own lifetime, Allen Grossman has been the greatest intellectual influence on my work. Allen's sense of lyric poetry as the preservation of the image of the person, his belief in the poetic vocation, his deep understanding of the

poetry of the past as a living force—these are gifts I rely on each day.

**Shi:** I noticed a word which has been repeatedly used— anthropomorphism—in this book, in sentences like “Poetic making is an anthropomorphic project” (2), and “My study as a whole has been concerned with the long historical and material project of anthropomorphization” (327). It seems to suggest that the idea of anthropomorphism serve as a thread running through the whole book to emphasize the importance of the senses, is that the case? If so, in a time of technology-dominated and digital world like ours, why is anthropomorphism still important in relation to poetic creation?

**Stewart:** By “anthropomorphism” I meant to indicate that art works as a whole give us an image of who we are and who we have been. What is a human person? What does he or she care about? What do we think of as an adequate, or imaginative, or grotesque, representation or expression of our being, and how do such representations and expressions change in time? When I make an art work I extend myself and go beyond mere experience and so I convey something of my relation, not only to my past and present, but also to my future and to what I can imagine.

To address the last part of your question, I worry about the passive way we talk about technology. Technology is simply “know how” and we human beings have decided to make and use it—we often forget that we as well can decide to ignore or destroy it. We have a “digital world” because we have made one and “technology dominates” only because of the myriad decisions we make each day to keep it functioning. I have the impression that we speak more and more frequently of technology as we speak of nature—as if it were something outside of us, with powers of its own, with its own unknowable aims and consequences. This is, I believe, a mistake that may result in a total eclipse of our own agency, both as individuals and as societies, for we have made technology; we have not made nature. The first question to ask ourselves is “what is human being for?” Surely the answer is not “to keep the machines running and to make sure everyone has them.”

**Shi:** As you argued that poetry in its making and reception bound up with the somatic, with memory as well as sense experience. From this and much reading of your book, I guess you must live a life that is close to nature which is pastoral-like or idyllic, for from your analysis of “Nocturnes,” I see you are very familiar with “natural” life, probably in a Wordsworthian sense. Is this the reason you keep a very strong sensual imagination in relation to language and speech? And how much does it have to do with your writing, both as a critic and as a poet?

**Stewart:** Every poet’s imagination owes a great debt to his or her childhood. I spent my own childhood, about half of my time, in the countryside where most of my family lived on dairy farms surrounded by meadows, springs, streams, and deciduous

forests. The rest of the time I lived in the capitol city of our state where there was a symphony and an excellent public library system and good public schools. I was fortunate to have a sense of contrast between the rural and the urban, which was in many ways a contrast between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Today I still live in both kinds of places—in the city of Philadelphia and also in a rural area near Princeton. Silence, changing light, weather, effects of wind and water, birdsong, the myriad forms of insect and plant life, the presence of quick and wild living beings—I imagine I would not be able to write without these phenomena around me. But I also benefit very much from the sounds of street life and new cinema and great libraries and universities and the varieties of languages that come from dwelling in the city. In Philadelphia we have an enormous public park where it is possible to walk for miles in the forest and we also have two rivers, the Delaware and the Schuylkill—on the latter it is possible to row a small boat and I like to do that, too, on summer mornings. Wallace Stevens wrote a wonderful poem, “A Completely New Set of Objects,” about the Schuylkill.

What does this have to do with poetry? As Coleridge, Wordsworth, Valery, and many other poets have noted, walking and rowing and other everyday forms of rhythmic motion are spurs to thought and composition. Yet any poet’s environment will create a space of the familiar and the surprising that will enter into the construction of a body of work. Yesterday, for example, someone put an old piano out on the edge of the very busy street where I live in Philadelphia; people walk by, then return to play it, or sit down to practice, or run their hands down the keys as they pass. It has created a sense of wonder in those whose paths intersect it—it’s something out of place, yet something inviting. The piano is an “art work” I never could have anticipated—will it appear in a poem? Will it provide some new sense of form in public space? Will it become a ruin? Disappear? I don’t know yet, but it seems to have something to do with poetry.

**Shi:** Thank you so much for giving us such a vivid description of your own life. I think, your living in “both kinds of places,” especially your benefit from the sounds of street life is very helpful for us in mediating our role in modern society. In the following chapter, you write: “By means of the incantatory, the poet acknowledges in the work’s very being this inevitable paradox of human life: that we actively pursue an *eidōs* or fixed image of the human and at the same time passively long for its dissolution.... It is the figure of poetic making who most fully and tragically represents the duality of this human desire for representation”(329). Both the paradox and the duality are somewhat complicated. How should we understand it? Compared to other literary genre, why is it the poem that tragically represents the duality?

**Stewart:** I am making a simple point there about what Allen Grossman has called “the violence of representation.” We long to have an image of our thoughts and

being, but as soon as we complete such an image, we are dissatisfied with it—not only because we idealize the power and form of what we project about ourselves, but also because we live in time and no stilled or static work of art will ever meet the terms of such temporal change. And so we need new art; we constantly seek out new forms and new means of making forms.

**Shi:** Since poetry-making is the process of form-giving, then what's the relation of poetry-making and other forms of art creation, such as novel, drama, painting etc.?

**Stewart:** Every culture has a system of genres that fulfill its needs. For example, we have proverbs to organize and shape the world into predictable patterns and we have riddles (which are often proverbs turned inside out) that break down our categories of thought and show us anomalies and paradoxes. Let's survey some of the standard definitions of the forms or genres you mention. The novel by definition is a tremendously capacious and mutating form, and it can include first, second, or third person point of view, omniscience and occlusion. That said, novelists most often have relied on narrative structure in general and plot teleology in particular, as well as an exploration of character that is both typifying and individuating. As Aristotle clarified for us, drama involves many of these same features of multiple points of view, plot teleology, and narrative form, but drama also involves the direct representation of actions and their consequences. Painting, which is the organization of color, line, and/or texture on a two-dimensional, supporting, surface, can also be narrative, as in history painting, or it can take any number of other approaches to its field of representation, including the presentation of pure color or the application of objects. With the latter practice, it begins to lose its two-dimensionality and become sculpture.

What distinguishes the poet's work is that he or she makes forms with measured language. Because language is both material and immaterial [the "matter" of thought]; because poetry has its origin in bodily rhythms and ritual occasions; because poems can take narrative form and at the same time indicate cycles of return and transformation, the work of the poet overlaps with the work of other artists. Yet the lyric poet is speaking in a first person voice, which may or may not be the voice of the poet and that voice will be measured and punctuated by another set of forces and decisions. Finally, I would say the fundamental immateriality of poetry [the poet can compose even without pen or paper or other physical aids] gives it a particular relation to human memory—it arises from the pulse of feeling and returns, internalized through memory and imagination.

**Shi:** In Chapter 2, especially with the section entitled as "Dynamics of Poetic Sound," you went to great pains to give us such a thorough analysis of the relation of poetry and sound, to show us how much can be at stake in a poem, a word, a sound, a pause, a break, etc. in terms of the poems of Stevens, Hardy and Hopkins. Do you

mean to remind us that in poetry sounds always take predominance compared to writing forms?

**Stewart:** Poets organize sound in particular patterns; there are many varieties of rhyme, dissonance, assonance, consonance, interval and punctuation. Even though a poem is on the page, the reader can “hear” the sounds of the words, lines, and stanza forms. It’s true that some poets—John Skelton in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Michael Drayton at the turn to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Abraham Cowley in the 17<sup>th</sup> century; Alexander Pope in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; the Romantic poets John Keats and George Gordon, Lord Byron; the American 19<sup>th</sup> century poet Emily Dickinson, the Irish modernist William Butler Yeats, and, as you mention, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Thomas Hardy, and Wallace Stevens—put sound in the forefront of their poetic practice. Sometimes it is a single line or a single poem in a poet’s work that crystallizes the poet’s relation to sound, silence, and noise. This is the kind of issue that is most interesting when approached on the local level—through close reading of what the poet actually is doing. I wouldn’t say that other kinds of writing—particularly literary writing—don’t rely on sound and sound play as well; sound is tremendously important in many novels, for example—think of the sound of names and tics of speech alone in Dickens or what it’s like to read a paragraph of Herman Melville’s prose or Virginia Woolf’s writing aloud. But with the exception of the fictional poetry of the Victorian era, I’d say it is rather unusual for poets to present their work as silent documents—poetry more often than not is framed as living speech.

**Shi:** During your stay in Wuhan, you have given three lectures on poetics—“The Poet’s Freedom,” “Imagination and Freedom,” and “Freedom and Rhyme.” All of them contain the word “freedom,” would you tell us more reasons why “freedom” is used in all the three topics?

**Stewart:** These lectures come out of my new book, *The Poet’s Freedom*. I’m concerned in them with the kinds of free play and open-ended process that art making involves. As for these lectures, my first lecture was concerned with how the poet begins to compose without knowing the outcome of the work; the second lecture explored how the imagination can be both an impediment and aid to freedom of thought; and in my third lecture I considered how rhyme may seem to be a constraint, yet patterns of rhyme allow us to explore meaning beyond convention and to claim that it is rhyme itself that determines, or undermines, our intentions in speaking. My goal was to explore the inherent freedom in these practices—freedom as extension, as non-teleological process, as release from utility.

**Shi:** I’m much impressed by your analysis of Dickinson’s “A Narrow Fellow in the Grass”; your indication of the pairing of identical letters in this poem is absolutely wonderful! With your help I’m coming to see the doubled letters—rr, ll, ss, cc, ll, dd,

ss, tt, ee, gg, oo, etc.—culminating in a chorus of serpentine and “oo” circles that have emerged from the grasslike ll’s before they [ha]llt (*Poet’s Freedom* 160). But honestly speaking, I have two doubts about this example: first, should we treat every poem in the context of reading aloud as skillfully as you did? And then how can we use our imagination that way?

**Stewart:** There’s no special trick to finding a pattern like this—it just requires patience and close reading and a knowledge of the poet’s usual habits and history. Dickinson put the pattern there for us to find, and even if we don’t “see” it, it has something to do with the chilling effect with which the poem leaves us as we read the last line. It seems to me we never can go wrong by going back to a work, by looking at it from a new angle, by accepting we’ll never come to “know” or “explain” it as a totality—and why would we want to?

**Shi:** My last question will be somewhat “teleological.” In translating your *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*, a great difficulty for me is: there are so many poetic or critical terms and proper nouns, and probably because of this, at the end of the book you have made long and detailed notes, I’m sure they are helpful, would you give us Chinese readers some advice on how to make a good use of them?

**Stewart:** I always try to leave a full “trail” of the influences and sources of my scholarship—this is the standard of good practice in academic life and it is very important that readers can return to the source texts, either primary or secondary works, and follow the scholar/author’s journey toward completion. Because we quote selectively, it is also important to give readers an opportunity to know what the full context might be. I try to make my books readable, even if they are sometimes difficult, and I try to create a trove of references for anyone who would like to do more work in the field. Many scholars now prefer to write without notes, but I find notes always generate new knowledge and insights as I finish a work. I have also experimented with new formats, or revived older practices, for my scholarly work. In *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*, I thought it was important to have a separate index for anyone who wanted to read the book as a commentary on particular poems, And in *The Poet’s Freedom*, I requested wide margins and blank pages at the back of the book so that the reader could use the “notebook” as a notebook.

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# Ezra Pound's Ekphrastic Principle of Stillness

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**Abstract** This paper is intended to examine Ezra Pound's *ekphrastic* principle of stillness based upon a thorough study of the interconnectedness between his "Canto XLIX" and the Chinese landscape handscroll entitled *Eight Views of Xiao Xiang*. It demonstrates that the last couplet of "Canto XLIX," "The fourth; the dimension of stillness./And the power over wild beast," can be regarded as Pound's ekphrastic principle of stillness. This is also in accordance with the modern ekphrastic theory of still movement put forward by Murray Krieger.

**Key words** Ezra Pound; Murray Krieger; ekphrasis; stillness; still movement

It has been more than forty years since Murray Krieger submitted his most influential essay, "Ekphrasis and the Still Movement of Poetry; or, Laokoön Revisited," to the first conference of the Iowa Center for Modern Letters in October, 1965 (263–88).<sup>1</sup> Hitherto, "still movement" is taken as a new *ekphrastic* principle to measure the interrelationship between "word" and "image" in the verbal representation of visual art in poetry. It marks a revolutionary substitute for Lessing's spatial-temporal reduction principle in relation to painting and poetry. This theory has been greatly developed by other critics and Krieger himself, including remarkable principles of "entering and envoicing" and "a marriage of the visual and verbal emblems". James A. W. Heffernan contends that "[e]ntering and envoicing the mute still object, language abandons its narrative impulse and gives itself up to graphic stasis"(308). Heffernan's principle of "envoicing" is virtually complementary to Krieger's "still movement," emphasizing that the work of visual art in a poem is able to "cross the line between graphic and verbal representation, between the fixed, silent beauty of graphic stillness and the audible movement of speech"(308). Put it simply, an *object d'art* has the potential to speak out rather than passively presents a mere description of its beauty or value in an *ekphrastic* poem. Krieger's newly-developed theory of *ekphrasis* regards "word" and "image" as two emblems: the verbal and the visual. The verbal emblem consists of arbitrary signs or man-made signs, whereas the visual emblem is made up

of natural signs. Krieger argues that “the shift from natural-sign picture as picture-as-code” makes words “turn themselves into a form,” “in effect a verbal emblem;” thus, these two emblems are “complementary languages for seeking the representation for the unrepresentables”(22). In this sense, Krieger defines the term of “*ekphrasis*” as “the poet’s marriage of the two within the verbal art”(22). Following Krieger’s trajectory of establishing the *ekphrastic* principle of “still movement,” readers may produce an echo with Heffernan’s criticism due to Krieger’s shift of emphasis from “movement” to “stillness,” in which Krieger articulates that his purpose is “to use a plastic object as a symbol of the frozen, stilled world of plastic relationship which must be superimposed upon literature’s turning world to ‘still’ it”(265–66). Krieger takes T. S. Eliot’s lines from “Burnt Norton” as his manifesto of “the still movement of poetry” and centers on the discussion of the archetypal motif of “jar-urn” ranging from “a Chinese jar” through “a Grecian urn” to “a Tennessee jar” represented respectively in the works of Alexander Pope, John Keats and Wallace Stevens. This article will mainly use Ezra Pound’s representation of “a Chinese landscape painting” in his “Canto XLIX,” together with his ideograms and hieroglyphs as visual images, to reexamine the *ekphrastic* principle of “stillness,” which can be considered as an extension of Krieger’s notion of “still movement.”

Pound’s “Canto XLIX” is an important *ekphrastic* poem in modern American painter poetry, yet largely neglected by critics. It might be caused by a vague source in the opening narrative, “for the seven lakes, and by no man these verses,” which seduces both readers and critics to associate this canto with the poet’s imitation of a certain place called “the seven lakes.” Only those who are quite familiar with Chinese southern culture and Chinese landscape painting in the Song Dynasty (960–1270) may determine Pound’s “Canto XLIX” is dependent upon a landscape handscroll entitled *Eight Views of Xiao Xiang*. The scenic description in the poem is allusive to the eight picture titles recorded in *Mengxi bitan (Brush Talks from Dream Brook)* written by the Song scholar Shen Kua (1031–95), who accredited the scroll to the Song painter Song Di (c. 1015–80). The original scroll had already been lost when Shen Kua copied down the eight picture titles in his narration. Each picture title consists of four Chinese characters and presents a nature image or a topographic scene along the Xiao and Xiang Rivers within modern Hunan province, the central south of China. In ancient times, this place is well-known for its watery land and misty hills with humid, cloudy weather and peaceful life, a southern valley rich in fish and grain and a place of seclusion as well for the exiled elites and statesmen banished by the Royal Court. These eight pictures include as follows:<sup>2</sup>

*Geese Descending to Level Sand* 平沙雁落

*Sail Returning from Distant Shore* 远浦归帆  
*Mountains Market, Clearing Mist* 山市晴岚  
*River and Sky, Evening Snow* 江天暮雪  
*Autumn Moon over Dongting* 洞庭秋月  
*Night Rain on Xiaoxiang* 潇湘夜雨  
*Evening Bell from Mist-Shrouded Temple* 烟寺晚钟  
*Fishing Village in Evening Glow* 渔村落照

As Alfreda Murck has observed, “word choice emphasizes darkness and endings—descending, returning, snowing evening, autumn night, rainy night, obscuring mist, setting sun” (71). This is because the list is not only an authentic picture of the beautiful scenery within the Xiao Xiang region, but also a reflection of the elites’ political failure and artistic taste. The evocative emotion is the result of their exile life from the northern capital to the southern waterland. Since the Song Dynasty, many painters would group their landscape paintings with such titles, which resulted in more than one hundred scrolls currently preserved in Japan, America, Taiwan and Mainland China. It may not be surprised that the modern American poet Wallace Stevens could not help proclaiming eight picture titles as “a list upon his soul”<sup>3</sup> after his visiting an exhibition in New York in 1909 (137–38). Pound never mentioned *Eight Views of Xiao Xiang* in his letters and essays. However, this does not mean that “Canto XLIX” is not a creative imitation dependent upon *Eight Views*. Interesting enough, Pound’s canto also consists of two main parts with eight stanzas. The first four stanzas represent and present eight scenes of the Xiao Xiang region with descriptive lines of eight picture titles as indicator. The last two lines of the fourth stanza, “in seventeen hundred came Tsing to these hill lakes./A light moves on the south sky line,” function as a transition from the poetic description of *Eight Views* in the first part to the poet’s imagination beyond the visual art through his unique ideogrammic method, juxtaposing myths, history and folk songs into oneness in the second part. Thus, the last couplet is a summation of the poet’s *ekphrastic* principle of “stillness,” the fourth dimension, whose “power over wild beasts” (Pound, “Canto XLIX” 255).

As is known, in the physical world, one point is seen as one dimension, one line in the same phase refers to two dimensions, and length, width and height constitute three dimensions with the movements of up and down, back and forth, left and right. When time as the fourth dimension is added to the three dimensional world, an object appears to move more complicated in all directions within the spatial-temporal world. As the contemporary ecopoet Gary Snyder says in his poem “Riprap,” “The worlds like an endless/four-dimensional/Game of Go”(32). Time is a linear world travelling from past, present to future. The endless moving of time makes the present moment

become the past and soon merges into the future. When a static object is placed within the temporal world, only words or metaphors can keep its spatial shape still moving in the world of stillness. T. S. Eliot uses the image of “a Chinese jar” to denote the relationship between “words” and “the still point of the turning world”:

Words move, music moves  
 Only in time; but that which is only living  
 Can only die. Words, after speech, reach  
 Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,  
 Can words or music reach  
 The stillness, as a Chinese jar still  
 Moves perpetually in its stillness. (Eliot, “Burnt Norton” 193; Krieger 264)

Krieger takes this poem as his “model statement” to illustrate the *ekphrastic* principle of “still movement” in relation to “word” and “image.” The process of his poetic “still movement” implies three levels when time is seen as the fourth dimension. First, time runs endlessly forward and never stops at a given place; thus, according to the theory of relativity, words can move in the temporal world. Second, words are “dead” in the spatial world at the very moment when they are spoken out and become frozen symbols or images in the literary world. Third, words have meanings and can be seen as living things. When they die within a form or a pattern, their status of stillness still conveys a meaningful idea to the outside world within that special pattern. At this time, “words” as images can “still move perpetually” in the world of stillness. Pound’s *ekphrastic* principle of “stillness” also takes time as the fourth dimension, but “time” is metaphorically upgraded to “the fourth dimension of stillness.” Pound’s “stillness” can be seen as the result of stilling words concerning history, myths and songs in his poetic space. On the other hand, the poet as critic-viewer amazingly finds that the scroll accommodates eight views of the Xiao Xiang region through the painter’s brushstrokes and condenses them into “still points” within a spatial-temporal structure of the Chinese landscape handscroll. The power of stillness, thus, like an eternal energy, can control “over wild beasts.” Here, “wild beasts” may symbolize the chaotic, uncivilized world, whereas visual arts such as painting, sculpture and porcelain should be considered as products of civilization. Pound’s notion of “stillness” appears to emphasize more its stilling power than its static status if compared with Eliot’s concept of “the still point.” In this respect, Krieger’s *ekphrastic* principle of “still movement” lacks of one crucial component—“the power of stillness.” Hence, for Pound, the *ekphrastic* process of the “still movement” should be made up of four main steps based on the word of “still.” First, “still” is used as a verb, referring to a

power of stilling “words” and “images” into two emblems: the visual and the verbal. Second, “still” is used as an adjective, indicating “the still point” after stilling “images.” Third, the result of stilling “images” turns out to a static status, namely, “stillness,” which is used as a noun. Fourth, a kind of power is embodied in the world of stillness through “words” and can keep “images” “still” moving in the world of “words,” in which “still” is used as an adverb.

In the first part of “Canto XLIX,” the poet revives the stilled *Eight Views* through his verbal representation, because “words move” “only in time” as Eliot articulates. Consequently, pictures and historical events are dynamically presented as “things in motion, and motion in things”(Fenollosa 10). The poet adeptly frees eight views from the frozen painting so that readers can hardly recognize their sources unless he/she is a master of Chinese arts and culture. For example, the first stanza is a vivid description of the painting entitled *Night Rain on Xian Xiang* based on some indicators such as “heavy rain in the twilight,” “one lantern,” “heavy, bent reeds” and “the bamboo speak as if weeping” (Pound 255). There is a special kind of bamboo with spots on its skin growing in this region, which is legendarily said to be tears of Goddesses Xiang 香妃, two concubines of Emperor Shun in the prehistoric times (1.7 millions years–21st century BC). Mount Ju 君山 is a small island over Dongting Lake 洞庭湖 covered with such spotted bamboos and reeds, where villagers live on fishing from antiquity. This is the place of exile and seclusion in the Song Dynasty. Many poets, statesmen, painters and calligraphers left their outstanding works there when they climbed Yueyang Pavilion 岳阳楼, opposite to Mount Ju, facing the vastness of the lake. Leaning the rails, their threads of thoughts got them into a dreamy journey over that mythical, misty and tranquil waterland. If readers have the potential to recognize this typical cultural characteristic, then they will feel it easy to imagine the verbal representation of three paintings in the second stanza. The lines, “Autumn moon; hills rise about lakes/against sunset,” are indicative of *Autumn Moon over Dongting Lake*; The lines, “Behind hill the monk’s bell/borne on the wind,” are related to *Evening Bell from Mist-Shrouded Temple*; and the lines, “Sail passed there in April; may return in October/Boat fades in silver; slowly,” are descriptive of the painting titled *Sail Returning from Distant Shore*. On the same token, the third stanza narrates two paintings. One is *Mountains Market, Clearing Mist* with a visible cultural symbol of “wine flag” in the line, “Where wine flag catches the sunset.” The other is about *River and Sky, Evening Snow* with a clue implied in the lines, “Comes then snow scur on the river/And a world is covered with jade/[...]/The flowing water clots as with cold.” The opening line of the fourth stanza, “Wild geese swoop to the sand-bar,” reminds readers of the painting titled *Geese Descending to Level Sand*. The last painting described in the poem is *Fishing Village in Evening Glow*: “Rooks clatter over the

fishermen's lanterns, /A light moves on the north sky line;/where the young boys prod stones for shrimp." The images of "rooks," "fishermen," "lanterns" and "shrimp" constitute a pleasant picture of the returning of fishing boats in a village welcomed by a group of "young boys," the fishermen's children.

According to the *ekphrastic* principle of "still movement," the poet as critic-viewer first enters the scroll to narrate the eight still points, namely, eight views, stilled by the painter's brushstrokes. This process can be seen as the poet's freeing spatial art within the temporal art. When the poet finishes his narration, his moving words soon turn out to become another still point "after speech," and "reach into silence." How to let "words" as the verbal emblem and "images" of *Eight Views* as the visual emblem continue to envoice and still move perpetually in the world of stillness? Pound's solution is to seek a kind of extant 'power' within and beyond "words" and "images," which is mainly embodied in the second part of "Canto XLIX." The two lines opening with "A light moves ..." in the fourth stanza play a crucial part in creating such a "power," a kind of an eternal energy because of its opposite, yet circular direction moving from "the north sky line" to "the south sky line," and vice versa. After the verbal representation of two paintings entitled *Geese Descending to Level Sand* and *Fishing Village in Evening Glow* discussed above, the poet first uses the line, "A light moves on the north sky line," plus the semi-colon (;) to make a visible watershed so that readers as viewers understand the implicit meaning of this line. Here, "a light" refers to "the fishermen's lanterns" or "moonlight," which "moves" throughout this northern village within the Xiao Xiang region. Thus, "the north sky line" is a topographical line, since the Xiao Xiang Rivers run into the north, where Dongting Lake is situated. This "light" reactivates the eight still points (eight views) of the handscroll, because the last painting of *Fishing Village in Evening Glow* is the verbal representation of a real fishing village situated in the north of the Xiao Xiang. With the pattern of "A light moves on the north sky line," the poet enters the scroll, moving freely from one view to another and envoices *Eight Views* in an impersonal tone with the absence of the persona "I" in his verbal representation. This technique also reflects the poet's mastery of Chinese poetic aesthetics, that is, the poetic space is achieved through the juxtaposition of small images without the appearance of "I" in a poem.

When the fourth stanza ends with the line, "A light moves on the south sky line," the poet starts his new journey beyond the scroll. Here, "the south sky line" refers to both topographical and historical lines by adding time as the fourth dimension. Accordingly, another power, "imperial power" that the poet shows his doubts and admiration, is created spontaneously accompanied by his narration of ancient Chinese history in a flashback from the last Qing/Tsing Dynasty (1644–1911) to the prehistoric times. The poet narrates, "In seventeen hundred came Tsing to these hill lakes," which

refers to Emperor Kangxi's four visits to the southern Yangtze region during his reign (r. 1661–1772). Therefore, the second “light” can be understood as “glory” or “imperial power” of the Qing/Tsing, when the Qing/Tsing army invaded from the northern border down toward the central and southern regions, which led to the collapse of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) and the replacement of a new empire. The poet uses the image of “the canal” to specify his spatial-temporal structure, a creative imitation of the Chinese handscroll, because the canal is running forever from the north to the south, which was built in the Sui Dynasty (581–618) and greatly expanded in the Qing Dynasty. As the poem says, “This canal goes still to TenShi/ though the old king built for pleasure.” Once again, the poet captures the adverb “still” to emphasize the spatial-temporal meaning of “movement.” The canal goes to the northern end in TenShi, the modern Tong County near Beijing and flows to the southern part “at San Yin,” a place of the southeastern Yangtze region, in which the poet describes in the third stanza, “they are a people of leisure.” The metonymical canal indicates that “imperial power” not only brings convenience and happiness to people, but also gets the rich country into debt. The poet compares such “imperial power” to “Geryon,” the Greek formidable demon with three bodies; the emphasis is thus upon destruction which the poet regards as “infamy.” To highlight the other side of “imperial power,” the poet archeologically explores the original meaning of “imperial power” during the prehistoric times, when Emperors Yao, Shun and Yü presided and carried out “the abdication system” by choosing a virtuous, capable man as the tribal head rather than giving the throne to his son. In this respect, “imperial power” in the prehistoric times means a practice of egalitarianism among all members characterised by peace, equality and the common ownership of wealth. The poet quotes two songs to eulogise this good “imperial power.” One is “Ode to Clouds” and the other is a folk song of peasants, both of which celebrate peaceful, collective work in daily life during the legendary times of Yao, Shun and Yü. Interesting enough, the poet uses Japanese version of “Ode to Clouds” with each letter capitalized, which comes from Fenollosa's manuscript. His purpose is for exoticism, which, in turn, serves the visual emblem by stilling these words in his verbal representation. Although non-Japanese readers cannot recognize these big letters, “KEI MEN RAN KEI/KIU MAN MAN KEI/JITSU GETSU KO KWA/TAN FUKU TAN KAI”<sup>4</sup> (Legge 14), at least they can sense the visual effect created by such images. This is also called “imperial power,” under which people enjoy life through labour work, as the song sings, “Sun up, work/ Sundown; to rest/dig well and drink of the water/dig field; eat of the grain.” When the poet asks rhetorically, “Imperial power is? And to us what is it?” he seems to seek the modern meaning of “imperial power” within the verbal art. The poet strongly feels such power existing in both the visual and verbal art, therefore, he gives a firm reply,

“The fourth; the dimension of stillness./And the power over wild beasts.” Although the triple-bodied giant Geryon is so fearsome, the poet can use the artistic power of stillness to still it into a still point. Similarly, the beautiful scenes of *Eight Views* have already been stilled within the frame of a handscroll by the painter, but the poet can still use his poetic power to free these views from the stilled spatial form and once again still them into silence within the temporal verbal pattern. This power of stillness has, no doubt, the potential to keep the work of visual art “still moving perpetually in its stillness” within the verbal art.

Pound’s *ekphrastic* principle of “stillness” appears to be more scientific when he takes time as the fourth dimension of stillness. This is in accordance with his contention that “[t]he arts, literature, poesy, are a science as chemistry is a science”(Pound, “The Serious Artist” 42). However, Pound further explained that this “precision” as “the touchstone of an art” “is of various and complicated sorts and only the specialist can determine whether certain works of art possess certain sorts of precision” (Pound, “The Serious Artist” 48). Based on Pound’s notion of “stillness,” readers may understand why “various and complicated sorts” of precision are widely practised in his *Cantos*. For example, in “Canto LXXX,” Pound points out “trees” “under Abélard’s bridges” are “Elysium,” but this precision aims at speaking “for serenity.” In Greek mythology, “Elysium” refers to heaven, a blissful place after death. Hence, “trees” used as a metonymical device represent a visible tranquil place on earth, which forms a sharp contrast to the flowing water “under Abélard’s bridges” in Paris. In his lines, two Greek words, “πάντα ‘ρεῖ,” literally “all things flow”(Edwards and Vasse 267) function as a visual emblem, indicating an authentic picture with “things in motion, motion in things.” To illustrate the *ekphrastic* principle of “still movement,” the poem continues its description in detail:

as he had walked under the rain altars  
or under the trees of their grove  
or would it be better under their parapets  
in his moving was stillness. (Pound, “Canto LXXX” 547)

Hugh Kenner explains that this precision virtually creates “a rhyme of a stillness felt with a setting remembered; and the trees, like the Arles graves, are called Elysian”(Kenner, *The Pound Era* 479). Pound’s unique use of Chinese ideograms and Egyptian hieroglyphs as stilled visual images in *Cantos* can be seen as his great contribution to the practice of the dimension of stillness. This is related to Fenollosa’s amazing discovery of Chinese ideograms as natural metaphors, a useful medium for English poetry. After receiving Fenollosa’s manuscript from his widow, Pound

articulates that “Fenollosa has left a most enlightening essay on the written character (a whole basis of aesthetic, in reality)”<sup>5</sup>(Paige 106). In his letter to Iris Barry dated “June, 1916,” Pound suggested,

you should have a chance to see Fenollosa's big essay on verbs, mostly on verbs. [...] He inveighs against “IS,” wants transitive verbs. “Become” is as weak as “is.” Let the grime do something to the leaves. “All nouns come from verbs.” To primitive man, a thing is what it does. That is Fenollosa, but I think the theory is a very good one for poets to get by. (Paige 131–32)

What Pound was fascinated is that Chinese ideograms look like natural pictures, although he acknowledged that “all the ideograms are not as musing”(Paige, 106). The more he explored the functions of Chinese ideograms, the more Pound practised consciously in his *Cantos*. In his letter to Katue Kitasono dated “15 November, 1940,” Pound declares that “[i]deogram is essential to the exposition of certain kinds of thought”(Paige 447). This idea is sparked earlier in his letter to George Santayana dated “16 January, 1940.” Pound explains,

Chinese saying “a man's character apparent in every one of his brush strokes.” Early characters were pictures, squared for aesthetic reasons.  
[...]  
One ideogramic current is from picture often of preprocess, then it is tied to, associated with one of a dozen meanings by convention. (Paige 430)

From Pound's letters, we may safely infer that his placement of Chinese ideograms as visual emblems in his *Cantos* expresses his deep thoughts traveling through time and space, which he takes as the basis of poetic aesthetics. As Laszlo Géfin has noticed, “in a Chinese ideogram the pictures are set side by side, from which the mind can grasp invisible ‘things’—ideas, concepts, universals” (11). Pound takes “image” as dynamic “vortex,” “not an idea,” but “a radiant node, or cluster,” “from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing”(Pound, *Gaudier-Brezeska* 92). Kenner explains this phenomenon by using a knot as a comparison.

Pull, and whatever your effort each lobe of the knot makes it impossible that the other shall disappear. It is a *self-interfering pattern*. [...] The knot is neither hemp nor cotton nor nylon: is not the rope. The knot is a *patterned integrity*. The rope renders it visible. (Kenner, *The Pound Era* 145)

Therefore, Kenner concludes, “For the vortex is not the water but a patterned energy made visible by the water”(Kenner, *The Pound Era* 146). In this sense, we can understand when Pound says, “poetry is the more highly energized,” “the thing that matters in art is a sort of energy, something more or less like electricity or radioactivity, a force transfusing, welding, and unifying”(Pound, “The Serious Artist” 49). When Chinese ideograms as a cluster appear within the lines of his *Cantos*, they create “patterned energy” of “stillness,” in Pound’s words, this power “over wild beasts.” The ideogrammically “patterned energy” encourages human beings to “preserve the tradition,” which Pound thinks the tradition “we preserve” as “a beauty,” “and not a set of fetters to bind us”(Pound, “The Tradition” 91). “A return to origins invigorates because it is a return to nature and reason. The man who returns to origins does so because he wishes to behave in the eternally sensible manner”(Pound, “The Tradition” 92). Pound provides readers theoretical grounds for his placing more than one hundred Chinese ideograms in *Cantos* in an aim of preserving Chinese Confucian tradition. The Chinese ideograms appeared in “Cantos LI–CIX” stand individually as visual images, but when combined together, they present readers a brief verbal history of ancient China from the prehistoric times to the last Qing/Tsing Dynasty, and they also represent the ethic codes reflected in the canons of Chinese classics. In “Canto LIII,” from three Chinese characters “尧,” “舜” and “禹,” names of three virtuous emperors “Yao,” “Shun/Chun” and “Yü/Yu” in the prehistoric times, through Pound’s favourite characters “新日日新,” “new, daily, daily, new” carved on Emperor Tching’s bath tub, to the first dynasty with the Chinese character “夏,” “Xia/Hia,” the poet began his narrative parallel to the French Catholic Jesuit Father de Mailla’s translation of *Histoire générale de la China* (1777–85) and the English missionary James Legge’s translation of *The Chinese Classics* (1893). This precision enables the poet to still these pictorial Chinese characters into “still points” within the lines of *Cantos*, and through the dimension of “stillness,” these stilled spatial shapes are set free, moving along the temporal line.

When Pound earnestly writes the Chinese ideograms “正名,” literally “call thing by their right names,” at the end of “Canto LI,” Pound seems to declare his exploration of “orthography” as “a disciple of morale and of morals”(Kenner, *The Poetry of Ezra Pound* 38). His pronunciation of “the fourth dimension of stillness” as “the power over wild beasts” in “Canto XLIX,” to some extent, offers a good example for the right name of the *ekphrastic* principle of “still movement,” which can be seen as a complement to the modern theory of *ekphrasis*.

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## Notes

1. This article was reprinted in the Appendix of Murray Krieger's book *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign*, 263–88. It was first published in *The Poet as Critic*, ed. by Frederick P. W. McDowell (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967), 3–26. Later, it reappeared in Krieger's another book with the title of "The Ekphrasis Principle and the Still Movement of Poetry; or, Lokoön Revisited," see Murray Krieger, *The Play and Place of Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), 105–28. The quotations in this paper are taken from Krieger's book *Ekphrasis*.
2. The quotation comes from Shen Kua's *Mengxi bitan (Brush Talks from Dream Brook)*, and the translation is given by Alfreda Murck in her book *Poetry and Painting in Song China*, 66.
3. Wallace Stevens wrote seven tiles except the picture title of "Mountain Market, Clearing Mist" in his letter to his wife Elsie Viola Kachel (known as Elsie Moll) dated "March 18, 1909." See *Letters of Wallace Stevens*, 137–38.
4. The translation of this stanza is given by James Legge in "The Prolegomena" of *The Chinese Classics Vol. IV*, that is, "Splendid are the clouds and bright,/All aglow with various light!/Grand the sun and moon move on;/Daily dawn succeeds to dawn."
5. The words come from Ezra Pound's letter to Felix E. Schelling dated "June, 1915."

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# Manifestation of Barthes' "Death of the Author" in Sepehri's Poetry

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**Abstract** This article applies Roland Barthes' theory nominated in his most pivotal essay *The Death of the Author* to the art of Sohrab Sepehri, one of the Modern Iranian poets. The study endeavors to extrapolate that Sepehri is not absolutely personal and subjective in his art; rather, he tries to be impersonal and objective in half of his verses. He, most of the time, struggles to hide himself in his poems, and there are poems in which he erases himself to communicate his notions to the readers. Hence, he follows Barthes' belief that as the author's ideas take the written form only the text remains. In this sense, he is also following the Formalists and their idea about the autonomy of a text as a self-contained entity which has subterranean connections with its author. Considering such a perspective, the present study is to foreground the manifestation of Barthes' impersonality of author or "The Death of the Author" in some of Sepehri's poems. The findings show that Sepehri has aptly incorporated the technique of conveying the entities of the world around him to his readers by challenging their thoughts objectively and not through direct expression.

**Key Words** Sepehri; Barthes; depersonalization of art; transformation of art

In his most celebrating and autonomous essay "The Death of the Author" Barthes puts a lot of emphasis on the science and principles of the Modern literary criticism to state that, upon narration, a fact fails to keep its original voice (*S/Z* 35). This is to say that the author's voice fades out and becomes imperceptible after he pours out his thoughts and notions in the narrative he is writing. From this perspective, the author's narrative is an upshot of an impersonal system. Reading Sohrab Sepehri from

this standpoint one can note that for Sepehri, too, the procedure of poetic perception incorporates the poet's sympathetic involvement with natural objects throughout the moments of acute observation or production when the poet loses himself into an object, experiencing the features of the object by virtue of intensified perceptions and intuiting attributes or realities of the object, not contrastingly perceived, so as to provide the reader with an alternative for having manifold interpretations. This bestows upon the readers freedom to get connected to the text through their individual associating system and momentarily disregard the author's aims and intentions. This prominent impersonality in Sepehri's poetry can be securely thought of in connection with Barthes' argument known as "The Death of the Author". Sepehri holds to the transformation of emotions not through expression, but through an exterior correlative of inner feelings. Therefore, a written material or a work of art is an outer correlative of author's inner feelings. Put differently, an artist is to reveal his vocations in the same outer correlative which is projected in a text or a piece of writing; thus, it could be claimed that Sepehri recapitulates what Barthes has already proclaimed.

According to Barthes, the writer should not imbue his oeuvres with his overflowed emotions and sensibilities; rather, by assuming an escape scheme he impersonalizes his self by way of selecting objects that have no bearing to a multitude of definite feelings and incidents which remind him of the personal emotions, recollections and sentiments. Allowing for such a hypothesis, a credible resemblance and uniqueness can be declared between Barthes' idea and its counterpart in Persian Literature recognized as *Tajrid*. While asserting the aptness of equating these terms, Shafiy Kadkani contends that "every work of art is based on *Tajrid*, in which some chosen objects, events, or concrete objects embody the poet's abstract ideas and emotions" (63).

With the above introductory remarks on Barthes and on Sepehri's style of writing we can now draw a parallelism between Barthes' theoretical proposition and Sepehri's practical artistic creation. Far away from Barthes, in another continent, Sepehri was one of the most heterogeneous hunter of objective realities ever existed in the art and literature of Iran, on whose Modernity, Yushij has remarked:

In facing the realities of life, the artist should be overflowing with sensibilities in an appropriate time; hence, the artist's objective experience leads to creativity. Then poetic creation is the result of the artist's hesitant moment in which he is trimmed with observations. In this moment the artist retires to create art (poem) using objects, situations, though these entities might occur in poetry by employing tropes like metaphor, allegory, allusion, metonymy, synesthesia, etc. (54)

Embroidering on Yushij's observations, one can say that the poetic process of artistic creation depends on poets' active sense of perception and imagination as described by Yushij, hence the poetic perception includes the poet's sympathetic identification with natural objects during moments of intense observation. Consequently, the poet is not able to reach such moment of impersonality without completely surrendering himself to the work and the object under process. As quoted by Gray, this term "suggests the artist's sympathetic imagination, the capacity to forget his own personality and enter imaginatively into the existence of others and other kinds of existence" (72). Put differently, we may suggest that both sympathy and empathy are the involuntary projection of ourselves into an object. Accordingly, Sepehri's poetry is predominantly aesthetic and sensuous in appeal, and it contains sympathy as well as empathy as the point of central concern. The idea proposed here will be of use when we see that, more than often, Sepehri metamorphoses himself into objects like animals, plants and other entities to experience different situations. This is to say that he impersonalizes himself in order to remove his own identity from the scene. Achieving this objectivity is equal to the omission of every voice, which is Barthes' slogan, as he elaborates on the issue in his essay that "writing is neutral composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing" (S/Z 26).

Considering the above mentioned hypothesis on the affinities enrooted between Barthes' idea in "The Death of Author" and Sepehri's objectivity or impersonality, we can now start discussing the poems selected for analysis in this paper. The first poem we analyze and discuss here is "Traveler". The traveler of the poem goes through different places and resembles the inexorable brook. He is a pilgrim in quest of the truth; the quest never ceases until the traveler attains it:

I'm traveling yet,  
 I imagine,  
 It is a boat in the world waters,  
 And I-am a passenger of the boat, have been chanting  
 The lively song of ancient mariners  
 To the ears of season chinks for thousands of years.  
 And I am sailing on... where will finish the feet tracks?  
 When will be unknotted the shoe laces by gentle fingers of leisure?  
 (113-123)<sup>1</sup>

The journey is historical yet it objectively refers to both the poet and all the humanity.

The verb ‘imagine’ in line two objectifies the traveler’s voyage on the world sea. The traveler imagines visiting the people of old primitive world in the remotest parts of the history; their chant is being objectified to the song sung by the mariners in Coleridge’s famous poem “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”. Additionally, the journey might objectively illustrate the myth of the everlasting journey. Jung, in this regard, believes that “the quest is also an archetype, and mariner or traveler is in search of a reality” (96), a reality which is more substantial than that is embraced by the materialistic society. Another outstanding quality of Sepehri’s poetry is the employment of the term synaesthesia. Kadkani declares, “Sepehri is the master of employing synaesthesia, and this is enrooted in his own new style; and this quality has always objectified his verse” (72). The following extracts from “Traveler” are a good testimony to such a claim:

But sometimes,  
The strange sound of growth,  
Reflects,  
In the brittle joint of joy  
Knee while ascension knee gets dusty,  
Maturity fingers,  
Leave alone,  
In the concrete geometry of grief. (Sepehri 14-21)

Such objectivity is further emphasized by Shamisa, as he says: “there is an objective impressionism and dramatization in Sepehri’s poetry, especially in his ‘The Water’s Footsteps’ and ‘Traveler’ as the poet employs different images like: blue color and other complementary shades, horizons, sun beam, objects in the different positions, living objects, fresh air .... In this respect Eslin believes that, every dramatic text is literature, even if it is not performed on the stage, this point is common among the narrative and objective genres like tales, epic poem, and drama. The main point that separates drama from other narrative forms is the act of performance” (Shamisa 52).

The other poem worth considering in our present sense of study is “The Hidden Bird”; it is supposed that Sepehri’s bird is the same as that of Keats’s nightingale though there is no transparent evidence to such a claim. Sepehri calls her “the hidden bird”; the poem opens with:

O bird who sings in the hidden places  
I should speak with you.  
And you open time by your song!  
Whence you ached, you sing in your hidden vacancy,

In order to snatch my life joy? (1-6)

Apostrophizing the hidden bird, Sepehri believes that the song of the bird dissolves the sense of time. The poem objectifies the little hidden bird to convey his messages of immortality of arts. This is demonstrated by the poet in the metonymic tone of the song of the bird which is here taken for art in its general transplantation. The bird and her song, one can say, might objectively refer to the everlasting notion of art and its joy in contrast with mortality of other entities in the world. However, Sepehri conceives that the bird is sad, and this sadness is revealed in the bird's song. He continues,

O hidden bird, where are you?  
 Under the veil of moist grass.  
 Or inside the joyous boughs?  
 You fly over the green eye of swamp,  
 Or you wash your feathers by the perception spring?  
 Wherever you are, tell me.  
 There are no enemy's foot tracks.  
 Come out!  
 Thunder has not kicked the roof of clouds anymore.  
 Snake has not come out of its burrow quickly anymore.  
 The chain of storm has not rolled over the body of meadow.  
 Don't worry anymore? (7-19)

In these lines, Sepehri reveals his sense of innovative metaphorical phrasing to the readers by employing phrases like "veil of moist grass". This is shown when he compares the veil with the moist grass; here the boundary between human and non-human is transgressed, especially in personifying the trees as "the joyous boughs". In the sentence "you fly over the green eyes of swamp, /or you wash your feathers by the perception spring?" he bestows human features on the non-human swamp "whose eyes are green". Indeed, Sepehri eradicates the boundary between human and non-human by personifying spring, and makes it available to an unconscious singer. Here, this notion comes to the readers that, as the bird sings unconsciously, it objectifies the artist (or the poet himself) who takes refuge in the Sepehri's society and crises, as the poet proclaims this notion in the line "there are no enemy's foot tracks. Come out!" In the next lines Sepehri says, "thunder has not kicked the roofs of clouds any more./ Snake has not come out of its burrow quickly anymore". Sepehri again personifies thunder that does not kick the roof of clouds anymore. The phrase "the roof of clouds"

is a metonymy implying calm weather; hence the poet objectively describes the calm weather by calling upon the natural objects. Similarly, snake implies enmity and evil in the reader's mind and the line "snake has not come out of its burrow quickly anymore" reminds reader of the artist's taking refuge in the previous sentence. The lines "the chain of storm has not rolled over the body of meadow / The day is calm, and quiet" personify and illustrate the crises of society; the poet instead of describing the crises of society directly illustrates them by "the chain of storm" rolling in the meadow. This ode enacts a drama which concerns itself with the changing nexus of the relationship of the poet and the nightingale, along with the value system relevant to each and the attempt of the reconciliation of antinomies, among such objects of contemplation is death, a nasty, fearful reality or a transition into a higher, richer and eternal life.

It is necessary here to recall Eslin and his dramatic notions on objectivity of literature and fine arts. The first notion one can recall is "the Icon", which is usually known and discovered through the senses like the picture of an entity, the sound of a bird or the blowing of wind in stormy climate. In fact, these Iconic objects are considered as external facts through which the author erases himself while immediately evoking emotions in the readers, as they are innately able to associate their senses with the objects. Sepehri accommodates all the above imagery senses in his poetry and objectively evoked the same in his readers; it seems that in him, as Eliot remarks, there was a separation between the heart which suffered and the mind that created (qtd. in Tilak 354). To exemplify such an objectivity one must go to another instance of Sepehri's poem entitled "The Water's Footsteps" where he says:

Life flies as big as death...  
 Death dwells in the pleasant climate of mind.  
 Death speaks of dawn in the nature of village night.  
 Death goes into the mouth with a bunch of grapes.  
 Death sings in the larynx of red throat.  
 Death is guilty for the beauty of butterfly's wings. (345-350)

This poem is one of the most dramatically pictorial creations. The death embodiment of the poem is apparently emphasizing metempsychosis of Buddhism. Meghdadi says, "Buddhism believes that there is no death, since one accompanies the whole existence of the world; hence death is a changing entity, and after death one's existence transfers to a living existence; therefore, death is vital, it is a part of nature" (48). In the line "life flies as big as death ...", the poet shows 'life' as a bird possessing wings, hence it is an implicit metaphor, because Sepehri does not declare directly that 'life is transient',

but he associates life's fragility with the short life of a bird. In the other part of the poem, Sepehri assures this idea that death is a part of life again: "our hands would search something, if death did not exist...", and this justifies Eslin's notion of the reconciliation of the opposites. In the next line, the poet dehabituallizes the readers' traditional notions of death and says, "we should not be afraid of death; the death is not the end of pigeon". This objectively implies that death accompanies life again; commenting on this Shamisa says, "Sepehri chooses a pigeon, since it flies, and is elegant, so it is a living death" (220). It seems, as Northrop Frye claims, "the unity of life and death is everlasting" (68). The very same idea might raise a question: why do artists in general and Sepehri in particular personify death? The answer justifies Frye's acclamation that death is a part of life, and hence they supplement each other in a Sepehrian way. In the next line of the poem "death inhabits in the good weather of reflection", the poet paradoxically implies that in spite of the disgusting view of death, it lives in good weather, and he personifies it further as he "speaks with the essence of village night about mourning". In the next line, "death is tasted with the bunch of grape in the mouth", the poet draws upon the gustatory image of death in a most objective manner employing a synaesthetic metaphor, so in this way he involves the reader with more than one sense, the taste of death through one's mouth. These instances can transparently direct one to Barthes' views about narrative art:

Extrapolating on the written forms of art, one can say that, as soon as a fact is narrated no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the term itself, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins. (S/Z 26)

Ironically, this is not an idea put forth by Barthes only. As Barthes, himself, reminds us, Mallarme, in France, wrote that "it is language which speaks, not the author; to write is, through a pre-requisite impersonality, to reach that point where only language acts, performs, and not me" (Ibid). This kind of delicate practice of objectivity and impersonality that Mallarme refers to is apparent in the poem "Always" by Sohrab Sepehri. It is of primary importance to note that by taking the postmodern Jungian assumption into consideration, Sepehri has implicitly described his Anima—an archetype or myth which originates in the collective unconscious—in the poem. Relying on Jung's own words that "collective unconscious describes the psyche which is not perceptible, I call it Psychoid" (436), we can consider Anima as spiritual, everlasting and immortal. This is when immortality has been a quality that human kind has longed for since the beginning of the universe. Sepehri, too, is a poet in

quest of immortality; therefore he describes his wishes in the form of a spiritual quest for the celestial female. Relying on the plausible assumption that Anima often appears in the form of female figures that appear in dreams, pictures, poems, and tales in the female figures we can argue that for Sepehri, this female figure stands as a “primitive nocturnal nymph of speech” (Sepehri 6). Therefore, looking at Sepehri’s “Always” with keen eyes we see that the female figure is used to objectify a concept or allegorize a notion, and since the poet writes in order to let his Anima appear indirectly, he is actually in quest of immortality, and by impersonalizing his wish, the poet shapes an organic female figure and evokes the same in the readers.

Going through the different parts of the poem, we identify a wish or a desire for immortality that is running through the word string; a wish that is hidden in a love-quest which is equated with Sepehri’s personal emotion. So through an imagined self destruction or loss of personal identity, Sepehri identifies himself with a beloved outside himself, and escapes from the material limits and self-centered condition of ordinary experience, to achieve a fellowship with essence. Nonetheless, it seems that Sepehri did not directly mention the Jungian Anima in his poem.

In reality, the poet sets up and searches to solve the basic oppositions between the inevitably mortal pleasures and the conceived possibility of immortal delight in human life. The allegory (Anima) totally fails as his own intensity and authenticity of a unique mystical vision invalidates his weak and faltering espousal of borrowed philosophy. Therefore, it seems that he triumphs in his bold renunciation of that espousal. The dichotomy disappears and the two (ideal, and reality) realize oneness. As a result, in Sepehri’s “Always”, the poet faces the celestial figure and this is when this nymph inspires the poet, pushing him toward poetic creation, as Hosseiyini adroitly maintains, “this nymph or celestial figure is an immortal who is leading the poet to the everlasting truth” (231). His poem, being objectively dramatic, does not apostrophize the concept of Anima, and there is no evidence with which one can call the celestial woman as being the mistress to Sepehri, because of the spiritual, celestial, and immortal entity in this poem. Consequently, these descriptions are great examples of Barthes’ idea of impersonality of author or Tajrid as it is called in Persian literature. He associates the poet’s quest for ultimate harmony of the actual beauties of this world with ideal beauty. The poet is in his pursuit of ideal beauty in order to be immortal, because immortality is one of the qualities that human being has been longing for throughout history. That is why Sepehri says:

Speak, O primitive nocturnal nymph of speech!  
Under the very emotional boughs of wind,  
Give in my childhood, to me.

Amid these black always.  
 Speak, O colorful sister of perfection!  
 Fill my veins with softness of intelligence.  
 Reveal my pulse on roughness of love's breath. (6-12)

One can say that only egoless, sensitive and receptive senses are required for the poem's perception. It is only the beauty that is omnipresent in the world of space and time, and such a beauty moves towards beauty in any movement. This turns the succession of time, itself, into a stillness of eternity. This poem is somehow saturated with idea of the term "Empathy". Gray believes that "it is a literary term coined by Fitchenner to suggest the artist's sympathetic imagination, the capacity to forget one's own personality and enter imaginatively into the objective existence of others and other kinds of existence"(Gray 72). In a thoroughly absorbed contemplation, Sepehri establishes a complete identification with the female figure by annihilating his own personality and undergoing what is called an inner mimicry. All these illustrations are intended to mark Sepehri's sense of beauty, art, and impersonality in artistic creation.

It is conceived that the sense of painting shares dramatic manifestations revealing in Sepehri's "The Water's Footsteps" as he says:

I am from Kashan.  
 I'm a painter.  
 Sometimes I make a cage out of colors, sell to you  
 For the song of corn poppy which is confined in the cage  
 Refreshes your bereft solitude. (25-29)

From the beginning of the poem Sepehri confesses his job as a painter of life around him, while in the following parts, the painting embodies as "a cage of colors". In another sense, the boundary between human and non human is transgressed, hence the corn poppy of the poem is in the cage singing the songs that refreshes one's bereft solitude, and these sentences are conceived to be objective correlative through which the poet depersonalizes himself. The other part of the poem, "a cage of colors" is bound up with the fixed entity of painting (a bird) which is not living any more. For this reason, the singing corn poppy of the cage refreshes "your bereft solitude", since corn poppy is humanized reminding the reader's bereavement. Here it can be articulated that Sepehri tends to dramatize most of his poetry by personifying the human and non-human entities. In the next line, he puts mark on this idea in the same poem, and he assures,

How fancy, how fancy ...  
 I know  
 My tableau is lifeless.  
 I know well, my painting pool is devoid of fish. (30-33)

Here, despite all his struggles, the poet confesses that he is not able to give life to his painting, since it is bereft of a fish standing as a symbol of life. Kermani says that “fish is a Zoroastrian symbol and a component of Haft Sin, a group of seven entities initially starting with the letter ‘S’ set on a table at New Year time in Iran”(156). Sepehri’s vocations continue to impress his readers through its objectivity and impersonality; to give it more vital growth one can refer to another poem by him “An Oasis in a Moment” in which he says:

If you come to me,  
 I’m beyond nothingness  
 Beyond nothingness is a place.  
 Beyond the nothingness of the air veins,  
 Dandelions abound, bringing news  
 From the blossoming flower at the farthest patch of land. (1-6)

The underlying issue about the above lines must be understood in wider form than its present. As Hosseyni points out “the poet impersonalizes himself to become one with nothingness, where, there is no trace of industrialization, the dandelions of the poem call people; and, this can be the poet’s utopia”(231). In another poem entitled “Presence till Infinity” Sepehri says:

Tonight  
 The gate of a strange dream  
 Will open,  
 Toward words. (1-4)

In the above lines, there is a strange sense in the words; they actually wait to be uttered, because they are in the timelessness and spacelessness. In this sense, Barthes says:

To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing. Such conception suits criticism very well, the latter then allotting itself the important task of discovering the Author (or

its hypostases: society, history, psyche, liberty) beneath the work. (Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* 147)

It is of significance to note that, what Sepehri and Barthes suggest is very similar in essence. Sepehri believes that words wait to be uttered out of space and time minus any author, and Barthes also negates author, his society, time, and his place. There are only words which for Barthes are small units of sense or 'lexias', and Barthes aims "to show how they carry many different meanings simultaneously on different levels or in different codes" (*S/Z* 24). Therefore, there is only the text left alone with the reader. Regarding such idea, Vernan asserts:

The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of the being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that someone who holds together in a single field all traces by which the written text is constituted. (99)

Here the emphasis is on the impersonality of the text, and the unique role of the reader in shaping the meaning of the text is highlighted and appreciated. Sepehri, too, appreciates such concepts in the same poem, hence he says:

A friend's breeze will vibrate  
 The stem of meaning,  
 And wonder will tear away. (19-21)

By associating the meaning to a flower, Sepehri asks the breeze to vibrate the stem of meaning, until the wonder (ambiguity) is resolved. Therefore, Sepehri, like Barthes, puts emphasis on the process of signification and interpretation that falls in the territory of readership when the author's connection to his product does not exist any longer.

While one of the metaphysical concepts prevalent among most of the Romantic poets is the idea of reconciliation between the creative potentiality and youth, it is the creative power which makes the artist lose his intensity as he gets mature by the passage of time. Therefore, Romantic poets had necromantic desire mixed with their creative potentialities, and their premature death is the satiation of this enflaming desire. By placing such a personal face on such a distant and inconceivable end, Sepehri manages to approach his questions and thoughts about death in a more concrete manner. Here, by personifying death, the poet, introduces a stylistic manner

that pervades much of his works.

This study emphasizes the manifestation of Barthes' objectivity or the death of the author in some of Sepehri's poems. The findings show that Sepehri's idea of objectivity and impersonality paves the way for Kadkani's Tajrid. This idea is based on impersonality of the poet in which something other than personal emotion exists. Sepehri's tendency for immortality wears the gown of female figure and his dramatic technique reveals the poet's wish for immortality. As stated before, dramatizing one's vocations, as incorporated in the works of the poet, is a way of objectifying the world around their perceptions, the application of which was demonstrated in Sepehri's pictorial poetry. On the other hand, craving for death appears in the personification of death in Sepehri's "Traveler" and "The Water's Footfall" through objective representation. It can be claimed incontrovertibly that he either tries to give objects of feeling, not the feeling itself, or he sympathizes with the observed objects, thereafter, converting it to empathy, and consequently putting himself in those objects. In his poems, he tends to glean and dramatize the worldly pictures around him, and this aptly foregrounds Barthes' impersonality of author in its real sense. It seems that the hidden spring of action often lies in his thought and imagination which sometimes become as vivid and powerful as to qualify for deception as the drama of interior.

## Note

1. The quoted verses in the text are referred to according to their line number.

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# 论菲利普·拉金诗歌中的商品符号与消费伦理

陈 晞

**内容摘要：**菲利普·拉金是二十世纪英国杰出的诗人。本文通过分析拉金诗歌中对商品和广告的描写，指出商品和广告都是通过“意义转移”获得“符号价值”，对商品的符号意义的消费体现了商品意欲强加在大众身上的价值观，进而揭示了在消费主义引导下人们生活方式的改变、商品文化的伦理导向作用以及人们被淹没在消费品和现代感中的迷茫和反省。

**关键词：**菲利普·拉金 消费伦理 商品 广告

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**Title** Commercial Symbol and Consumption Ethics in the Poems of Philip Larkin

**Abstract** Philip Larkin is one of the most distinguished poets in 20<sup>th</sup> century. By analyzing the goods and advertisements depicted in Philip Larkin's poems, this paper points out that the goods and advertisements have obtained "symbolic value" from "meaning transformation", thus the consumption of symbolic meaning of goods represents value that goods force upon people. Further on, the paper explores the changes of lifestyle caused by consumerism, ethical guidance of commercial culture as well as the confusion and meditation of people overwhelmed by consumption and modern life.

**Key words** Philip Larkin; consumption ethics; goods; advertisement

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拉金是二十世纪英国诗坛的杰出代表人物，由于他生活在传统社会观念崩溃与现代社会理念迅速发展的历史时期，他目睹了现代工业、商品经济和城市文明拔除传统生活的遗迹并以诗歌这一艺术形式记录下了这一重大的转折过程。拉金的诗歌以“拍摄式”的审美眼光，快速捕捉、记录和保存客观现象及个人体验，展示出一幅幅栩栩如生的现代城市生活画面，挖掘出人们对城市生活和工作的态度的变化，以及在商业高度发展的过程中，商品对人们生活方式导向的反思。

—

二十世纪，在现代化大机器的隆隆轰响声中，西方经济飞速地发展，商品

极大地繁荣，西方社会从生产型社会步入了消费社会，随之而来的是消费主义的盛行。人们消费的目的不是为了满足现实生活中的实际需要，而是不断去满足被诱导、被刺激起来的欲望，人们所消费的不是商品的使用价值，而是隐藏在商品符号背后的价值。

在拉金生活的英国二十世纪中旬，随着经济的复苏，城市化、商业化的发展，消费主义也开始在英国社会盛行，现代消费主义不仅改变了人们的社会关系和生活方式，也改变了人们看待这个世界和自身的基本态度。消费主义最重要的一个因素就是商品，法国诗人波德莱尔在十九世纪就曾指出在人们的生活中商品已经成为一种莫可名状的主体，人们对商品的顶礼膜拜宛如“大城市的宗教般的陶醉”，商品如同人们现实生活中的麻醉品，人们对商品的陶醉犹如顾客潮水般涌向商品的陶醉（本雅明 73-74），他们徜徉在城市里，在商品的迷宫里慢行，陶醉在对商品的迷恋之中，商品“极乐地渗透了他的全身”（本雅明 73）。而波德莱尔是一个对拉金影响深刻的诗人，拉金在牛津大学读书时就大量阅读波德莱尔的作品。波德莱尔主张独身才能让创作的自由空间得到保证，拉金为了追求艺术和自由，一辈子没结婚。波德莱尔推崇“用平常的语言来表达无限深邃的思想”（本雅明 74），拉金把波德莱尔这句话奉为至宝，因为波德莱尔的这种诗歌理念既摆脱了浪漫主义的华丽辞藻又迥异于象征主义的晦涩暧昧，在拉金几十年的诗歌实践中，这种诗歌风格逐渐成为拉金的独特诗风，并影响了整个运动派诗歌。在题材方面，波德莱尔诗歌中对城市平常人和日常事物的关注对拉金影响很大，平常的人和平凡的事物也成为拉金诗歌的主要题材。可以说，如果波德莱尔是城市漫游者的典范，那么拉金是城市漫游者这一特定文化群体在现代社会的发展和延续。

本雅明在《发达资本主义时代的抒情诗人 论波德莱尔》中以波德莱尔为典型，研究探讨商品及消费主义以及人们的商品移情。本雅明以辩证的移情图式（Schema der Einfühlung）为基础分析了商品的经历和顾客的经历。商品的经历是对顾客的移情，对顾客的移情就是对金钱的移情；顾客的经历则是对商品的移情，对商品的移情就是对价格即交换价值的移情（曹雷雨 49）。商品对人的移情一方面表现在人们对物品的欲望和拥有商品的激动，另一方面，人们不是从他们所生产的商品获得了自身价值，而是商品在向金钱流通的道路上反映了人的价值。本雅明关于人对商品移情揭示了商品是具有幻觉效应、许诺某种价值的象征；在从顾客到商品的移情过程中，人在商品无孔不入的流通旅程中体验到种种有关主体和商品的律动。

本雅明标榜的这种商品移情在拉金的笔下更是妙笔生辉。拉金不仅一辈子都很注重衣着的品质，从牛津大学求学期间起，他的衣着总是走在时尚的前沿，而且拉金还醉心于商业文明带来的五彩斑斓的物质享受，同时，他的消费观念也是超前的，比如：他在八十年代就买了一部奥迪车代步，在当时他的同事中是十分前卫的，这些都代表性地反映了他的消费观念和商品意识。此外，从诗集《较少受骗者》、《圣降灵节婚礼》到《高窗》，他的诗歌罗列了各种商品

和品牌：汽车、百货商店、“西装、红色厨房小电器、尖头鞋”、电视机、便宜货的买卖、烫发、尼龙手套、电搅拌机、烤面包机、浴帽、廉价香烟、巧克力包装纸等等。

研究拉金的学者布莱克曾指出很多不同类别的商品名称和品牌的名称频繁出现在拉金的诗歌里 (Blake 164)，但是他仅仅指出了这个现象，没有对这种现象进行更进一步的分析 and 阐述，其实，拉金有意识地、不厌其烦地详细罗列这些商品和品牌是蕴意深刻的，其目的在于揭示人们生活中无所不在的商品的移情所掩盖的残酷之现实，比如：《一个酷酷的大商店》这首诗就罗列了商店中陈列的各种商品：针织衫、夏天休闲衫、长筒袜、T 恤、裤子、上衣、娃娃装、迷你短装：

The large cool store selling cheap clothes  
 Set out in simple sizes plainly  
 (Knitwear, Summer Casuals, Hose,  
 In browns and greys, maroon and navy)  
 Conjures the weekday world of those  
 酷酷的大商店出售便宜的服装  
 简单的款式简陋地摆放  
 (针织衫、夏天休闲衫、长筒袜，  
 褐色，灰色，栗色，海军蓝)  
 可以想象工人们的每个工作日

Who leave at dawn low terraced houses  
 Timed for factory, yard and site.  
 But past the heaps of shirts and trousers  
 Spread the stands of Modes For Night:  
 Machine-embroidered, thin as blouses,  
 他们破晓离开低矮的房子  
 踩点到工厂、工场和工地  
 但是大堆 T 恤和裤子后  
 铺陈着一排排晚礼服：  
 机器刺绣，薄薄的上衣，

Lemon, sapphire, moss-green, rose  
 Bri-Nylon Baby-Dolls and Shorties  
 Flounce in clusters. To suppose  
 They share that world, to think their sort is  
 Matched by something in it, shows

柠檬色、天蓝、嫩绿、玫瑰色  
英国尼龙，婴儿的玩具，热裤  
如繁花锦簇，如果  
他们也享有那个世界，认为  
他们这种人也与某些东西相配，说明

How separate and unearthly love is,  
Or women are, or what they do,  
Or in our young unreal wishes  
Seem to be: synthetic, new,  
And natureless in ecstasies. (101)<sup>1</sup>  
爱，或女人，或他们的工作，  
或我们年轻时那不实际的梦想  
是多么地遥远和荒谬，  
仿佛销魂入迷中的  
虚伪的，新奇的，和不自然。 《一个酷酷的大商店》

这首诗歌一开始就描述商店里摆放着的廉价衣服：式样单调（Plainly），颜色深沉而暗哑，都是褐色、灰色、栗色和海军蓝。这些衣服让人联想起它们的生产者和消费者，那些破晓就要从低矮的房子里出来去工厂、田野和工地劳作的体力劳动者，正是他们生产出成批的产品。这些批量生产的衣服由于都是机械制作的，每一件都是一模一样，单调而没有特色，而生产这些衣服的劳动者和千篇一律的衣服一样，也是千人一面，被非人化而失去个人特色，商品使个体失去了主体性。由于是大批量生产，衣服的质量低劣，因而价格低廉，在商店里也是堆成一堆地随意摆放，只有生产它们的人成为这种商品的消费者，对商品的符号意义的消费过程构建了新型的社会阶层与社会支配的方式，体现着一种新的社会生活组织原则。令人寻味的是，诗歌接着描写这些廉价的衣服后面摆设着的晚礼服之类的服饰，它们不再是简单而粗糙，而是经过机器刺绣、柔软轻薄，颜色不再暗哑而是鲜艳的柠檬色、蓝宝石色、嫩绿色、玫瑰色，式样也很时尚（Bri-Nylon Baby-Dolls and Shorties），衣服边上装饰着花边和坠饰。这些衣服明显是时髦女性的服饰，它们让人们联想到女人、爱情，因此这些商品也在引导人们的消费思想，正如诗歌最后画龙点睛般的一句所言：年轻人在商品的诱导下，产生不现实的幻想，以为拥有了这些，就拥有了幸福和成功。而实际上，这些外表光鲜的商品是合成纤维衣料，一种新的工业原料制作而成，是“natureless in ecstasies”。其“不自然”（natureless）而“销魂着迷”（ecstasies）正是现代社会商品化在底层体力劳动者心中的心理投射。

在诗歌《这里》（“Here”），诗人描写了人们走进商店时，面对琳琅满目的商品，心中涌动的购物冲动和欲望即将得到满足的快感：

Push through plate-glass swing doors to their desires-  
 Cheap suits, red kitchen-ware, sharp shoes, iced lollies,  
 Electric mixers, toasters, washers, driers. (70)

推开有玻璃门旋转门，激起他们欲望的一  
 便宜的衣服，红色的厨房用具，锃亮的鞋子，冰激凌  
 电动搅拌器，烤面包机，洗碗机，吹风机

在商品社会里，消费生活延伸了现实世界的浪漫情调，把追求崇高信仰的幸福感变成了具体的消费中的快感，变成新的无数个体体验中的幸福。商业化改变人们的生活，引导人们的思想，而随着时间的推移，这种工业化文明所带来商品化和消费文化将在更大的程度上影响人类的价值观，正如《周六集市》结尾句中所预示的“时间搓成了铁匠铺的烟 / 其形影越来越大”，这行诗恰如其分地暗示了工业化、商业化不可遏制的势头。在这样高度工业化社会里，人们的生活、消费、思想观念完全商业化了，并且为商业、大众传媒所左右，人失去了主体性、选择性，社会迷失了传统的价值。

拉金在描写商品时从自己的体验出发，观察和书写这些物品所代表的消费主义引导的生活方式、物欲刺激下商品文化的伦理导向作用，以及人们被淹没在消费品和现代感中的迷茫和反省。纵观拉金的作品，其诗歌几乎皆以一个旁观者身份观察城市生活和人们的活动，以悲观、幽默的态度冷眼旁观世态人情，评论周遭所闻所见，直接而冷静地剖析诗人自我的内心世界。虽然拉金像传统的城市漫游者一样沉浸于物质所带来的便利和消费所带来的满足感，但是他并没有像城市漫游者一样被商品所麻醉，迷失在商品的迷宫里，而是敏锐地观察到消费主义的盛行使人们把追求和占有物质、追求享受作为人生目标的价值观念，消费主义和享乐主义成为消费生活中的主流价值和规范，在这种潮流的驱使下人们变得越来越现实，变得越来越功利。追求享乐和物欲刺激的生活方式驱使人们沉溺于时尚与消费潮流之中，娱乐、消遣、休闲、消费代表了新的生活价值，寻求更新、更好的消费成为人们生活追求的目标，消费时的情感快乐成为人们关心的焦点，而精神享受却变得日益贫乏。

## 二

在六十年代经济和商业浪潮中，拉金不仅描写各种商品以揭示其符号消费的本质，还通过对广告的别样解读与剖析来揭示平常人在商品经济中受到的冲击。由于“伴随着消费主义的发展的是广告、销售噱头、促销手段的发展，所有这些力图在消费者和产品之间建立某种关系”（Day 21），而广告之所以能有效地在消费者和产品之间建立起关系，因为它是一种实用的视觉工具传达着商品经济的精髓，“按照广告来放松、娱乐、行动和消费……”（马尔库塞 9）。在《拱廊街》中，本雅明曾指出城市漫游者是城市结构和广告的最敏锐的观察者，同样，拉金也曾向朋友表露自己对广告着迷：“于我而言，广告牌

是美丽而又带有一种奇怪的哀伤，它非常像柏拉图式不切实际的本质”（Motion 321）。广告的这种特质深深地吸引了拉金，他的诗歌中频繁地出现广告，比如：《无钱可送》中的“户外广告”，《1914》中的“铁皮广告牌”，这些诗歌表现了广告在人们生活中无处不在的地位，不仅如此，拉金还写了两首以广告为主题的诗歌：《美的精华》和《阳光明媚的普莱斯塔廷》。

作于上个世纪六十年代的诗歌——《美的精华》揭示了广告的所有本质：市场经济在人们思想上的主导作用、广告所创造的理想意象和现实的矛盾、广告的消费引导和人们的盲目轻信：

In frames as large as rooms that face all ways  
 And block the ends of streets with giant loaves,  
 Screen graves with custard, cover slums with praise  
 Of motor-oil and cuts of salmon, shine  
 Perpetually these sharply-pictured groves  
 Of how life should be. High above the gutter  
 A silver knife sinks into golden butter,  
 A glass of milk stands in a meadow, and  
 Well-balanced families, in fine  
 Midsummer weather, owe their smiles, their cars,  
 Even their youth, to that small cube each hand  
 Stretches towards. These, and the deep armchairs  
 Aligned to cups at bedtime, radiant bars  
 (Gas or electric), quarter-profile cats  
 By slippers on warm mats,  
 Reflect none of the rained-on streets and squares

如房间大的广告牌，随处可见  
 巨大的块头堵在马路的尽头，  
 坟墓被乳蛋糕遮掩，平民窟被  
 对机动车润滑油和三文鱼的赞美所遮盖，  
 永远照耀这些刻画鲜明的树木  
 生活应该是怎么样的。高悬于贫民窟之上  
 银质餐刀深插在金灿灿的黄油里，  
 草地上立着一杯的牛奶  
 得体的家庭，在气候宜人的仲夏里  
 驾着车，随意地大笑，挥洒他们的年轻，  
 每人手拿小方盒  
 伸向前。这些，以及那舒适的摇椅  
 和就寝时的杯子连成一气，发光灯

(燃气或电的)，四分之一侧面的猫  
 躺在拖鞋旁，温暖的地毯上，  
 置身于滂沱的街道和广场之外

They dominate outdoors. Rather, they rise  
 Serenely to proclaim pure crust, pure foam,  
 Pure coldness to our live imperfect eyes  
 That stare beyond this world, where nothing's made  
 As new or washed quite clean, seeking the home  
 All such inhabit. There, dark rafted pubs  
 Are filled with white-clothed ones from tennis-clubs,  
 And the boy puking his heart out in the Gents  
 Just missed them, as the pensioner paid  
 A halfpenny more for Granny Graveclothes' Tea  
 To taste old age, and dying smokers sense  
 Walking towards them through some dappled park  
 As if on water that unfocused she  
 No match lit up, nor drag ever brought near,  
 Who now stands newly clear,  
 Smiling, and recognising, and going dark. (113)

它们统治了整个户外。当然，他们安详地竖立  
 宣称要将纯真的外表，纯粹的泡沫和纯粹的冷酷，  
 注入到我们并不完美的眼睛  
 凝视着这个世界，什么都不能  
 冲洗得干净如新，寻求着可以居住的家园  
 所有的家园。那里，黑色屋檐的酒吧  
 满是从网球俱乐部回来的穿着白色衣服的人  
 一个男孩在厕所里几乎把心都呕吐出来  
 避开他们，那些领取退休金的人  
 用半便士买了一杯格瑞伍克露斯奶奶的茶  
 品尝那久远的年代，烟鬼们  
 走向斑斑点点的广场，  
 如同走向在水一方的她  
 没有点烟，深吸一口也不能靠近她，  
 她笑着，清晰而亲切，  
 他们逐渐意识到，然后往回走。 ——《美的精华》

为了说明广告在人们生活中无处不在，诗人在这首诗一开始细致地描写了

广告的物质特征：广告牌不仅制作得很大“as large as rooms”，而且在我们生活中无处不在“face all ways”，他们巨大的块头堵在马路的尽头“block the ends of streets with giant loaves”、高悬于贫民窟之上“cover slums”、“high above the gutter”、“rising serenely”（第二诗节）甚至统治了整个户外“dominate out-door”。广告全力打造一个人们置身于完美世界的理想状态的意象，以多种形式刺激人的物质欲望，鼓吹个体的物质利益和物质享受。为了达到这个目的，广告首先展现给人们一个富裕、温暖、优雅的家庭生活画面：银质餐具（A silver knife）、美食（cuts of salmon、golden butter、A glass of milk stands in a meadow），舒适的物质享受（the deep armchairs cats、radiant bars、slippers on warm mats、cars）、这些物质构成了一个和睦、快乐、年轻的幸福家庭画面（Well-balanced families、owe their smiles、Even their youth）。重要的是：这个快乐家庭的人们每人手里都拿着广告产品（“small cube each hand/ Stretches towards”），很显然，广告是在引导消费，广告者是在暗示人们，如果买了他们的商品就能像广告中的人一样享受快乐、保持青春、生活富足，因此，广告赋予了商品的象征价值。《美的精华》把抽象价值与受众理解对接，运用消费者认知中形象的符号，即用具有象征意义的载体来表达商品形象，赋予商品象征的价值——富裕、青春、快乐。

由于广告利用图片有意误导人们对幸福的定义，所以拉金在这首诗中尖锐地指出广告牌强烈的视觉冲击所制造的理想画面掩盖的是普通人贫穷的现实，冰激凌蛋糕广告牌掩盖了坟墓，虚华掩饰了贫穷，银质餐具和黄灿灿的牛油是贫民窟的人们消费不起的奢侈，广告中晴朗的中秋不能反映现实中阴雨的“阴霾”。因此，在诗歌的第二节，诗人进一步揭示：广告是虚伪的“泡沫”，“冷酷无情”，不仅不是现实的“反映”，而是脱离、美化了真实世界。通过虚假的广告意象和真实生活画面的强烈对比，诗人意在揭示广告所展示的“美的精华”蒙蔽、欺骗普通百姓的残酷事实——消费主义文化。这种文化的本质特征就是对“符号”的消费，商品最重要的属性不再是“使用价值”，而是其“符号价值”，即商品所具有的象征意义、文化含义（鲍德里亚 114-115）。《美的精华》，《阳光明媚的普莱斯塔廷》中的商品广告宣扬了一种追求高品质的生活品味、海滨度假的奢华休闲方式。商品属性的这种转变使消费活动的本质发生了改变——过去为满足需要（needs）的消费转变成为了满足欲望（wants）的消费，亦即对欲望本身的消费，而这种大规模消费欲望是经过媒体的引导和大规模的广告宣传被创造出来的，无形中把越来越多的人卷入了广告所规定的生活方式，使人们总是处在一种“欲购情结”之中，无止境地追求物质享受和高品质的生活方式，从而，消费成为人们自我表达与自我身份认同的主要形式和意义来源。

商品通过“意义转移”获得了“符号价值”主要有两种手段：一是广告系统，一是时尚系统。通过这两种手段，商品获得了文化含义，成为代表某种意义的符号和载体，变成代表某种文化含义的符号象征，或是让消费者在商品和某种文化意义之间取得某种习惯性联想（McCracken 77）。广告依仗着这种习惯

性联想引导人们的消费，引诱人们从贫瘠的口袋里挤出一部分钱来购买广告宣传的产品。《美的精华》中的第二节描写了普通人对香烟的消费，正如消费主义专家坎贝尔总结的：“在涉及香水、香烟或是女式内衣的广告中，狭义的浪漫表现得特别明显，在有些图像与故事中，更典型地使用着异国情调、想象的、理想化的等广义的浪漫。而广告的实际目的当然是诱使我们购买它们所表现的物品，换句话说，就是消费”（坎贝尔 2）。《美的精华》细致入微地描写了香烟盒上的图案——一个美丽的女人。这则广告仿佛在激起抽烟者的浪漫情怀，并且针对抽烟者潜意识中的浪漫情怀进行心理暗示：抽这个牌子的烟会使男人更有魅力，更能吸引香烟盒上那种类型的美丽女人。如此这般，广告的经济功能与文学、文化功能结合紧密，广告者利用消费者的心理、情感和精神方面的需求，使产品起着思想灌输和操纵的作用。在广告的强烈心理暗示下，抽烟者沉溺于这种浪漫幻觉。虽然，他们一辈子也不可能亲近这样的女人，但是，在他们心目中她是“清晰”而“亲切”（113）。

如同本雅明所言“在商拜物的支配下，女人的性吸引力多多少少被染上了商品魅力的色彩”（qtd 曹雨雷 19）。《美的精华》包装盒上的女性体现了女性身体的商品化和性欲商品化。性欲的商品化是利用男性消费者的潜意识欲望，进而鼓动这些潜在消费者的消费行为。《阳光明媚的普莱斯塔廷》（“Sunny Prestatyn”）同样揭示了女性身体的商品化和物化，拉金通过这首诗揭示了在商品经济中，商人通过性来吸引人们，广告中的女人和旅馆都带有性的暗示，而人们去海滨度假的心理暗示就是去纵欲寻欢。广告中女人的身体被物化了，变成了非人的性物品。人们对性感女人海报的破坏性行为：在她“巨大的乳头和裂开的胯部”（Huge tits and a fissured crotch）留下刻痕，还在她“两腿间潦草地画着 / 让她恰恰跨着 / 一根隆凸的鸡巴和两个球”，一方面说明人们对这种不真实的商品宣传的反感，另一方面，说明无限制地追求物质享乐使人们的精神文明日渐陷入危机。

## 结语

“（后）现代城市漫游者不仅准确的认识现实，同时能捕捉到城市潜在危险、威胁的种种迹象”（Jenks 157）。在上个世纪商业文明迅速发展的繁荣景象中，拉金敏感地察觉到广告在现代城市生活中代表了商品意欲强加在城市大众身上的价值观，是典型的城市梦幻的具象化生，同时，新的消费品产生新的象征意义，使得整个城市变成了一系列图画式的象征符号。因此，拉金的诗歌通过描写的广告和商品，揭示了资本社会物质的赤裸本质和商品与人之间的明目张胆的欲望关系。

## 注解【Note】

1. Thwaite, Anthony. ed. *Philip Larkin: Collected Poems*(London: Faber and Faber,2003)。以下随

文注明页码，不再一一说明。若非特别注明，文中引用的诗歌均为本人翻译。

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责任编辑：蒋文颖

# The Transitional Self and Tertium Quid in Theresa Cha's *Dictee*

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**Abstract** The essay addressed the representations of gender, identity, and nationalism in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's novel *Dictee* to argue that the text offers an interstitial space to conceptualize an identity that both invokes and resists the attempt by the dominant culture to contain the immigrant female self. The novel is composed of repeated silences, peculiar pauses, and narrative gaps found in translations that deviate from the original in an effort to explore the agency of an individual female subject within the national social order. The term "mistranslation" refers to the literary technique of directly altering meaning by leaving out an exact or equivalent translation between languages. Through mistranslation, the text reveals and disrupts the traditional use of translation during colonialism and imperialism as a method of cultural domination.

**Key words** *Dictee*; mistranslation; identity; Asian American literature

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's text *Dictee* (1982) is composed of repeated silences, peculiar pauses, and narrative gaps found in translations and mistranslations between English and French that explore the agency of a female subject within national narratives of cultural and identity. The author's innovative formal qualities include frequent changing between English, Korean, and French that produce "mistranslations" of the original meaning, thus creating a novel that complicates national narratives of culture and identity. The book, which might best be called a mixed-media novel, is an autobiographical compilation of prose, poetry, drawing, maps, diagrams, and photography that follows the lives of several women including Cha herself, Yu Soon—a Korean revolutionary leader, Joan of Arc, Demeter, Persephone, and Cha's mother. The author's personal stories as a Korean native and Korean-American immigrant show a resistance to the forces of integration and assimilation under colonial and imperial forces. The poetic passages of the novel alternate between French and English to represent the transitional female identity as expressed seen through the views of

French colonialism and Korean nationalism. The term “mistranslation” refers to Cha’s literary technique of directly altering meaning by leaving out an exact or equivalent translation between languages. Through mistranslation, the text disrupts the traditional use of translation during colonialism as a method of cultural domination. Similar to Mikhail Bakhtin’s “word of another,” Cha understands language as composed of multiple voices, most directly of the colonized other in resistance to the colonizer. The text sees the act of translation as a form of both domination and resistance. While the colonized are forced to use the colonizer’s language directly or indirectly, the speaker actively shapes the words for double meanings that allow her original voice through. In the dominant process of language reacquisition, the native language that is now “colonized” becomes temporarily silenced, but never permanently erased from consciousness. The colonial and imperial use of translation functions to assimilate the female subject into the dominant social order based on cultural hierarchies, wherein the colonized female individual is labeled as inferior.

Cha’s narrative of her own experience as a Korean immigrant woman in twentieth-century America offers a different model of translation as a mode of resistance. Translation in the text becomes the method by which immigrant subjects re-insert a self-chosen identity into the linguistic and metaphoric space that arise out of the overlap between two cultures, thereby allowing a third identity to emerge. This third identity is located both between and beyond the dominant and subordinated cultures. The alternative immigrant subjectivity is identified by Cha as *tertium quid*, which in Latin means a “third thing.” A *tertium quid* subjectivity is positioned not only in relation to the imperial and native culture, but also in relation to the individual, internal consciousness of the female subject’s personal life in America.

The literary technique of mistranslation creates dissonance within the narrative by dispelling the notion of equivalency in translation. The logic of equivalency between two or more cultures minimizes linguistic and social differences to suggest that meaning and identity are easily transmitted, unchanged between languages. Equivalency in translation is based on the idea that one word of meaning can be seen as an equal exchange for another meaning or experience. Yet it hides the fact that there exist difference and cultural hierarchies.

The use of translation occurs between Korean, the colonial French, and English. French is employed to refer the experience of French Catholic missionary activity in colonial and postcolonial Korea. Specifically, Cha directs our attention to the French colonial project to educate Koreans within foreign institutions of education that stress language acquisition at the cost of suppressing native languages. English is employed to refer to the language of the imperial United States during the mid-twentieth century and later, as well as to refer to the experience of Cha as a female Korean immigrant in

America who lives as a disenfranchised citizen. Cha employs these languages to show that the imposition of an outside, foreign language increasingly suppresses Korean language, cultural practices, and forms of knowledge.

More than showing the multiple layers of colonial and imperial domination through the use of mistranslation, the passages create a new or third meaning that is not found in a single language or culture. These alternative meanings that erupt symbolize the ability of the Korean American subject to challenge dominant forms of representation and immigrant identity by manipulating imperial cultural institutions of language production, which demonstrates that subjectivity cannot be represented uniculturally.

New forms of language and meaning challenge the dominant social order that dictates proper ways of assimilation for the female immigrant. The proper ways to assimilate include accepting the notion of equivalency that ignores the cultural hierarchies and forces one to speak “properly” following the rules of grammar and knowing when to be silent.<sup>1</sup> Cha employs silence in unique ways throughout the text and directly addresses the suppression of an individual voice in the colloquial American phrase “bite your tongue” in an ironic sense in the poem “Urania/Astronomy” when the speaker commands herself and the reader to stay silent. The immigrant subject resists the “proper” roles of speaking and acting by breaking the rules of language in order to express an alternative voice that narrates the lived experience of domination and assimilation that enforces a silence upon the subject.

In our attempt to understand the function of translation as a method of assimilation within the process of colonization and imperialism, it becomes apparent that language is one of the first tools used to assimilate the subject under a new order of rule. Language is an instrument of power that provides the means for representation and constitution as a legitimate subject of the new nation. In *The Wretched of the Earth* Frantz Fanon explains that language is the primary medium by which the colonizers control the colonized subject because the ability to speak affords the possibility of assuming a position within a culture (53). Lisa Lowe argues that “deviation” in language, such as found in the mistranslations in Cha’s novel, is the location where the self is articulated not only because the self resists racist domination through language but also due to the unspoken narrative in the gap of translating that allows the marginalized self to act (Lowe 38). In Cha’s text, colonization requires the subject adopt the language of colonizers because it is language that transmits the moral dualities of identity formation within the colonial social order, which simultaneously legitimizes and degrades the native subject. Colonization therefore dictates a dualistic paradigm of identity formation that articulates a subjectivity within a hierarchical framework of identity and culture. Writing on the subject of colonization,

language, and identity, Lisa Lowe explains the contradiction of the colonial formation of subjectivity:

The imposition of the colonial language and its cultural institutions, among them the novel, demands the subject's internalization of the 'superiority' of the colonizer and the 'inferiority' of the colonized, even as it attempts to evacuate the subject of the 'native' language, traditions, and practices. (97)

Lowe argues that the encounter between the colonizer and colonized demands that the colonized must void or suppress notions of identity based in 'native' culture. However, the attempt to void the native or pre-colonial culture is paired with the employment of the native culture as a relational point of difference that defines the colonial culture, thus creating a subject that is inferior yet necessary. The dissonance between the attempt to erase the subject's past and the attempt to employ the subject's past as a basis for moral comparison to the superior colonial culture creates the grounds for the subject's resistance. This resistance is precisely due to the fact that the contradiction demanded by the colonial culture is too impractical.

Forced assimilation produces both the silences and fragmentations of the indigenous and colonized subjects, which give way to the articulation of a dominant social order that marginalizes the female immigrant. However, the dissonance between the indigenous and colonial cultures provides a place for resistance to the dominant culture because language is manipulated by the initially silenced individual to serve the needs of a newly formed subject. This new subjectivity is fashioned partly in resistance to domination, but partly as a personal and non-public representation of the individual. Language is a tool of power used by the colonizers, but colonial language can also be co-opted by the colonized to challenge the power of the dominant social order. *Dictée* reveals this process through sections of poetry and prose that employ autobiographical references to the female Korean American immigrant who breaks the rule of language and the 'proper' order of assimilation by refusing inferior status. For example, the poem in the chapter "Urania/Astronomy" begins with the speaker listening to the sounds of swans and rain, then transits into a list of speech organs. The poem takes the reader on an imaginative journey into the physical body in an attempt to understand the *origin* and impact of speech.

In the opening stanzas, the speaker relates a feeling of confusion with images of the physical body trying to express itself:

*Impossible de distinguer les paroles*  
*Exhalees. Affirmees en exhalation. . . .*

*La language dedans. La bouche dedans*  
*La gorge dedans*  
*Le poumon l'organe seul*  
*Toute ensemble un. Une.*

Not possible to distinguish the speech  
 Exhaled. Affirmed in exhalation . . .

Tongue inside the mouth inside  
 The throat inside  
 The lung organ alone. The only organ.  
 All assembled as one. Just one. (66-67)

Confusion arises in the first line because the speaker is unable to “distinguish the speech” and unable to speak herself it seems. The focus on exhalation addresses the anxiety about wanting to speak but being afraid to articulate sound and self. We are caught in a moment of silence, where the repetitive stress on the words *dedans/inside* draws further attention to the body and physical organs of breath and sound—the tongue, mouth, throat, and lung.

By focusing on the body as the site of language production for the female immigrant subject, readers become aware of the fact that language is not produced merely through physical movement of organs, but depends upon a cultural ideology that directs acceptable speech production. This brings to light Cha’s perspective on the explosive interplay of the body, culture, and colonization as a process that relies upon the immigrant for the expression of power and resistance to that state power. Identity formation within the colonial social order demands dualistic and hierarchical relationships wherein the integration of the subject is based upon identifying with the dominant social order and the contradictory erasure of the native culture. As the moment of speech gestures toward the subject’s formation and agency, the ambiguity of meaning in the speech act embodies the silent agency of the subject, the unspoken narrative of the self in the gap between languages.

The formation of identity in Cha’s text occurs through linguistic representation, allowing the themes of resistance to come across in the act of speech itself. For instance, the divergent punctuation in the first line of the second stanza occurs through the placement of the period that alters the meaning between the French and English lines. The French text reads: “*La language dedans. La bouche dedans,*” while the English ‘translation’ (or mistranslation) reads: “Tongue inside the mouth inside.” The

simple displacement of the period radically alters the meaning of each sentence in each language, further underscoring the notion that meaning is culturally contingent. The English version indicates a sense of unraveling as the imagery delves quickly into the body via the speech organs. In contrast, the French sentence comes across factually with a period separating the description of the tongue and mouth. The French language thus functions as a perfunctory explanation while the English version gives rise to a heightened feeling of panic by linking the tongue and mouth, suggesting that both organs are encapsulated by something larger. The idea that the tongue and mouth rest “inside” the body but also beyond the body, points toward the function of ideology by suggesting the formation of identity is attached to any speech act.

The altered meaning of the aforementioned phrase between French and English occurs with the lost period, which reminds the reader of the nonequivalency of languages and cultures. In other words, Cha repeatedly articulates her view that knowledge and identity are created in culturally specific spheres which are not communicated ‘equally’ between cultures. This inequality shows that a subject is never fully formed or integrated within any national order or ideology. It also indicates that a subject must always have avenues of resistance to the dominant order that tries to minimize difference and erase minorities within the majority. This calls forth the dilemma elucidated by Edward Said when he inquires about the problems that arise in asserting a different identity than that of the colonized self. The asserting of a new identity is an effort to “discover the bases of an integral identity different from the formerly dependent and derivative one” (213).

Frequently throughout the text Cha employs the technique of misplaced punctuation that creates improper pauses in the narrative in order to stress the impossibility of achieving absolute equivalence between cultures and meanings. The minor grammatical change of one period does indeed alter the meaning of the stanza because there is a pause in the French text that does not occur in the English version. These discrepancies found in the mistranslation between two or more language almost always involve a silence or lack thereof in the book. Thus, the placement of silence or moments of pausing become the linguistic and metaphoric space where Cha articulates an alternative Korean American agency.

Narrative gaps between translated texts represent the deceptive silence arising in the processes of forced assimilation and translation wherein the female Korean American speaker resists the inferior positioning imposed by the government. The act of translation can also be an act of resistance. Mistranslations do not reproduce the original form and therefore function to resist colonial/imperial attempts to erase the native past and the present immigrant identity. These narrative gaps left from mistranslation, as noted above, employ the logic of nonequivalency, which rejects the

duality of superior and inferior social roles. Nonequivalency is also a rejection of the concept of exchange value that makes different things the same and of the attempts to obliterate the hierarchical relations between a dominant and oppressed culture.

As the poem continues, alterations in language accompany an emphasis on the experience of erasure. This experience, however, gives rise to the events of resistance found in repeated mistranslations and moments of silence in later chapters. The untitled poem in the chapter “Urania/Astronomy” quoted above ends with images of violence and dismemberment that are paired with images of resistance and deceptive silence:

*Mordre la langue. Avaler. Profondement.  
Plus Profondement. Avaler. Plus encore.  
Ju'usqu'a ce qu'il n'ya aurait plus d'organe. (70)*

Bite the tongue. Between the teeth. Swallow  
deep. Deeper. Swallow. Again, even more.  
Until there would be no more organ. (71).

The juxtaposition of these moments works to show the refusal of the Korean American subject to be written into the dominant American narratives of assimilation that only offer the immigrant inferior public roles within the national social and linguistic order. The stanza below begins with the speaker telling herself, as well as the reader, to devour the self. Immediately before these lines above, the speaker contemplates the disappearance of written language by imagining the absence of punctuation, sentences, paragraphs, pages, books. Here, we find the disappearance not only of written language, but of speech as well. The violence of the act is disconcerting and underscores limitations on agency as a marginalized subject. Even in the restraint or violence upon the self, the subject ascribes value to the silence. From the outside, the subject is silent, but from within ferocious activity taking place upon the self, the tongue painfully disrupts the hegemonic order that attempts to control the female subject.<sup>2</sup>

The impossible, agonizing act of eating one's own tongue symbolizes the painful process of speaking an imposed language of the dominant culture. Cha commands how to bite and swallow the speaking instrument of the tongue; one must sever the articulation of yourself in the forms made available through colonial and imperial languages. The speaker wants to swallow her own tongue, the source of the speech production that articulates identity, in an attempt to defy imperial demands to speak and act ‘properly.’

In this section quoted above Cha comments on the dissonance between the inner self and external social reality created by that act of speaking the imperial or national language. Craig Calhoun reminds us that “nationalism is not just a doctrine, however, but a more basic way of talking, thinking, and acting” (11). Assimilation produces painful moments for the immigrant who must renounce aspects of the self in order to articulate an identity in the adopted culture. However, this violent form of self-silencing by biting and swallowing one’s tongue is an act of resistance as well because the speaker refuses to accept the dominant narratives that demand a subjugated positioning in order to begin to speak. The speaker in Cha’s poem nullifies the rules, both grammatical and ideological of the colonial/imperial cultures. The violent, self-inflicted pain of silence through devouring speech organs suggests that the speaker wants to control her own representational status in the language. Therefore, the subject refuses to speak the imperial language in the terms set forth. Cha makes the body acutely visible in these sections by materializing an otherwise invisible process. To a certain degree, Cha indicates that it is the physical body that marks the limitations of assimilation into the dominant culture.

In the final stanzas of the poem, the speaker “voids the words” of the dominant language and then she “voids the silence” (73). This gestures toward the belief that the speaker has the ability to void the imposed dictum of an inferior subjectivity that conforms to the colonial/imperial paradigms of power relations. Voiding the silence imposed by colonialism and imperialism gives rise to new forms of agency that are articulated in the “broken speech” and “pidgeon” languages that stop and start at odd times in relation to the internal demands of the individual rather than the external demands of the nation.

The emphasis on interruption in the these stanzas below further underscores the view that the immigrant subject will create an alternative identity by deviating from expectations of the dominant culture. The effect of introducing an alternative identity or source of agency works to disrupt the dominant position of the colonial language. Rather than a French (mis)translation of the text for this passage, there is an anatomical drawing of the head, chest, and speech organs. This draws our attention to the point that speech and language rules are produced by the ideology of the dominant social order, which enacts cultural hierarchies and moral dualities between imperial nation and immigrant subject.

Stop. Start. Starts

Contractions. Noise. Semblance of noise.

Broken speech. One to one. At a Time.

Cracked tongue. Broken tongue.

Pidgeon. Semblance of speech.  
 swallows. Inhales. Stutter. Starts. Stops before  
 starts.

Stop start. Where proper pauses were expected.  
 But no more. (75)

The speaker's interruptions and unexpected silences create hybrid forms such as a "pidgeon" language. Repeated emphasis falls upon the notion of "proper rests" in the passage above. However, Cha suggests that improper rests are the places where the individual actively resists assimilation. These stanzas are composed of rests where language is broken off and stopped short of expectation so that new meanings emerge. The speaker begins but stops abruptly on the line, emphasizing the inhalation and exhalation of breath that focuses upon the body. The physical function reflects the interiority of the self wherein identity is demarcated by the breath and the pause—the moments of silence that turn into contemplative resistance. The last line is a defiant stance of the speaker's rejection of the rules of speech and translation that demand uniformity. After biting off and swallowing the metaphoric tongue of imperial culture, the speaker articulates an alternative identity that does not conform to the "proper pauses" in the language.

The text's improper pauses are part of the new, hybrid language or pidgeon speech that considered by the dominant culture as broken speech, however for Cha this is precisely where a new subjectivity is formulated. The new language and agency that she creates in this poem does not simply borrow from other cultures but actually creates a new alternative language. This displaces hegemonic rules of order and assimilation because it reveals the multiplicity of meaning that incorporates endless forms of subjectivity. The speaker's pidgeon language accords agency in other forms that acknowledges the painful process of assimilation and resistance. The positioning of the letter 'g' in the word pidgeon creates allusions to the common pigeon bird. Thus, pidgeon speech is a play on words that hybridizes the word even further because it also symbolizes freedom and escape from domination and social erasure in the image of a flying bird.

*Dictée* disrupts the subjugated positioning of the Korean American subject in the process of assimilation through language by manipulating the process of translation that creates the possibility of an alternative identity within these indeterminate spaces of speech. Rather than defining the subject in a dualistic relation between imperial and native culture, the 'cracked tongue' subject speaks an alternative language that contains reference points to both imperial U.S. and Korean cultures as well as colonial

French culture. The tertium quid for Cha is this alternative immigrant subject who resists assimilation into the dominant social order by refusing to speak “properly.” In addition, the tertium quid identity refuses the abstract notions of native cultural identity located only in relation to Korea or located within a dualistic framework of the dominant and the oppressed. For example, the book opens with a prose poem that questions the standards by which identity is defined:

From a Far  
 What nationality  
 or what kindred and relation  
 what blood relation  
 what blood ties of blood  
 what ancestry  
 what race generation  
 what house clan tribe sock strain  
 what lineage extraction  
 what breed sect gender denomination caste  
 what stray ejection misplaced  
 Tertium Quid neither one thing nor the other  
 Tombe des nues de naturalized  
 What transplant to dispel upon (20)

This opening poem demonstrates the text's project as a whole to explore the social methods of demarcating the self in a relational opposition to another. The text asks us to imagine identity outside of social categories and cultural dualities by suggesting tertium quid as the better possibility—identity found between the mistranslations and the silences of the speaker. Identity throughout Cha's unique text is not defined in normative colonial or postcolonial categories based upon hierarchies, but conceptualized as a hybridized form of a language that is shaped by the speaker, rather than the nation or political elite. Korean American identity is understood in relation to the dominant culture but is best defined by an internal dialogue that rejects hegemonic dualities of order and meaning.

## Notes

1. See Lisa Low, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*, Durham: Duke UP, 1996. Lowe examines the formal deviations of colonized literary production, which contradict national narratives that attempt to incorporate the subject into the dominant social order.

2. See L. Hyun Yi Kang, "The "Liberatory Voice" of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*." *Writing Self, Writing Nation*. Eds. Norman Alarcon and Elaine H. Kim. Oakland: Third Woman Press, 1994.

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# Figuring Modernity: Four Types of Women Images in Chinese Women Writing

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**Abstract** This article aims to explore four types of cultural images of women in Chinese literature—"the New Woman" from the Republican China (1911-1949), "the Strong Woman" in the Mao era (1949-1976), "the Feminine Woman" in the 1980s and "the Bad Girl" in the 1990s—to illustrate how the status of women is a significant indication of the development of modernity discourse. By exploring the four types of women images in the linear development of Chinese women writing, this essay argues that the idea of Chinese modernity is a historically specific structure in association with some distinct women images. In other words, the New Woman image signifies one dimension of modernity—a rejection of tradition and a break from the past, whereas the Strong Woman becomes the "national resources" during the Mao era's pursuit of modernity with the creation of Feminine Woman as a counter response to the dominant Maoist discourse, and the Bad Girl image turns into the "consumer resources" in a consumer culture.

**Key Words** Chinese modernity; Women Images; Women Writers

The word "modernity" has been used by scholars in so many different ways that it is necessary to be clear as to what the term is meant in this essay. A very authoritative explanation of the term given by Anthony Giddens is that

at its simplest, modernity is a shorthand term for modern society or industrial civilization. Portrayed in more detail, it is associated with (1) a certain set of attitudes towards the world, the idea of the world as open to transformation by human intervention; (2) a certain range of political institutions, including the nation-state and mass democracy. Largely as a result of these characteristics, modernity is vastly more dynamic than any previous type of social order. It is a society—more technically, a complex of institutions—which unlike any preceding culture lives the future rather than the past. (Giddens 94)

In this sociological thought, Giddens seems to emphasize more on the objective conditions that help produce modernity, but in my view, modernity can not only be seen as a set of economic, political and social conditions that help liberate humankind from ignorance and irrationality, but also a kind of “representation, a way of talking about the world in which temporal transformations of the society are occurring” (Chin 491). I agree with Sheldon Lu’s argument that “Chinese modernity, from the mid-nineteenth century to the twenty-first century, is necessarily multifarious and open to many possibilities of narration. We may enumerate a series of successive or overlapping ‘modern’ moments: incipient modernity in Late Qing, May Fourth Bourgeois modernity, capitalist semi-colonial modernity in Shanghai-Nanjing in the Republican era, communist revolutionary modernity, socialist modernity (1950s -1970s), the modernity of the new enlightenment in the New period (1980s), and postsocialist modernity in the post-New period from 1989 to the present” (Lu 1). China’s continuous striving for modernization in different historical periods has unleashed many sensitive writers’ reflections on some specific problems revolving around the process of pursuing modernity. This paper examines the literary representations of Chinese women by Chinese women writers since women’s issues and women writers’ own voices have always constituted a major part of Chinese modern experiences. Chinese women writers provide various imaginations about what it means to be “a modern woman”, forming an important part of the forces that question different modernization projects and their consequences. Using the work of women writers as my research materials, I hope to analyze the different types of responses women writers have towards the prevailing dominant view of gender relations in different historical contexts and the entanglement between nationalism and feminism so as to arrive at a certain understanding of the lives of women in contemporary China.

### **New Woman Image and Positive View of Linear Modernity**

The word “modern” is used whenever “the consciousness of a new epoch formed itself through a renewed relationship to the ancients”(Habermas 3). Modern Chinese women’s literature is generally dated from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, during which time there was a range of activities carried out by different social groups advocating the need to change women’s lives and social positions. Many reformers in republican China contributed China’s weakness to the inferior status of Chinese women; consequently, they promoted women’s rights as a means of strengthening the nation. Searching for women’s equal rights has become a signifier of Chinese modernity. Influenced predominantly by the western thoughts, some male intellectuals such as

Liang Qichao (梁启超) and Kang Youwei (康有为) believed that the inhumane treatment of the female body in the traditional practice of foot binding was the cause of China's weakness. Since the bound feet thwarted the development of a healthy body and healthy offspring, foot-binding practice could only endanger the strength of the whole nation. Thus those reform-minded intellectuals strongly advocated a reformation of Chinese female body as one of the solutions to build a strong future China. They also advocate women's education as a way of China's salvation. This advocacy of anti-traditional, newly educated woman is always linked to the positive views of linear modernity. The New Woman symbolizes the vision of a strong future nation. Influenced by those male intellectuals, some women intellectuals such as Qiu Jin (秋瑾 1879-1907) began to publish articles in some newly emerging women's magazines, trying to awaken their fellow female Chinese to their own social status and its entanglement with the national crisis that China was facing.

The pre-May Fourth production of the "New Woman" as image was soon turned into real experiences during the May Fourth period. More elite women began to unbind their feet, attend school to receive education, and became more open-minded. This emancipation of Chinese women from the traditional Confucian beliefs was in accordance with male intellectuals' imagination of a strong new China. That is to say, the process of national invention and the struggle to create a new gender ideology still occurred simultaneously in China. May Fourth intellectuals, like their Qing precursors, also believed that the emancipation of the Chinese women can lead to China's strong future, but they shifted from Qing reformers' focus on the physical transformation of the people to the ideological transformation. Only by abandoning the Confucian doctrines and by adopting Western individualism could China become equal to the west. May Fourth Movement's radical emphasis on cultural transformation led to the emergence of a generation of "New Women", who believed that the traditional role of "good wife and wise mother" is less attractive than having a career and being economically independent. These "New Women" became zealous supporters of the male intellectuals' efforts to liberate Chinese women. Under such kind of cultural context, some major women writers such as Ling Shuhua (凌叔华), Ding Ling (丁玲), Xiao Hong (萧红), and Chen Xuezhao (陈学昭) create a series of literary female images to reflect on the concurrent emergence of "New Women". Their works deal with the emotional changes that were occurring in the lives of women, especially how some women raised in a traditional Confucian ideology were transformed into the new, educated urban women whose new demands and inspirations clash with the traditional values from time to time.

One specific example of a literary New Woman in women's literature is Meilin (美琳) in Ding Ling's "Shanghai, Spring 1930" (《1930年春, 上海》).

Ding Ling's literary works shift from the early exploration of female subjectivity and sexuality to the later emphasis on class and revolutionary struggle. "Shanghai, Spring 1930" belongs to the latter category of her works. Part one of "Shanghai, Spring 1930" tells the story of a male revolutionary Ruoquan (若泉), his bourgeois writer friend Zibin (子彬), and Zibin's lover Meilin. At the beginning of the story, Meilin is a passive elite woman who has simple charm and delicate beauty. Meilin's personality is largely shaped by the influence of her lover Zibin, who proudly keeps her in an expensive lifestyle, but through contact with Ruoquan and his new ideas about political and class struggle, Meilin begins to realize that her life is frivolous and needs a radical change. She is dissatisfied with her life and wants to be with the masses, try to understand the society and work for it. Towards this aim, she joins the Communist Party and participates in a mass May Day Movement. Thus Meilin is finally transformed into a New Woman who has discovered the key to self-fulfillment in a larger political cause. She represents "the optimism associated with belief in the linear process of modern nation" (Stevens 89). Ding Ling's handling of the heroine seems to support the idea that women's transformation into New Women can finally lead to the salvation of China. We can say that the emergence of the "New Woman" in early twentieth century China is wholly of and in modernity in the sense that these new women had to be confronted with the conflicts between tradition and newness. Since modernity in the May Fourth period largely means a break from tradition, the "new woman" is a woman who possesses the attribute of newness and she is the one who is in the process of remaking herself new.

Ding Ling's representative work *Miss Sophia's Diary* (《莎菲女士的日记》) depicts Sophia as a quintessentially modern woman struggling between self-loathing and self-love, between traditional expectations and modern freedom. Confined by tuberculosis, Miss Sophia narrates her thoughts and feelings in her diary while encountering with various friends and visitors. One visitor, Weidi (苇弟), is a puppy-like admirer who dotes on Sophia, which is much to her irritation. She tries every means to torment Weidi and at the same time also spends a lot of time dwelling on thoughts of Ling Jishi (凌吉士), another male visitor who is both handsome and repugnant. Miss Sophia is clearly preoccupied with the search for self-identity, swaying between taking pleasure in expressing herself and feeling pressured to conform to social norms. She is emotional, depressed, obsessive, and bewildered by her anxieties. She torments Weidi because of some deep-seated feelings of self-hatred, confusion and disgust for her life. By depicting Miss Sophia as a character who is experiencing a crisis in subjectivity, Ding Ling reveals her anxieties about modernity.

The 1950s and 1960s witnessed more examples of the dedicated revolutionary heroines who sacrifice herself for the greater national good. These new archetypal

heroines sometimes function to lead the male into proper conformity with the political order, but generally speaking, the significance of gender is downplayed in order to call for the creation of a strong nation and posit a progressive and linear notion of the modern project.

### **Mainstream Discourse and Strong Woman Image**

The mainstream discourse on Chinese women in the Maoist era tends to masculinize women. As Meng Yue and Dai Jinhua notes, “The Maoist ideology of gender equality camouflaged a socialist impasse that did not so emancipate as masculinize women” (Meng & Dai 32). This is partly because Chinese official discourse wants to tout the values of the public good of society in the process of modernization. As a result, images of energetic, hard-working female farm-hands, factory workers, soldiers, or cadres become propagandized. In order to realize the so-called “Four Modernizations”, the robust female factory workers and oilfield workers were highly praised of. “Since time is different, men and women are the same” or “Women can hold up half the sky” ideology produced the sexless “iron girl” models in all kinds of walks in this period of China. The Maoist emphasis on the sameness of women and men constitutes part of socialist modernity, but the slogans such as “Women can do whatever men can do” and “Time is different, men and women make no difference” show that Mao’s gender equality is still male-centered in that women are measured according to men’s standards. Chinese women in this period did not exist as women in their own right; instead, they were the national tropes that help build the socialist discourse. They had no distinct feminine features but were only sexless images strengthening the socialist discourse. Under such kind of dominant gender discourse, Chinese women’s self-formation was largely forged through the new political aspirations of the nation and Chairman Mao’s famous slogan “Girls love armed attire instead of silk and satin”( 不爱红装爱武装 ) became a unique historical phenomenon among Chinese women in Maoist era.

Since the writings of women have been at the forefront of literary innovation mainly in Post-Mao China and what I’m specifically interested here is how women writers’ works are related to the socially accepted gender discourse in the process of modernization, I’d like to focus mainly on the analysis of some prominent women writers in post-Mao era. Women writers in post-Mao era began to make efforts to deconstruct Maoist gender discourse. They try to demythologize Maoist women’s liberation with a feminist critique. The “iron girl” or the strong woman image was questioned in women’s writing. Shen Rong ( 谌容 ) in her *At Middle Age* ( 《人到中年》 ), creates such a strong woman image. Lu Wenting ( 陆文婷 ), a devoted ophthalmologist whose dedication to work takes over all her time and

energy, eventually becomes seriously ill and dies because of her long years of full concentration on work and extremely bad material circumstances; however, while in the hospital, Lu Wenting feels terribly guilty about her husband and children because she believes she has neglected them because of busy work although she has always been a good wife and good mother in others' eyes. On the one hand, by telling the plight of middle-aged intellectual who lived in cramped living space with low salary, the story attempts to highlight the new role of Chinese intellectuals in China's new modernization program and point out their selfless dedication to China's modernization, but on the other hand, the author clearly questions the Maoist strong woman ideology and set the readers thinking about the status of Chinese women who are struggling in their efforts to balance the double roles both at home and at work. It is this emphasis on both her role as a modern professional woman and on the traditional role of wife and mother that makes Lu Wenting stand out as an ideal character. But such an ideal woman suffers too much and has to die in the end.

### **Heterodoxy and Feminine Woman Image**

In order to let "real woman" surface onto the historical horizon, women writers in the 1980s began to question the so-called "state feminism" which is characterized by a lack of attention to women's own identity. Cultural images of Strong Woman produced in the Mao era such as cadres, "iron girls" and successful professional women are questioned, ridiculed and negated. In return, an emphasis on gender differentiation in dress and social roles become the hallmarks of the 1980s and marked a discourse of femininity in post-Mao China. Women writers in this period want to reclaim their naturalized sexual identity that had been denied during the Maoist era. Countless novels published in the 1980s introduce themes of love, romance, marriage, divorce and sexuality with an emphasis on women's biologically determined sexual differences from men. Women writers such as Zhang Jie (张洁), Zhang Xinxin (张辛欣), Wang Anyi (王安忆) and Tie Ning (铁凝) examined these issues in their works, addressing gender dilemmas in this particular period.

Zhang Jie and Zhang Xinxin are two contemporary Chinese women writers who are widely recognized for their fictional depiction of the problems of urban intellectual women confronting conflicts in their careers and personal relationships. Zhang Jie, for instance, in her representative work *The Ark* (《方舟》), made the three female protagonists realize that the virtues socialist society expected of them have no necessary connection with their well-being. In order to depict them as individuals, the author removed them from the family (all are divorced or separated) and put them together in one living space in which the female characters have spiritual bonds and solidarity. They are no longer under the restrictions gender difference imposed within

the family.

Zhang Xinxin depicts the increasing competitiveness and individualism that has marked post-Mao urban China. The story of her *On the Same Horizon* (《在同一地平线上》) focuses on the conflict that arises in the relationship between the male and the female protagonists. The plot follows the changes that the female protagonist is making in her life. She falls in love and marries an artist, sacrificing her own last chance to enter university. In the beginning, she dedicates herself to caring for her husband's needs, but after a few years of marriage, she feels a deep sense of frustration and emptiness. Gradually they begin to grow apart and finally get divorce. She finally enters a film institute, specializing in directing. The novel focuses on the complex psychological and emotional trauma that the female protagonist must overcome before she can take the final decision to go her own way. *On the Same Horizon* does not directly relate to China's political and ideological aims, rather it focuses on the author's concern with the female's process of searching for a self-identity. Although feeling agonized, the female protagonist finally leaves her husband and chooses to have an abortion instead of settling down to motherhood. The fact that she is unwilling to be a source of comfort for her husband and chooses to fulfill her own demands from life shows that the attitudes of women have changed. The novel clearly rejects the making of women by the traditional gender discourse and depicts women's agonizing process of discovering a feminine self. The decision to escape the limits of tradition is not an easy one. The result is the kind of psychological ordeal that the female protagonist in the story undergoes. Whatever the consequences of her choice, she has entered a new phase in her life. Her decision reflects the demands of an educated urban woman who sees herself equal to her male counterparts, thus standing on the same horizon, as the title indicates. By depicting such kind of female protagonists, Zhang Xinxin tries to redefine what it means to be a real woman in modern China.

Since the 1980s, many women writers are very sensitive to the social changes with the development of China's economy. Lin Bai (林白)'s *Record of Women's Oral History* (《妇女闲聊录》), for instance, wrote in this book hundreds of hours of conversations with women in remote areas to tell the everyday life experiences of 154 women. These women's stories detail the desperate survival of women in rural communities, especially the degradations they suffer when they attempt to migrate to the city to find employment. The description of those marginalized migrant women presents an important picture of alternative Chinese modernity. As the commercialization and urbanization of Chinese society grow faster, women writers express their concern when Chinese women confront the pressures they feel as women and challenge the established hierarchy.

Women writers in the 1980s wrote works to critique the incomplete nature of Chinese women's liberation. They tend to desire a return to a female identity or female essence and are often critical of men for not being able to accept or deal with strong women with distinct individualities. We can see that their collective push for the desire of femininity is historically conditioned. It can be seen as a cultural critique of the de-emphasis of women's difference in the socialist gender policies. Ironically, those women writers' search for femininity was hijacked by the rapid development of consumerism in the 1990s. Weihui (卫慧)'s *Shanghai Baby* (《上海宝贝》) is a typical example of taking the issue of womanhood and femininity further and more daring into the domain of sexuality.

### Urban modernity and Bad Girl Image

Leo Lee (李欧梵) in his famous book *Shanghai Modern* (《上海摩登》) confidently declares the city to be the site of the Chinese modernity. The city was where Chinese modernity manifested itself in multiple forms and shapes. By identifying Shanghai as the "very embodiment of modernity" (Lee 5), Lee draws attention to the local experience. If we agree Leo Lee's wonderful analysis of Shanghai in the 1930s as one of the key sites of Chinese modernity, today's Shanghai can even more clearly reflect distinct Chinese modernity since it is one of the most prominent cities in China that experience the large scale urbanization. Different generations of female urban writers cultivated their literary and aesthetic sensibilities in this cultural matrix of Shanghai. Zhang Eileen (张爱玲 1920-1995) and Wang Anyi are two predominant writers who had the aesthetic sensibilities to depict the urban modernity in Shanghai. Zhang Ailing questioned the meaning of modern civilization and explored the impact of modernization upon human relationships. She began the concept of creating legends in daily life and described the fatality of people's lives. She once described her portrayal of common Shanghai people as "legends" since she argued that the mundane lives of the common people were "more legendary than legends" (David Wang 77). The contemporary woman writer Wang Anyi continued Zhang Aileen's approach, delved into the lives of common Shanghai people and explored their psyche when confronting various modern allurations.

In the past twenty years the growth of a market economy has dramatically changed China. The market economy and open door policy had greatly transformed Chinese people's way of thinking. In the 1990s, a very different group of urban-based writers offer new perspectives on contemporary Chinese women. Various images of modern feminine women are created with the basic elements of traditional feminine virtue and consumerism. The power to define women has been shifted from the state to market forces. Due to such change of historical context, young writers known as

beauty writers such as Wei Hui and Mian Mian (棉棉) wrote “Bad Girl” novels to depict the changing complexities of women’s lives in an increasingly globalizing, market-oriented China. Their candid, amoral portrayals of the heroine’s sexual experience and admiration of the hedonistic cosmopolitan lifestyle mark the great influence

Wei Hui’s semi-autobiographical novel *Shanghai Baby* (1999) presents a “simulacrum of Western modernity” (Schaffer & Song 24). The protagonist Ni Ke (倪可) is depicted as a babe yearning for bourgeois commodities and hedonistic lifestyles. Her sexualized performance of femininity and her self-fashioning as beauty objects both challenge and enhance phallogocentric notions of woman as other. Roaming around coffee shops, bars and parties, Ni Ke fluctuates between her Chinese boy friend Tiantian (天天) who is sexually impotent and dying of a drug overdose and her virile German lover Mark. This explicit binary opposition between a Chinese man and a western man in terms of their sexuality is apparently too much for most of male readers. Layers of historical traumatic memory are stirred by this blatant contrast, because in a deeper sense, this sexual impotency hurts Chinese men’s dignity and compels them to think about China’s weak position in the past, thus arousing a wide spread negative male response.

*Shanghai Baby* echoes the American third wave feminism advocated by some young women who focus more on the realms of female desire and female expressions of sexuality. It apparently emphasizes female sexuality as the site of subversive female self-articulation, but this articulation has been co-opted by consumerism and the female body is turned again into the object of desire. Ni Ke’s free decision to choose her lover shows a pervasive rhetoric of female empowerment. In fact, Ni Ke states in the novel that today’s women are different from women in the past. They are a new generation that has “more freedom than women of fifty years ago, more beautiful than women of thirty years ago and have a greater variety of sexual orgasm than women of ten years ago” (Wei Hui 118). The heroine’s unbridled, almost masculinized “Bad Girl” sexuality and her claims of agency and empowerment are extremely fragile and dangerous because the prioritizing of youth and beauty is always a central strategy employed by the patriarchy to reduce women to objects who are being gazed by male subjects. The confident, sexually assertive new type of Chinese woman Ni Ke represents is actually conforming to globally defined standards of what it means to be a modern women in the new age. The feminist critic Xueping Zhong, when discussing the ambivalent responses among Chinese intellectuals to *Shanghai Baby*, points out that “the gender politics of the 1990s have shown that the turn to sexual difference or sexuality in the post-Mao era has encountered its specter: women could be turned into national resources during the Mao era’s pursuit of modernity, they can also be turned

into commercial resources in a consumer culture” (Zhong 654) .

### **Conclusion**

May Fourth iconoclasm was not the only approach to modernity. As a result of recent debate on globalization and the postcolonial concern with “alternative modernities”, I also tend to think of Chinese modernity as different from western modernity. It is true that many Chinese intellectuals employ Western ideas to design a blueprint of a modern nation, but after a period of uncritical reception of Western models, Chinese intellectuals began to envision the nation state in more accordance with China’s situation. Thus a conceptualization of modernity as plural conditions is very necessary. Pluralism is emphasized not only because various visions of modernity coexist, but also because different groups participate in the modernization project. Chinese women writers in different historical periods aptly represent Chinese women who have had to confront a powerful array of both ancient and modern patriarchal traditions that include the enduring Confucian belief systems and more recent Communist ideologies, compounded by the influx of western ideas resulted from market economy and consumerism. Chinese women writers’ reflections on women’s position in Chinese society are formed according to the different historical, political and cultural conditions. They are important indications of the development of modernity discourse.

The series of women images of New Woman, Strong Woman, Feminine Woman and the Bad Girl in different historical times clearly show that women’s issues become a signifier of Chinese modernity. The New Woman image represents a positive view of linear modernity and hopes for a strong future China and the notion of a Strong Woman in the Mao era itself is a reflection of the Maoist ideology in the process of modernization. These two representations of Chinese women constitute the male-dominant modernity discourses, whereas the advocacy of a more “feminine” identity in the 1980s can be seen as a questioning of State feminism’s lack of attention to women’s own identity. When it comes to the beauty writing practised by such self-proclaimed feminist writers as Wei Hui in the 1990s, the new image of the narcissistic bad girls’ yearning for living hedonistic life styles reveals that they are totally overwhelmed by the lure of commodity fetishism and their blatant expression of female sexual desires and encounters shows some modern urban women’s desire to search for a cultural space of their own in the rapidly changing Chinese social-economic context. We can see that in China, modernity is never a complete westernization. The sedimentations of the past such as the traditional Confucian values, together with the mores Socialist China all form complex attitudes to what it means when talking about modernity in China.

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# The Dislocation of Identity and an Elegy for Empire: E. M. Forster and His *A Passage to India*

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**Abstract** *A Passage to India* is the last and the most successful novel of E.M. Forster, a British middle-class intellectual with liberal humanism ideal expressed in his “only connect” motto. However, Forster’s liberal humanism ideal is incompatible with the imperialism of his time. Forster criticizes the inhuman imperialistic behavior and condemns it for its undermining of the cross-racial personal relations. As a firm anti-imperialist and liberal humanist, Forster’s identity is a dislocated and embarrassing one. Sensing that the empire is “resting on sand” with the inevitable fate of collapse, Forster resorts to the Utopian concept of “democratic empire” as a panacea of redemption. This depolitized ideal reflects the latent empire complex in Foster and his double visions: what he opposes is imperialism, not empire. Instead, he shows his great anxiety and concern to the fate of British Empire. *A Passage to India* is an “epitaph on liberal humanism” and an elegy to the British Empire.

**Key words** A Passage to India; liberal-humanism; identity; empire;

*A Passage to India* is generally regarded as E. M. Forster’s masterpiece. When it was published in June 1924, it was regarded as a major literary event and became an immediate success: 17,000 copies sold in Britain and more than 53,000 copies in the United States by the end of 1924. It was regarded by some people as a novel with a political theme. However, Foster declared on many occasions that the novel was not something intended political. In his prefatory note to the Everyman edition in 1957, he said: “In writing it, however, my main purpose was not political, was not even sociological” (Forster 317).

Then what is the novel really about? Forster continued, “It’s about something more than politics, about the search of the human race for a more lasting home, about

the universe as embodied in the Indian earth and the horror lurking in the Marabar caves and the release symbolized by the birth of Krishna” (Ibid.). The truth is that, as his previous four published novels, the novel shares the same theme---personal relations, although it has a strong tint of politics and pessimism.

### 1. “Only Connect”: Forsterian Utopia

In his *Morgan: A Biography of E. M. Forster*, Nicola Beauman gives a vivid and conclusive delineation of Forster and his ideal, “The very name of E. M. Forster symbolized the importance of personal relations, art, the inner life, the traditions of the rural life, the individual” (Beauman 368).

Personal relations are what E.M. Forster believes and cherishes all through his life. In *The Novels of E.M. Forster*, Virginia Woolf pointed out that: “His concern is with the private life; his message is addressed to the soul... This belief that it is the private life that matters, that it is the soul that is eternal, runs through all his writing” (Wilde 46). Personal relations, expressed in another way, are the famous Forsterian motto “only connect” in *Howards End* (1910) expounded by the central character Margaret.

Only connect! That was the whole of her sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its highest. Live in fragments no longer. Only connect, and the beast and the monk, robbed of the isolation that is life to either, will die. (*Howards End* 183)

“Only connect” became Forster’s well-known creed since then. Both in his life and his works, he was searching for such a kind of connection, or in other words, a harmony of personal relations. Take *A Passage to India* for example, the theme of personal relations is present everywhere. At the very beginning, Aziz, the Moslem doctor, was spending a social evening with some of his friends, and the question “whether or not it is possible to be friends with an Englishman” was brought up and stirred heated discussion. This question serves as a hidden line in the whole novel and “connection” becomes a central issue. The three parts of the novel, namely, Mosque, Caves and Temple suggest different seasons of a year in India. They also imply the personal relations at different stages: the Mosque part is the beginning of establishing connections, with the acquaintance of Mrs. Moore and Aziz as the typical symbol. The second part, Caves, is the break of the connection yet to be soundly established. It is a disruption of the personal relations with Adela’s accusation of Aziz’s attempted sexual assault. The relations between East and West, between those who are “trying to see India” and the natives, between the rulers and the ruled, are totally destroyed. The

third part, Temple, implies a slight hope of renewed connection. Mrs. Moore died on her return to Europe, Mr. Fielding and Miss Adela returned to Europe, and doctor Aziz abandoned his job to find a new one in a native state. The ending “No, not yet...No, not here” is often quoted by critics as an ambiguous response to the question in the first part: whether the Indians and the Englishmen can be friends, and it also shows the dilemma of E. M. Forster’s “personal relations” creed.

Forster grew up in a transitional period from the late-Victorian to Edwardian period in which his outlook and values were mainly forged. Forster was indebted to Matthew Arnold, the liberal humanist although Forster once said that he himself belonged to “the fag-end” of Victorian liberalism. Arnold’s liberal humanism ideal is reflected in Forster’s life and works. What is more, Forster advocated a universal connection that is both inclusive and transcendent.

In one of his lectures Foster said: “By the time I was writing novels and I remember a section in them, personal relations are the only thing that matters, for ever and ever.” Here, the “section” that Forster referred to was from Helen Schlegel’s statement in *Howards End*. Forster did keep this in his mind, because all his novels are about the personal relations, from his first novel *Where Angels Fear to tread* (1905) to his last one *A Passage to India* (1924). This deep-rooted concept of “personal relations” or, in other words, “only connect”, is the expression of Forster’s life-long faith as a liberal-humanist.

The “only connect” ideal opposes imperialism, hegemony and class hierarchy; it believes in freedom, equability, ration; it emphasizes the importance of personal relations, the harmony between individuals and the cultivation of spiritual world. It also proposes to bridge all the gulfs and barriers between the West and the East, to surpass and transcend the differences of race, class, culture, gender and nation for a universal Brotherhood and friendship. The ideal is a combination of the criticism of the reality and the expression of romantic imagination. This concept of personal relations, in final analysis, is Forster’s political Utopia.

Like many writers in the early twentieth century, Foster expressed his resistance and opposition to the modernity and machine age. Forster’s opposition was strong but he expressed it in a mild tone. His persistent “moral” is that “the life of affectionate personal relations, disengaged from political and religious zeal by means of a tolerant eclecticism,” (Crews 5) is supremely valuable. Forster just withdrew and retreated to his liberal-humanism utopia in the case of any crisis, including the First World War, which “enforced a radical reassessment of all the values Forster had inherited from nineteenth-century liberalism and awoke feelings of fear and anguish for the future” (Colmer 20). Although the War destroyed Forster’s faith in old-fashioned political liberalism, it did not turn Forster away from Utopian politics. In *A Passage to India*,

he thinks that the catastrophic failure of establishing personal relations between the British and the Indians is the ultimate reason for the unsuccessful connection. He also shows his faith through Fielding, a character with liberal-humanism in the novel that “the world, he believed, is a globe of men who are trying to reach one another and can best do so by the help of good will plus culture and intelligence” (Forster 80).

According to Forster, the solution to human misunderstanding lies in human nature, not in political institutions. In the 1930s and 1940s, he made a lot of speeches, broadcasts and essays defining his liberal humanist position, the most famous is “What I Believe” (1938) in which he declared: “I hate the idea of causes, and if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country” (Forster 66). Forster held the faith of “only connect”, which is both a utopia and refuge for him in his life-long experience. The neglect of politics in his novels is the latent expression of his utopian ideal.

## 2. The Dislocation of Identity

As pointed out by Parry in his *The Politics of Representation in A Passage to India* that “Imperialism inflicted a catastrophic dislocation in the world it conquered and colonized, generated new forms of tension within the metropolitan countries and brought the West into a condition of permanent antagonism with other civilizations” (Beer 27). The novel portrays both the dislocation of the identity of the Forster as well as his main characters in the novel.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the ideology of empire and imperialism was dominant. As pointed out by C. C. Eldridge, “the late Victorian and Edwardian world-view was assuredly imperial” (Eldridge 4). Forster, however, saw the ideology with intellectual sobriety. He belonged to the minority of his time who swam against the current. Forster did not brag about so-called sacred cause of empire. On the contrary, he was not confined to the circle of middle classes. He stepped out of it and began to gaze at this circle, at himself, at others and at the world in a critical way, from within and without. As an intellectual with liberal-humanism utopia ideal, Forster hated “the idea of causes”, and hoped that he should have the guts to “betray my country”. The denial of imperial cause means “treason”, in that case, Forster was excluded from the mainstream ideology and identity: he was both challenged and marginalized.

Many of the British writers in the nineteenth and early twentieth century showed their pride in the imperial cause in their works, including some serious writers. Among them, Kipling was the most feverous supporter and promoter of the imperial cause. Forster showed his strong distaste to Kipling. In his *Arctic Summer*, he wrote: “Kipling – whom I detest and I am sure you do too?” (Forster 246) The different attitudes of

Kipling and Forster toward imperialism are clearly reflected in their characters in their works, as pointed out by Jeffrey Meyers, “Kipling’s heroes became Forster’s villains” (Meyers 30).

Forster’s strong opposition to Kipling lies in the great difference in their attitude toward the issue of imperialism and the relations between East and West: Forster as a strong anti-imperialist and Kipling as the imperialist. This does not mean that they have nothing in common. As a matter of fact, they share the common idea that there is a great gulf between East and West. However, their discrepancy lies in the way they deal with the gulf. Kipling takes the gulf for granted, regarding it as impassable and does not bother to surpass it, as depicted in his famous poem *The Ballad of East and West*.

Forster shows no tolerance of Kipling over the issue of East and West. With his liberal humanism belief, he proposes a friendship between different races and cultures, and he thinks that the gulf between them can be bridged by establishing and maintaining good personal relations. In *A Passage to India*, Forster shows the possibility of this friendship even at their first meet. In the first part of the novel, Aziz meets Mrs. Moore at the entrance of the Mosque for the first time. Mrs. Moore’s respect for the Muslim’s religion by taking off her shoes before entering the mosque wins Aziz’s friendship immediately. Aziz said: “Oh, can I do you some service now or at any time?” (Forster 42) His heart “began to glow sweetly”, and he expressed great joy and heartfelt wish by saying “You understand me, you know what I feel. Oh, if others resemble you!” (Foster 45.)

According to Forster, the public school types have “undeveloped hearts”, with Ronny in *A Passage to India* as a typical example: “His self-complacency, his censoriousness, his lack of subtlety, all grew vividly beneath a tropic sky” (Forster 96). Forster thinks that they are responsible for the unsuccessful connection between different races and cultures. Whenever Ronny appears, the happy atmosphere and friendship among the Indians and British with a liberal ideal will be spoilt, as in the case of Fielding’s tea party.

The dislocation of the main characters in the novel is expressed in their process of transcendence and return. Forster’s main characters, including Aziz, Fielding, Adela and Moore begin with the good intention of crossing the racial barriers to establish good personal relations, but fail to do so due to some limitations, and return to their starting point with a different outlook.

Dr. Aziz is a Moslem with Western education background. He shows no interest in politics at first. In the opening part of the novel, when the old men “had reached their eternal politics, Aziz drifted into the garden”. He meets Mrs. Moore at the mosque and they become good friends. Aziz wishes to keep good relations with the

English who show their respect to him and his religion. He tries to cross the difference and avoid talking about politics. He just wants to live a calm life under the British rule and continues his job as a doctor, and he shows his unconcern to political affairs. He tells Fielding that the Marabar picnic “is nothing to do with English or Indians; it is an expedition of friends.” Aziz cherishes the friendship so much that he shows his late wife’s photo to Fielding and regards him as “brother”. He believes that their friendship can transcend all the differences. However, the alleged assault against him smashes his dream of “brotherhood” with the British. He is wronged and arrested, and feels that Fielding has deserted him by standing on Adela’s side. Meanwhile, the political consciousness awakes in him, and he is firm in his anti-British stand. Aziz leaves his present job and finds a new one in the native state of Mau. He understands that Fielding has made sacrifice for him, but “it was now all confused with his genuine hatred of the English.” He feels relieved that he is “an Indian at last”. When he tells Fielding that his heart is for his own people henceforward, he speaks that in Urdu, so that his children might understand. He declares that he wished “no Englishman or Englishwoman to be my friend”. National feeling floods in Aziz’s mind, and it has a full show at his last ride with Fielding. He is no longer an ordinary doctor serving in the British civil station; he becomes a fighter for the national freedom and independence, with no illusions to the British and realizing that Indian’s independence is the only way for his complete liberation from the tyranny of the British.

Apart from Aziz, the trace of transcendence and return can also be found in Fielding, Adela and Mrs. Moore, which shows Forster’s awareness of the fragility of his liberal values of “only connect”.

### 3. An Elegy for the Empire

The title of the novel, *A Passage to India*, originates from Walt Whitman’s poem entitled *Passage to India* in which Whitman enthusiastically praises the building of the Suez Canal and envisages the “marriage of continents, climates and occasions”. Whitman has an optimistic attitude and predicts the possibility of universal brotherhood and global order. However, after finishing reading Forster’s novel, readers will find that it is not a passage to India and the novel is not about the “marriage” of the East and the West. Rather, it is a novel about the failure of the practice of personal relations and the dissolution of the British Empire.

The pride and prejudice of the colonizers about their empire can be sensed almost everywhere in the novel. Their complacency and arrogance doubtlessly widen the already existed gulf between the rulers and the ruled. The British imperialists regard themselves as the ambassadors of the globe, who shoulder the mission of “the white man’s burden”.

They do not think the process of colonization is a one with conquest and for material gain. Rather, they regard their behavior as responsibilities and duties: they are bringing order, civilization and light to the chaos, savage, ignorant and Dark Continent of the subjected races. They have the irresistible duty to rule. The pose of “maintaining peace and keeping order” reminds us of Ronny Heaslop in the novel. Ronny says that “we’re not out here for the purpose of behaving pleasantly! ... We’re out here to do justice and keep the peace... I am out here to work, mind, to hold this wretched country by force” (Forster 69). Ronny holds high the banner of civilization as an umbrella in his mission. He does not think that he and the other officials are bullying the Indians and exploiting India for material gains. On the contrary, he thinks that they are there for India’s good, because they are intending to bring civilization, order and law to this chaos and “wretched country”. The Anglo-Indians are so proud that they can define and describe everything in India in their own terms. They are so complacent and confident that they never consider that their representation of “the other” may be a false one. The mission of civilization does not always have a civilizing effect on either the rulers of the ruled, but the Anglo-Indians do not care. They are always in the glorious dream of the white man’s burden.

The novel is based on Forster’s two visits to India in 1912 and 1921 respectively. During these two visits, the situations in India change a lot, and the First World War brings serious effects on Forster, who has to make alteration in his draft and original plan for the novel. Forster witnessed the crisis faced by the empire and he showed his anxiety to the fate of British Empire with a complicated emotion.

In *A Passage to India*, Forster gives a portrayal of the crisis. He sensed much about the gulf between the British and the Indians. Even with good intention of the main characters, the gulf still exists and becomes “impassable”. For example, in the trip to Marabar caves, Aziz tried to show his hospitality and humor as an oriental as well as a host. He hires an elephant and plays a joke by telling one of his servants to let go the end of the elephant’s tail when another servant is climbing by it. Aziz intends to amuse his British friends by doing this, but his Western friends, Mrs. Moore and Miss Adela, “both of them disliked practical jokes”. In their eyes, the joke “was a little piece of court buffoonery, and distressed only the ladies” (Forster 152). Forster, the omniscient narrator in the novel, concludes Aziz’s behavior: “like most Orientals, Aziz overrated hospitality, mistaking it for intimacy”. Forster tries to show that there are gaps between the East and West, including a cultural one. The result is always disappointing when one makes efforts to bridge it, as in the case of Fielding. After Aziz is arrested, Fielding “was throwing in his lot with Indians, he realized the profundity of the gulf that divided him from them”. The cultural gulf between Aziz and Adela is the immediate cause of the Marabar Caves incident, which not only

damages the established relations, but also strikes the confrontation of the rulers and the ruled.

As an intellectual with the liberal humanist ideal, Forster showed his great concern and anxiety about the fate of British Empire. “Democratic Empire” is the direct expression of Forster’s ideal in the crisis, and it was regarded as the redemption of the crisis. Forster suggested of a common humanity on which the foundation of a democratic empire might have been well and truly laid. Forster believes that mutual incomprehension and personal misunderstanding is the root of colonial problems, and that without friendship between the races the British Empire “rests on sand”. It is the “ill-breeding” that brings the crisis and dissolution of empire, as Forster points out in *Reflections in India – too Late*, “never in history did ill-breeding contributes so much towards the dissolution of an empire”. In the novel, when Ronny tells Mrs. Moore that he comes to India not for the purpose of being pleasant, but for the purpose of keeping peace by force, his words reminds her of his “public-school days”, and “the traces of young-man humanitarianism had sloughed off”(Forster 70). It is clear that Forster regards public-school system as the very reason for the loss of humanism spirits in the British middle-class with Ronny as one example. Forster continues in the novel to show his concern for the fate of the empire: “one touch of regret – not the canny substitute but the true regret from the heart – would have made him a different man, and the British Empire a different institution” (Forster 70).

Can “one touch of regret” really make the British Empire a different institution? At least, in Forster’s eyes, it can. Forster’s “democratic empire” is the concrete political attitude of his “only connect” ideal. To put it simple, Forster hopes that the British Empire is an institution in which British and Indians can live as social equals. Forster’s tries to use democratic empire as a measure to keep the empire from collapsing and dissolution, which reflects the latent empire complex in him. What he opposes is imperialism, not empire. As a matter of fact, *A Passage to India* shows signs of Forster’s empire complex. In the whole novel, India is portrayed as a “muddle”. When one leaves India and enters Europe, the muddle is also left behind and the world with order emerges. This is experienced by Adela, Fielding and Mrs. Moore. For Fielding, Europe is the place where “the civilization that has escaped muddle, the spirit in a reasonable form”. Forster continues with his famous verdict in the novel: “The Mediterranean is the human norm”. If Mediterranean is the human norm, then India must be the deviation.

Forster shows his anxiety to the fate of the British Empire, and at the same time, he feels that the Indians are not capable of self-government though they will be free from British rule sooner or later. On their last ride, Fielding tells Aziz that “the British empire really can’t be abolished because it’s rude” and he believes that

“away from us, Indians go to seed at once”. That the India will fall without the British Empire is Forster’s belief. The British Empire brings benefits to India, “the reason and orderliness spreading in every direction, like a most health- giving flood”. Forster has the pride of empire deep in his soul, but not in an arrogant way. “Democratic empire” reveals both the ideal and dilemma of Forster as a liberal-humanist. Forster’s overt anti-imperialism and latent empire complex are combined in the depolitized concept of “democratic empire”.

Virginia Woolf once commented that “there is something baffling and evasive in the very nature of his gifts”, especially in *A Passage to India*. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said has no reservation about Forster’s solid stand against imperialism, but he also questions the “absence of national resistance” (Said 241) to imperialism in the novel, particularly the ending part “not yet”, “not there”. Both “evasive” and “absence of national resistance” indicates that Forster was trying to avoid something. Forster’s denial of the novel as a political one may provide part of the answer. The direct reason is that Forster faces the dilemma of his liberal humanism ideal and the imperialism reality. The incongruity between the ideal and reality makes Forster realize that the practice of “only connect” in India under imperialism is out of context. “Only connect” fails to function with imperialism. Forster finds that liberal humanism is just ineffective in the imperial discourse, and he feels that imperialism has dug its way to the grave by spoiling the personal relations between races. He also senses that the British Empire would come to its end and its days are numbered. In this sense, *A Passage to India* is an elegy for British Empire and “epitaph on liberal humanism”.

Forster’s anxiety over the doomed fate of the empire goes hand in hand with his sense of the bankruptcy of liberal humanism ideal. He draws a cause and effect conclusion: because the imperialism refuses and fails to establish good personal relations, the dissolution and collapse of the empire is inevitable. However, Forster does not clearly declare it. Instead, he tries to show this indirectly through his main characters in the novel.

In the imperial frame, “only connect” ideal is an illusion. To quote T. S. Eliot’s words in *The Waste Land*, “I can connect; Nothing and Nothing”. Liberal humanism and imperialism can not coexist and imperialism can never be redeemed by liberal humanism. “Resting on sand”, the collapse of the empire is unavoidable. In this sense, *A Passage to India* is both an elegy for empire and an “epitaph to liberal humanism” (Wilde 174).

#### 4. Conclusion

E. M. Forster belongs to the few who can keep fully awake in the Victorian optimism

and the “strained optimism” of Edwardian period. His “only connect” motto remains to be unchanged throughout his life and his works, and he seems to develop the capacity to adapt to his social environment without adopting its values. As a member of the Apostles at Cambridge and later at Bloomsbury Group, he prefers to hover at the margins of such cliques, and this “habitual location on the fringes of groups” (Edwards 185) enables him to preserve his independence. Forster is an insightful writer as well as a firm fighter against imperialism. *A Passage to India* which is not meant to be political is the combination of the two sides of him. Forster reduces history to personal relations, and his “only connect” ideal wrestles with imperialism all the time. He envisages the failure of the imperialism, but his liberal humanism ideal as a weapon seems to be invalid during the battle. Forster finally realizes that the ideal of personal relations is not panacea for all the English ailments. Seeing clearly that the British rule in India is not on a safe footing and it can not escape the fate of dissolution, Forster is full of anxiety for the fate of the British Empire. As pointed out by Winston Churchill, “the loss of India would mark and consummate the downfall of the British Empire”.

As a fighter from the inside of the empire, Forster is a solitary one. While criticizing the imperialistic behavior he is estranged by the British middle-class who has “undeveloped hearts”. At the same time, he can not fully enter the camp of the ruled because of the empire complex deep in his soul. His identity is a dislocated one, as in the case of Fielding in the novel. Forster comes to realize that his “democratic empire” is just an illusion, but he has to seek shelter in it. He also foresees the independence of India from British rule, and he is right in predicting that the conflicts between the Hindus and Moslems will bring trouble to the integrity of India. The partition of India in 1947 proves his prediction right.

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# 《公爵夫人之书》中的爱情婚姻观

李 安

**内容摘要：**杰弗里·乔叟的长诗《公爵夫人之书》中描述了一名骑士的爱情，修正了传统的爱情和婚姻相割裂的观念，认为“典雅爱情”应当走向婚姻，而理想的婚姻应建立在爱情的基础上，这样既实现了宗教的“爱”的诫令，使人们能够达到精神上的完善，又符合基督教的家庭婚姻道德观。诗中把宗教与世俗的因素贯通在一起，体现出文艺复兴运动早期的人文主义者们普遍持有的兼收并蓄的态度。

**关键词：**乔叟 《公爵夫人之书》 典雅爱情

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**Title** The Idea of Love and Marriage in *Book of the Duchesse*

**Abstract** Geoffrey Chaucer has depicted a knight's love story in his first long poem *the Book of the Duchesse*. In this poem, the poet modified the traditional idea which divided the love and marriage, and pushed courtly love into marriage, built ideal marriage on true love. In this respect, people can practice the religious teaching of love, and accord with Christian morality of family and marriage. This poem linked the religious element with secular element, revealed a general attitude of humanists which can blend different ideas in early renaissance.

**Key words** Geoffrey Chaucer; *the Book of the Duchesse*; courtly love

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杰弗里·乔叟 (Geoffrey Chaucer, 约 1343-1400) 在其创作的第一首长诗《公爵夫人之书》(*The Book Of The Duchesse*, 约 1369) 中描述了一位黑衣骑士 (black knight) 与他的已逝的意中人的美好爱情，这个故事的原型是诗人的庇护人兰开斯特公爵约翰与他的第一任妻子布兰希的感情生活。1369 年 9 月，年方 27 岁的布兰希去世，诗人可能是在此后不久写了这首叙事诗，悼念逝者，安慰年轻的公爵。这首诗继承和发扬了中世纪晚期盛行于西欧贵族社会的“典雅爱情” (courtly love) 传统，并提升了传统的婚姻观念。

## 一、与中世纪“典雅爱情”的比较

在诗中，叙述者因阅读古书而解除失眠之苦，夜间成功入睡，梦中遇到一位忧郁且年轻的黑衣骑士，出于好奇而与之攀谈。骑士告诉他，自己遇到一位完美的意中人，苦苦相恋，几经坎坷才获得她的爱情，无比幸福，但死亡夺走了他的意中人，因此他无限悲伤。从题材本身来看，这是一个典型的骑士爱情故事，诗中的爱情场景与中世纪“典雅爱情”传统有两个方面是相同的：

第一，在“典雅爱情”传统中，骑士对他的意中人的崇拜“类似于一种半宗教性质的，近乎对女神的崇拜。骑士看待妇女，往往把她们理想化，‘似乎深居在灰色城堡内的女人掌握着她们走向天堂的钥匙’”（赵立行 81），如诗人但丁献给他暗恋的贝阿特丽采的诗歌《新生集》，并让她在《神曲》中扮演天堂引路人的角色。本诗中的骑士视意中人为最完美的典范，不敢有丝毫亵渎的念头，长时间暗恋，诉衷情遭拒绝时悲伤欲死，后获认可时仿佛重生，意中人去世后万念俱灰，与这种传统是一致的。

第二，中世纪“典雅爱情”传统中有一个特殊的仪式：

骑士跪下来，把双手紧握放在他的女士手中；随后，在证人及圣物面前，宣誓他将忠诚地为她尽忠，直到死亡，捍卫她的名誉，保卫她免受所有恶意的攻击。这位女士接受了骑士的忠诚宣誓后，答应给予他最温柔的感情，并把一枚戒指戴在他手上，然后吻一下，扶他站起来。这样，骑士对其女士的忠诚就如同附庸对其领主的忠诚一样，包括听从贵妇的命令，冒一切的危险和受一切的折磨。（赵立行 79）

本诗中有一段骑士对意中人的表白：

我全心全意地恳求她  
 答应做我的意中人；  
 并且立誓，全心全意地热爱她，  
 对她永远坚定和忠诚，  
 永远与初恋时同样新鲜地爱她，  
 决不移情别恋，  
 还一定尽我所能，维护她的荣名；  
 我向她立誓：  
 “我的一切都已全部呈献于此  
 并将永远如此，我甜蜜的心！  
 我决不会欺骗于你，除非为梦幻所迷，  
 我决不会这样，愿明眼的上帝助我！”（1224-1235）<sup>1</sup>

主要内容也是表示忠诚于爱情并捍卫意中人的名誉，和前面骑士的传统誓词相同。而他的意中人后来对骑士的允诺，也是赠戒指。诗中虽然没有按部就班地写整个求爱的过程，但和这个仪式大同小异。

但是，诗中描写的爱情同“典雅爱情”又不尽相同，这主要表现在三个方面。

其一，传统的“典雅爱情”中，“骑士所追求的对象一般都是已经结了婚的贵妇人，这种爱情的追求有破坏婚姻的通奸之嫌。更重要的是，典雅爱情所追求的最终结果并不是缔结姻缘。按照典雅爱情的观念，灵魂间的交往要比肉欲的交往强上一千倍”（赵立行 78）。有意思的是，《公爵夫人之书》中也没有直接说明骑士是否和意中人结为夫妻，<sup>2</sup>甚至从未说明骑士在求爱的过程中他的意中人是已婚状态还是未婚身份。除此之外，他们各自的社会地位，相关的如婚姻方面的法律契约、利益往来，等等，全被搁置不提，全诗关于两人关系的所有叙述都只与爱情有关。但诗中对他们的关系还是有所暗示。例如，黑衣骑士称他的意中人在优秀和高贵方面可与著名的珀涅罗珀和鲁克丽丝相媲美，除了此二人外，再没有其他人可与他的意中人相比（1080-1087）。珀涅罗珀是荷马史诗中希腊英雄奥德修斯的妻子，她在奥德修斯离家 20 年期间坚守贞洁，等待丈夫归来。鲁克丽丝是古罗马传说中的人物，因被王子塔昆污辱而自杀。<sup>3</sup>这两位女性被歌颂的原因都在于身为妻子对丈夫忠贞不二。黑衣骑士既然谈到的他的意中人的优点与她们相同，由此可以排除婚外情爱。同时，如果说诗人是用古希腊罗马贞妇的典范来类同于未婚女子用情专一的现象，有些牵强，逻辑上也不合。此外，骑士与意中人的现实原型是约翰公爵与他的妻子布兰希。因此，可以认为，诗中的黑衣骑士与他的意中人最终结为眷属，这种爱情关系进入了婚姻生活的范围。

其二，中世纪传统中，“11、12 世纪，上层社会流行着这么一种观念：爱情是一种可以由当事人随便赠给别人的礼物，而婚姻则是一种契约，因此，后者没有个人意愿可言”（赵立行 81-82）。这主要是因为中世纪的婚姻往往是出于财产、权力的保护或者扩张，一位财产、爵位继承人往往在童年时期就由长辈安排订下婚约，或者婚姻中的男女双方年龄差距非常大，这种情况在上流社会尤其普遍。如英国国王理查二世与法兰西的伊莎贝拉结婚，此时伊莎贝拉年方 7 岁，而理查二世已经 30 岁了，<sup>4</sup>这种婚姻很难产生爱情。所以，中世纪人由此推理出爱情不可能存在于婚姻中的观点。相应地，“根据典雅爱情的法则，婚姻和爱情根本就是两回事，婚姻的缔结就意味着爱情的结束。”<sup>5</sup>正如婚姻不是爱情的圆满收场一样，爱情也不是婚姻连续和升华，两者是一种对立的关系。本诗中，“这位骑士和妻子之间的爱情超出了典雅爱情的范围，也超出了他对她在性爱方面的忠诚。他们之间的相互尊重导致了心灵的结合，也尽可能地导致了爱情的伴侣关系”（桑德斯 62）。

由上所述，诗中骑士的爱情跨越了典雅爱情与世俗婚姻之间的鸿沟，且表现为以典雅爱情为起点和程式，它的终点落实到了婚姻，同时又没有与爱情断裂开来。

## 二、与中世纪传统婚姻观的比较

中世纪传统的婚姻观可分为教会与世俗两类。早期的教会否定婚姻的价值，“保罗允许人们结婚，但认为结婚是对肉体软弱性的退让，‘倘若自己禁止不住，就可以嫁娶。与其欲火攻心，不如嫁娶为妙’（《新约·哥林多前书》7：9）。婚姻当然好过通奸和淫乱，但它本身毫无价值”（萨哈 70）。婚姻阻碍人们忠诚追随上帝，这是人性的一个弱点的体现，神学家们无法禁止人们的欲望，只能退而求其次地承认婚姻的合理性。在这个基础上，保罗也承认爱情与婚姻相通，夫妻双方有相爱的义务，但这种相爱是不平等的，婚姻的前提是男人是女人的上帝和主人（“丈夫也当照样爱妻子，如同爱自己的身子；爱妻子便是爱自己了”（《新约·以弗所书》5:28）。“你们作妻子的，当顺服自己的丈夫，如同顺服主；因为丈夫是妻子的头，如同基督是教会的头，他又是教会全体的救主”（《新约·以弗所书》5:22-23）。8世纪之后，教会把婚姻关系描绘成基督和教会的关系，承认婚姻是合法的，并把婚姻中的男女相爱的义务加入教义中，同时重弹使徒保罗的老调子，认为妇女是上帝为了男人而创造的，男人处于优越和主宰地位。此外，由于神学家们和教会法学家们认可的婚姻之爱与性爱无关，而妇女往往被视为肉体，与男人为精神相对应，是诱惑男人沉溺于肉欲之罪的根源。所以，虽然基督教神学中对婚姻与爱情关系有某种肯定，但总体上来说，婚姻、女性容易引起人对世俗生活享乐的向往，总是受到谴责。<sup>6</sup>

在世俗文学中，把婚姻视为幸福的源泉或爱情的结合的作品非常少。在这些为数不多的作品中，如法兰西南部的游吟诗人就曾提出婚姻应建立在爱情的基础上的观点，有一位“巴黎的好人(Parisian Goodman)”编写了一本妇女指南，是写给自己妻子看的书，理想的婚姻在书中被描述为男女伴侣关系和爱情的结合，“相爱和相互履行义务成为他们幸福和快乐的源泉，为他们带来共同的乐趣。”但是，“尽管有这些情意绵绵的描写，作者在另一章却毫不犹豫地将对丈夫的忠诚和顺从比作狗对主人的忠实”（萨哈 78-79）。中世纪的家庭是以男性为中心组成的，男女地位不平等是普遍现象，所以，这种理想的婚姻关系仍然带有这种根深蒂固的观念。而世俗文学中还有一派谴责婚姻关系的观点，并且成为文学作品中一种固定的模式，“贬低婚姻始终和中伤妇女如影随形”（萨哈 80）。在中世纪常见的市民文学故事诗中，“婚姻受到冷嘲热讽，给男人带来痛苦……在这类文学作品中，妇女的个性在把婚姻变成地狱的过程中起着重要的作用。……大多数故事诗中的已婚妇女独断专行、糊弄丈夫、爱吵闹、欲壑难平、招蜂引蝶、漫不经心、妒嫉”（萨哈 83-84），乔叟后期创作的《坎特伯雷故事集》中巴斯妇人是这种典型形象。中世纪还有贬低婚姻但没有谴责妇女的特殊例子，这来自阿伯拉尔和爱洛伊斯这一对著名的情人，他们从哲学的角度探讨婚姻，爱洛伊斯的观点与典雅爱情相近，认为婚姻导致的家庭生活会打扰哲学家的思考，但“她反对的只是婚姻，不是彼此相爱。继续相爱比结婚更好”（萨哈 82）。阿伯拉尔则从神学的角度肯定了爱洛伊斯的观点，认为

婚姻把男人束缚于尘世，无法通向上帝。<sup>7</sup> 典雅爱情中的婚姻观前文已经提及，认为爱情与婚姻不能兼而得之，严格说来，“拥护优雅爱情的人们承认夫妻间也可以存在某种程度的爱情，不过这种爱以夫妇相互的义务为前提，优雅爱情则建立在骑士的荣誉感之上”（萨哈 88）。所以，世俗文学分为肯定婚姻和否定婚姻两类观点。肯定婚姻的作品中，男女关系建立在不平等的基础上。否定婚姻的观点又分谴责妇女和不谴责妇女两种，认为婚姻让恶女人的恶行得逞、使人不能提高神学境界，婚姻中的义务对人造成约束，其中发生的爱情具有世俗物质动机和目的，不是纯粹的精神之爱。

因此，中世纪传统的宗教和世俗的婚姻观大体上是接近的，都更多地强调婚姻和爱情相龃龉之处。因为婚姻与世俗物质利益、肉欲等的联系，对婚姻主要持否定态度。其中对婚姻中的男女形象的论述中，大部分是批判女性的，甚至典雅爱情极力讴歌的女性，她被其爱慕者膜拜的部分都与婚姻无关。这与《红楼梦》中贾宝玉对未嫁女子和已婚妇女的评语有些相似：“奇怪，奇怪，怎么这些人只一嫁了汉子，染了男人的气味，就这样混帐起来，比男人更可杀了！”（曹雪芹 527）

《公爵夫人之书》中对婚姻生活的描写与基督教传统相同之处是，都侧重爱情婚姻中的精神层面，完全没有与性（或肉欲）有关的描写；与世俗文学中肯定婚姻伴侣关系和爱情统一这派观点相同，认为婚姻是幸福快乐的源泉。

与传统的不同之处更明显。诗中完全肯定婚姻的价值，它既是人生的幸福归宿，又能和爱情一道提高人的精神境界。这里爱情和婚姻完全一致、相辅相成，强调在爱情的基础上建立理想的婚姻关系，同时又让婚姻中的女性不丧失典雅爱情中的女性的完美、高贵，也就是说，对典雅爱情中的女性形象和世俗文学中赞美婚姻的观念兼收并蓄。此外，诗中黑衣骑士的意中人 / 妻子在婚姻后生活中与丈夫平等相处，不卑不亢，能自觉有效地使夫妻之间保持足够的和谐美满，超越了中世纪传统的宗教神学和世俗文学的女性观念。

### 三、理想爱情与幸福婚姻的融合

从《公爵夫人之书》所述爱情故事的现实原型来看，骑士意中人的原型布兰希是当时英格兰显赫的兰开斯特公爵亨利的女儿，她为自己的丈夫、爱德华三世的第三子约翰带来了巨大的地产和爵位，约翰由此一跃成为英格兰最富有的人。<sup>8</sup> 双方是出于各取所需才联系在一起的（布兰希的财富和约翰的王族身份），但最终成为一桩有爱情的婚姻（“love-match”），而且约翰在布兰希死后一直对她念念不忘，临死前还叮嘱将自己埋葬在布兰希的墓边。<sup>9</sup> 诗人乔叟可能由此而看到了某种理想的状态，即爱情与婚姻相结合，既满足了个人对爱情幸福的追求，也恪守了道德原则和社会责任，使这种美好的情感能够在现实生活中落到实处。

在诗中，黑衣骑士的爱情开始于忠诚地服侍爱神，其后，对他的意中人一见钟情。这种前后关系赋予这一桩情事以神圣指引的意味，而不是现实利益的

驱动所致。“在骑士对‘爱人’的描述（第817~1041行）中，乔叟严格地遵循宫廷爱情文学中理想的‘贵妇’形象。他借鉴了马肖《布厄涅王的判决》和弗瓦萨尔《命运的疗方》中对女士的描写，不仅从头到脚非常细致地描写了她的外貌，更强调她的性情、德行和气质。她善良、不矫揉造作、乐观、高雅、理性、平和、克制。总之，她就是集美貌、德行、高贵为一身的完美无瑕的化身”（刘进 110）。这两百余行诗读起来未免有些琐碎，但换个角度来看，则显现了骑士的爱慕之深，这种爱慕把他推到了胆小的程度，只敢把满腹相思之情倾诉于笔端，整日撰写情歌。在痛苦的逼迫下，他尝试表白情意，遭到拒绝，受挫的骑士没有减少他的爱慕之情，一年后，意中人终于理解到他的一番真情，两人终成眷属。

关于骑士爱情的叙述（758-1297）是本诗的核心部分，基本上是按照专属于骑士阶层的典雅爱情程式进行的。但如果去掉其中的阶级外衣，骑士尽力体现出的是对完美形体和高贵品行的赞美与追随，没有任何粗暴与强取豪夺的行径，符合“只有高雅的人（courteous）才懂爱情，也正是爱情使他们高雅”（Lewis 2）。相应地，意中人接受的是“我〔注：骑士〕只渴望德行 / 和荣誉，全力保卫她的荣名 / 免受污损， / 勤勉于为她效劳； / 而且我如果没有犯下任何过失却忧伤至死， / 实在是令人遗憾”（1262-1267），是仁爱之心与理性把握后的决定。双方都没有表现出任何关于肉体欲望和功利目的等方面的倾向。也就是说，他们的爱情摆脱了物质利益的束缚、通向纯粹的精神层面。

但这并不意味着这种爱情与物质世界断裂开来，而是让高贵的精神境界为他们带来幸福的婚姻生活。在骑士心目中，意中人是如此完美，以至于他自惭形秽，自愿接受她的任何支配。意中人则从未如暴君般任意行使这个权力：

当我犯了过错而她是正确的时，  
她总是恰如其分地  
宽恕我，非常温和。  
在我的尚未成熟的青年时期，在一切情况下，  
她都是对我严加督导。  
她总是以诚相见，  
我们的快乐一直如刚相恋时新鲜；  
我们心心相印，  
从未有对立矛盾，  
没有愁烦。  
确实，就象它们（两颗心）是  
经历着同一个幸福和同一个悲伤；  
它们同样快乐同样愤怒；  
我们结合在一起，从未有过争吵。（1282-1295）

尽管在这个爱情故事中，女性依靠一种间接的方式才能描绘出来，但“诗中布兰希的形象给人留下的印象大体上是明亮、丰富、活泼、在某种程度上是个人的”（Clemen 54），因为“在乔叟对布兰希的生动描写中，典型的宫廷的（courtly）和传统的品质与更为普遍的人的特征混合在一起，宫廷传统中被强烈地理想化了的形象，其刻板、做作的描写被修改、柔化。而且，通过运用更为生动多样化的语言，放弃直接的和个人的描绘以造成略为含蓄的风格，这种传统的理想也被‘人性化’了”（Clemen 56）。这种修改和柔化了的女性形象很自然地从高在上的被男性膜拜的位置上走了下来，被绝对化和纯粹化的典雅爱情传统也因此毫不牵强地与现实的婚姻生活发生关联。

这种关系在《坎特伯雷故事》的“平民地主的故事”中有更为详细的补充，故事中骑士阿维拉古斯与道丽甘结为夫妻后，双方在爱情和婚姻中的地位既复杂又明了：

这里可看到和谐、谦让和明智，  
妻子得到了她的仆人和主子，  
这是爱情中的仆，婚姻中的主；  
而丈夫则既有权威又受束缚，  
受束缚？不，他是一家的主宰，  
因为他已赢得心上有、赢得爱；  
这是他的忠实的情人和妻子，  
这种关系与爱情的法则一致。（乔叟，《坎特伯雷故事》 720-721）

女性既是情人又是妻子，男性既是仆人又是主子。与之相近还有《坎特伯雷故事》中骑士讲的故事的结尾部分，希腊武士帕拉蒙历尽艰辛与艾米莉成婚后的生活。而《坎特伯雷故事》中诗人作为讲故事人讲的两个故事中，后一个“梅利别斯的故事”里的妻子普鲁登丝对丈夫梅列别斯循循善诱，帮助丈夫提高解决难题的能力。这三个故事与《公爵夫人之书》共同展现了诗人关于爱情与婚姻关系的思考：完美的爱情带来幸福的婚姻，婚姻幸福的途径在于男女之间地位平等，女性除了传统所要求的贞洁忠诚外，还可以因其智慧才干而扮演引导者的角色。

总之，《公爵夫人之书》肯定爱情和婚姻都是值得追求的人生理想，两者的结合既实现了宗教的“爱”的诫令，宣扬了基督教家庭婚姻道德观，又与中世纪晚期世俗贵族追求的理想情感不谋而合。人们在尘世的领域内实现了精神上的高度追求和完善，基督教神学诫令和世俗人文主义理想的毫无芥蒂地组合在一起，两位主人公的形象和活动既具宗教性又具世俗性的特点，等等，这些都体现了一种兼收并蓄的态度。这首诗在人物形象塑造的方式方法及与之相关的命题中包含的道德观念等方面都具有一定的时代性和普遍性，也就是说，打通宗教和世俗的旧有的框架和界线，让它们在现实世界中贯通起来，这是文艺

复兴运动早期人文主义者常有的态度。

### 注解【Notes】

1. 本文中《公爵夫人之书》的引文来自 *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (2 vols. Ed. F.N.Robinson. London: Oxford University Press, 1957.), 并参考方重先生的散文体译文(乔叟:《乔叟文集》,方重译,上海:上海译文出版社,1979年。)译出。文中引用原诗处,都只标出诗的行数,不另注明。
2. 方重先生在他的译文中把第1287至1288行译为“她总是以诚相见,我俩永享着新婚的欢爱”(乔叟:《乔叟文集》,方重译,上海:上海译文出版社,1979年,第26页。)此处的“新婚”在原诗中为“newe/new”,意为“fresh”,没有直接指向婚姻,为方先生意译。
3. 乔叟后来在《贞女传奇》(*The Legend of Good Women*, 约1386)中对鲁克丽丝的故事有详细介绍,可见诗人认为这个典故具有很高的代表性。
4. 参见 Gillian Rudd. *The Complete Critical Guide to Geoffrey Chaucer*, (London; New York: Routledge, 2001)33.
5. 赵立行:《中世纪西欧骑士的典雅爱情》,《世界历史》4(2001):82。另注:一个有趣的例子可以很好地说明这种爱情婚姻观念:一位骑士向爱情法庭上诉,说他的情人有了一位新情夫,这位女士曾向这位上诉人许诺过,如果她失去新情夫,就会立即回到他身边。这位骑士接受了这种冷遇。他向爱情法庭要求:应该宣布这位女士已经失去了新情夫,因为他们已经结婚。法国的王后判决了此案,决定支持这位骑士。她说,很明显,他们结婚以后,这位女士就失去了她的情人,因为爱情不可能在婚姻中继续。按照王后的意见,这位女士现在应遵守她的诺言,去爱这位骑士。(赵立行:《中世纪西欧骑士的典雅爱情》,第82页。)虽然爱情法庭本身只是在贵族阶层中流行的一种休闲游戏,没有现实法律意义,但由此也可以窥见在当时贵族社会的观念中,爱情与婚姻的关系是对立的。
6. 参见萨哈:《第四等级——中世纪欧洲妇女史》(林英译,广州:广东人民出版社,2003年)70-75。
7. 参见萨哈:《第四等级——中世纪欧洲妇女史》,第83页。
8. 参见 Derek Pearsall. *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Biography*(Oxford: Blackewll, 1992) 56.
9. 参见 Derek Brewer. *An Introduction to Chaucer* (London: Longman, 1984) 56.

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# 论《我是克隆人》中的伦理混乱与伦理选择

郭 雯

**内容摘要：**克隆人科幻小说作为与时俱进的文学作品，描写了科学对人的改造及对社会的影响。小说《我是克隆人》（*Blueprint*，又译《蓝图》）通过克隆儿丝丽伊对“母双”伊丽丝自我克隆的控诉，为我们书写了一部克隆人与自然人共存的伦理启示录。本文以文学伦理学批评为研究视角，围绕生物性选择之颠覆及伦理身份诉求的伦理主线，通过解构新型的伦理环境、丝丽伊对自我存在的疑惑、对双重生活的不满、对“母双”命令的违抗以及乱伦禁忌等伦理结，剖析作品深处的伦理寓意：逾越人类认知底线的科学选择必将引发伦理混乱与道德失衡，克隆人小说的预见性与警示性值得人类对现实与未来的科学选择进行理性思考。

**关键词：**《我是克隆人》 生物性选择 伦理身份 伦理混乱 科学选择

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**Title** The Ethical Confusion and Choices in *Blueprint*

**Abstract** Science fiction on human cloning keeps in pace with the social development, focusing on the human change by science and the scientific impact on society. In *Blueprint*, through the accusation of the cloned child of her “mother twin”, it provides us with an ethical revelation of the coexistence of natural human and cloned human. From the perspective of Ethical Literary Criticism, the paper centers around the ethical line of the subversion of biological choice and the pursuit of ethical identity, deconstructing the ethical knots of new ethical environment, confusion of self-existence, dissatisfaction of double life, the rebellion of mother-twin’s orders and incest taboo. The paper then explores deeper ethical meaning, that is any scientific choice beyond the bottom line of cognition will arouse ethical chaos and moral imbalance, thus we need to rethink the present and future scientific choice by the prediction and warning of the fiction.

**Key Words** *Blueprint*; biological choice; ethical identity; ethical confusion; scientific choice

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20世纪六七十年代以后,分子生物技术、基因遗传工程等重大突破标志着日新月异的高科技,这是人类的第四次科技革命,人类的主体性逐渐变得模糊。美国著名女性主义学者、文化理论家堂娜·哈拉维(Donna Haraway)曾将“赛博格”(Cyborg)这个词融入到后现代科技革命中,论述它对人类的影响。她认为,随着“电子人”、“机器人”、“克隆人”等拥有长寿、情感和思维的“后人类”的出现,人类将重构已有的秩序<sup>1</sup>。日裔美国思想家、政治经济学家F.福山(Francis Fukuyama)的《我们的后人类未来:生物科技革命的后果》描写了生物技术充斥着“后人类”时代中种种“人”的问题和忧虑,包括尊严、人权、人性等,提出控制基因技术的政策<sup>2</sup>。《我是克隆人》(*Blueprint*, 2000)是德国女作家夏洛特·克纳(Charlotte Kerner)的代表作,曾于2000年获得德国优秀少年文学奖。小说讲述了天赋极高的女作曲家伊丽丝患了绝症,为了使自己的天才在这个世界上延续,她决定克隆自己做女儿。但是“复制品”并未与她和平共处,她们之间产生了巨大的矛盾冲突和心理差异,悲剧接连发生。克隆术将对人和世界带来哪些影响和改变,人类现有的伦理秩序、情感道德、宗教、法律等是否会随之颠覆?这些问题正是由这部小说反映出来。本文将在克隆人与自然人共存的新型伦理境况中,分析新型家庭模式里的克隆人如何进行身份诉求和伦理选择,并由此探讨克隆人引发的伦理问题。

### 一、新型的家庭模式:血亲关系的颠覆

“克隆是英语 clone 或 cloning 的音译,起源于希腊文 klone,原意为‘用嫩枝插条繁殖’。1903年被引入园艺学,以后逐渐应用于植物学、动物学和医学等方面”(高兆明,孙慕义 1)。伊丽丝在三十岁的时候,检查出患有多发性硬化症,为了让自己的天才永生,她决定克隆一个完整的自己。伊丽丝的愿望在医生费希尔的帮助下得以实现,成为首次实验性尝试的成功范例。费希尔提取伊丽丝的细胞克隆出一个与她一模一样而富有才华的女儿,并象征性地取名为丝丽伊。作为“复制人”,丝丽伊的生活在未出世前就已定制,唯一的使命就是延续伊丽丝的才华。

“在生物技术高度发达的今天,克隆仿佛是一股高潮般的转折点,带领我们进入后人类时代”(Ferreira 2)。丝丽伊的诞生印证了克隆人与自然人共存的新时代的到来。丝丽伊的生命“从一开始就具备良好的遗传基因,而且完全排除了基因赌博,排除了任何偶然性。不会出现空白彩票的,绝对是全赢!”(10)<sup>3</sup>这的确是科学发展所带来的乌托邦情景,是造物主伊丽丝和费希尔创造出的理想人生,使人的生命根据自我意愿得以延续。试想,如果人类能凭自由意志挑选最好的基因,借助高科技制造最理想的后代,那么世界将被单一的“最优秀的”人统治,人类将不再拥有不同肤色的民族,每个人都会生活在无忧无虑的天堂。正如赫胥黎《美妙的新世界》中克隆人生活的“天堂”,然而,一个由所谓的完人组成的社会是不会成功的,因为在植物、动物以及最确切地说在人当中,最完美的特性就是多样性。可见,单纯的遗传信息复制技术即将为传统的人类

时代划上句号。

纵观人类科技发展历程，几乎每一次飞跃都能满足人类新的欲望和自由意志。作为母版的伊丽丝是杰出的作曲家，音乐是她的生命，她创作了《萨蒂亚》，“意思是礼仪和规则。人类的一切行为都是要遵循规则的，它们可以是神秘的、宇宙的或者数学的”（7）。然而，伊丽丝的行为却逾越了常规，她遵守礼仪和规则的音乐创作成为一种反讽，使丝丽伊对“人造人”行为愤然斥责：“你突破了常规——陈旧的人类发展。克隆婴儿就是突破常规的果实”（16）。众所周知，任何违背自然规律的事物都会产生问题。国外学者曾就“弗兰肯斯坦式”的恐慌对克隆术进行过探讨。美国著名生化学家、哲学家罗林教授指出：“克隆术与生俱来便是错误的，无论带来的结果是好或是坏……克隆术打破了道德秩序，即使它不带来任何坏处。这就像莱布尼兹的神学，没有克隆的世界才是上帝（或大自然）的本意……对于自然而言，人们必须清楚为何克隆是非自然的，剖腹产不属于非自然，为何非自然的就必定是不道德的”（Rollin 55）。克隆人的诞生跳跃了人类进化过程中的第一次选择，即生物性选择，违背了“自然选择”，进入了科学选择阶段。<sup>4</sup> 达尔文“物竞天择，适者生存”的进化论核心便是“自然选择”。<sup>5</sup> 大自然在“选择”生物个体的生存与繁衍。每一个生命在诞生之前都会自然地、而非既定地去选择父母的基因，于是，孕育的过程充满着未知的神秘色彩，使生命富有自由与尊严。“生物科学一直关注着两个问题：一个是生命的起源与本质问题，另一个是生命是如何繁衍的”（韩松 39），克隆术针对这两个问题也向世人提出了探索的范围。

伊丽丝的生育过程无疑向世俗提出了挑战，也颠覆了女性的家庭与社会角色。丝丽伊在日记中讽刺了这个高级的技术：“不论男人还是女人，终于可以完全不依赖另一个性别。处男和处女可以生育了——多么了不起的进步！这是走向未来的第一步。但要当心！它有摔倒的危险，摔得发青，青得就像蓝图”（6）。从此，“蓝图”贯穿了“原版”与复制人的双重生活中，也贯穿了整部小说，表达了丝丽伊对超前科技的厌恶之情。克隆人是高度控制下的选择，某种程度上来说，克隆人是“无根的”非自然的产物，尽管他们具备“人形”，但却未经过“性选择”而诞生，所谓“性选择”则是自然界的另一种选择形式。<sup>6</sup> 作为高等动物，人区别于动物的本质是人具有理性的伦理意识，自从亚当和夏娃在伊甸园偷食禁果开始，人类便能辨善恶知羞耻。因此，不同于动物，人具有更高级的“性选择”，拥有基于伦理道德之上形成的“性选择”，即爱情和婚姻。丝丽伊的诞生是建立在无性生殖的基础上，即缺失两性爱情与婚姻的基础上，她对“原版”的母亲身份一直无法接受，并指责道：“你从来没有浪费过你的爱，没有对任何孩子和任何男人有过爱。你也不认识任何人，可以和你一起生育出一个你所希望的孩子。你不适合建立任何伴侣关系，而只适合建立克隆关系”（12）。上帝死了，人类自己成为了造物主，伊丽丝可以拒绝婚姻与两性而得到永生。

从传统家庭观念来看，我们无法确认伊丽丝和丝丽伊的血亲关系，毕竟“丝

丽伊”的命名只是一种复制的象征，而不具有任何伦理身份的概念。虽然伊丽莎白选择颠覆传统的生殖行为，很可能受到自己家庭的影响。她来自单亲家庭，没有父亲的生活对她造成了根深蒂固的影响，使她认为没有父亲也能成长为优秀的人。然而，她的“单亲家庭”却和摹本的“单亲家庭”有着本质区别。早在费希尔克隆第一人的实验开始，他就遭到了各方质问。在社会舆论压力下，费希尔为自己的克隆术进行辩护，声称“一个克隆儿从一开始就缺少父母的一方，一个孩子从受孕时就没有父亲或母亲，这种说法并不能成为反对克隆的依据。现在已有越来越多的孩子生活在所谓的单亲家庭中。克隆孩子的单亲家庭，只不过是提前到生命生成的起始而已”（64）。表面来看他说得很有道理，实则是一种诡辩。因为家庭是建立在血亲关系之上的，而克隆人从来就不拥有传统的核心家庭。丝丽伊从未有过父亲，而母版是否就是母亲，这一伦理身份尚不确定，因此人类的“单亲家庭”与克隆人的“单亲家庭”是两种概念，克隆人的诞生无疑开启了新型的家庭模式。

## 二、克隆人的伦理身份诉求

《我是克隆人》不同于现实主义文学，它以完全不同的主体或完全不同的场景作为特征。丝丽伊对身份的追问，实际上是以奇怪和新意作为特征，暗示出新的技术、生物、哲学规范的可能性，陌生化了作者和读者的经验环境。“当代生物技术最大的威胁在于它可能会改变人性，从此将人类带到‘后人类’历史阶段”（Fukuyama 7）。颠覆传统生物性的选择是反自然的伦理越位行为，它产生了两个致命问题：一是伦理身份的不确定，二是人伦秩序的混乱。从小说章节来看，它实际上是以身份诉求为主线的伦理叙事，体现了丝丽伊整个人生的双重性和矛盾性。在叙事过程中，伦理身份诉求是伦理主线，这条线上又生出多个伦理结需要解构，包括对自我存在的疑惑、对双重生活的不满、对“母双”命令的违抗以及乱伦的伦理禁忌。

“我是谁”是困扰丝丽伊一生的俄狄浦斯式的问题。丝丽伊在斯芬克斯之谜面前，也急需解决“人形”与“人性”的本质区别。她面临的是所有克隆人都将面临的难题——“人是什么”，是与生俱来拥有尊严的生命体？还是由人工设计出的带有基因标签的碳水化合物？“人是由什么构成的，他的种族、才华或者个性都是如何形成的？”（98）从生物学角度看，她已拥有人形；从生产方式看，她是非自然的生殖产物。国内科幻文学研究者吴岩认为，克隆人包括在机器人、人造人范围之内，而这些“人”正是人类自身的一种镜像。<sup>7</sup>因此，丝丽伊的身份诉求体现了人类千百年来永恒的追问，即关于“人”的问题，标志着她自我意识复苏和追求人性的开始。

但是，由于克隆人身份的特殊性和不确定性，丝丽伊对身份感到迷茫，时常找不到自我，内心孤独而矛盾，她最常问的问题就是自己是否有生命：“我今天在自问——我确实存在吗？我的意思是，我作为一个个体？或者，我们这些克隆人连和黑猩猩都无法相比吗？”（37）著名的镜中实验证明黑猩猩也有

自我意识，而丝丽伊的人生还不如动物，从童年开始就循环于“我——你——我们”的双重生活中。“我如何才能够找到我自己呢？如果我在寻觅中只是一再碰到你，碰到你的图像，你——我的图像呢？不论我干什么，你总是走在我的前面，什么都比我干的更快，干的更好。我只不过是你的生命，再一个生命”（73）。丝丽伊对人生的质问回到了人类古老的命题，即人的本体论问题，这主要源自人类自身对于意义的焦虑：我是谁，从哪里来，要到哪里去，我存在的意义是什么？

从萨特的存在主义来看，人真实的存在是指精神的存在，存在主义的核心是自由，即人在选择自己的行动时是绝对自由的。人在事物面前，如果不能按照个人意志作出自由选择，这种人就等于丢掉了个性，失去自我，不能算是真正的存在。“失去自我，即‘自我感觉到的存在感’，往往导致心理上的焦虑、绝望、恐惧、病态”（黄文贵，15）。可以说，自我的诉求是构建伦理关系的基础，只有确立和完成自我建构，才能为个体与他人、社会建立伦理关系做好准备。丝丽伊曾为自己失去自由选择的权利发出绝望的声音：“我在诞生时，没有像其他婴儿那样用大声的哭喊渴求我的自由。因为，我的渴求早已被伊丽丝驱走”（26）。由于自我意识的缺失，丝丽伊决定通过叛逆来反抗伊丽丝的独裁，通过叛逆来找回自信、脱离伊丽丝的阴影。她故意养猫把家里弄脏；十二岁与伊丽丝同台演出时，在伊丽丝喜爱的呆板的黑色礼服腰间缠上黄色绸带以此示威；十四岁时第一次化妆、穿高跟鞋；青春期剪了短发并染发；离家出走。这些行为都是出于她对自由的渴望，希冀找回个性。值得注意的是，她的成长过程与千万少年儿童一样，在青春期都会叛逆、渴望独立。“离家出走”是寻找自我的起点，是挑战“家长”权威的极端行为，只有摆脱伊丽丝的束缚，方可获得个人自由。可见，丝丽伊努力挣脱克隆人的身份，不愿复制生命和人生。只有解开“人”的身份的伦理结，才能拥有最终的存在感和人生意义。

然而，伦理身份的诉求是最难解开的伦理结。即使伊丽丝坚持认为丝丽伊是女儿，但丝丽伊却意识到这种反传统的血亲关系实则导致了人伦定位不清，她常要独自面对伦理困惑，一方面，困惑来自母版伊丽丝，丝丽伊认为母版实际上“把丈夫和妻子，母亲、父亲和姐姐集于一身”（18）。从生育角度来看，她们的“血亲关系”应当是母亲与女儿，因为双胞胎均为同龄，不可能是两代人。从孪生儿遗传角度来看，她们具有同样的基因密码，从骨骼、外貌到脑电图几乎一致，丝丽伊同时又把伊丽丝当做孪生姐姐，只是比自己早出生了一代人。丝丽伊经常想到关于双胞胎的古老神话，以此比喻自己的命运。“在古老的神话中，孪生儿的父亲不是神灵就是恶魔，而孪生儿的母亲则常常是不忠诚的女人或者是着了魔的女人，要不就是占卜女巫。因为，人类一向认为，孪生儿的诞生总是一种特殊的昭示：是预告幸运或者灾难的超自然的信号”（13）。所以，从出生开始，具有双重身份的丝丽伊注定会经历重重灾难。

伦理身份的混乱一直伴随着丝丽伊，直到八岁时，她发明了一个听起来荒唐的词语：“母双”——母亲双胞胎（58），这正是滥用科技的伦理后果。另

一方面，伦理身份的困惑来自于伊丽丝的母亲卡塔琳娜。早在丝丽伊五岁时，卡塔琳娜就无法接受这个小“魔鬼”（43），这种陌生的疏离感不仅能让人产生恐惧，更重要的是一种思想和情感上带来的震撼。在这位“长辈”眼中，小丝丽伊成为他者、异己的怪物，同时，也加深了自然人自己伦理身份的困惑：她有两个女儿：一个是三十六岁的伊丽丝，一个是五岁的丝丽伊。“如果这两个人是同一个人的话，那她就应该是两个人的母亲，而她已经去世的丈夫则不仅是伊丽丝的，而且也是丝丽伊的父亲。一个他死后才出生的女儿的父亲！这个想法使卡塔琳娜感到眩晕”（43）。对于丝丽伊来说，卡塔琳娜又是谁？是她的外婆，还是她的母亲？她无法选择正确的称呼，而在她听到“外婆”叫她“魔鬼”时，她幼小的心灵从此蒙上了阴影。

虽然伦理身份的不确定性使丝丽伊陷入伦理困惑，但是作为克隆的“人”，她经历了生物性选择的高级阶段——科学选择之后，仍要求归属于人类，得到自我承认和人类承认，这就必须进一步进化为人，拥有伦理意识、进行伦理选择。因此，努力成人的过程中，只有进行伦理选择，才是她真正解答“我是谁”的问题。青春期的丝丽伊经历了比常人更多的磨难，显得比同龄人成熟，已经具有成年人的伦理意识。但是她的伦理选择既为了实现自我存在的意义，又是为了报复伊丽丝，这就使丝丽伊在伦理选择中更多地体现了追求自由的本能要求，即自由意志。任何一个人都具有“斯芬克斯因子”，体内既有人性因子，又有兽性因子。“人性因子即伦理意识，主要是由人头体现的。人头是人类从野蛮时代向文明进化过程中进行生物性选择的结果……兽性因子与人性因子相对，是人的动物性本能。动物性本能完全凭借本能选择，原欲是动物进行选择的决定因素”（聂珍钊，文学伦理学批评及其它：聂珍钊自选集 21）。兽性因子要求人具有本能欲望，本能就要追求绝对的自由，实现自由意志，才能最终明确伦理身份。在兽性因子的牵引下，丝丽伊开始寻求属于一个少女的性爱自由。

就在丝丽伊十四岁时，她爱上了伊丽丝的爱人克里斯蒂安——名义上的“代理父亲”（76）。这次初恋对她具有双重意义：一是能体验真正的人类情感；二是达到报复伊丽丝的目的，成为她的情敌，使之嫉妒。虽然丝丽伊诱惑克里斯蒂安在某种程度上是为了激怒伊丽丝，但是作为“复制品”，“伊丽丝喜欢的东西，丝丽伊当然也是喜欢的。一颗心和一个灵魂”（95）。丝丽伊付出真爱的同时，承受着巨大的心理压力。实际上，她的爱情很有可能出于“恋父情结”，由于缺少父爱，她在童年时代就认保姆的儿子雅内为“哥哥”，凡事依赖于他，一辈子形影不离；少女时代又爱上名义上的父亲，痛苦与快乐并存。快乐是因为兽性因子让欲望得以释放，让精神足够解放。享受爱情的丝丽伊第一次感觉到了真是的自我存在。同时，她成为伊丽丝的情敌，只有这个时候才能跳出原来被束缚的生命，感到无比快乐。

但是，由于身份混乱意识的牵绊，丝丽伊在伦理选择过程中出现了伦理两难。一方面，她任凭自由意志牵引着自己，通过反叛来追求自我、激怒情敌；另一方面，克里斯蒂安的亲昵动作激发出丝丽伊的人性因子，使她的理性意志及时

控制自由意志，使她因乱伦的羞耻感而退出这场爱情游戏。伦理身份的不确定性产生了混乱的伦理环境，伦理混乱导致了乱伦，乱伦又进一步加剧了伦理混乱。伦理身份与伦理选择密切相关，无论从“母女”角度还是“双胞胎”角度，克里斯蒂安与伊丽丝和丝丽伊的恋爱都是乱伦之恋，是任何家庭不容许存在的。乱伦不仅是被禁止的，而且被当作所有不道德行为中最严重的一种，乱伦禁忌也是社会规制的最初形式。“社会科学的研究证明，古代人类的道德观念产生之前，伦理秩序是凭借禁忌维系的。以性关系为例，人们对乱伦关系极度恐慌，对乱伦的禁止也十分严厉”（聂珍钊，文学伦理学批评及其它：聂珍钊自选集23）。可见，丝丽伊在伦理诉求中的抗争被头脑中的理性驯服，在她身上集中体现了人类的伦理意识与选择。

丝丽伊向善的道德要求在另一次伦理选择中体现出来，经历了乱伦事件后，她在日记中记录了十六岁时酒后乱性的经历：“我第一次和一个男人睡觉，是雅内的一个朋友，比我大十岁，我感到很轻松和美好，但我却没有爱上他。这只是我要完成的一项任务。和其他事情一样的‘正常生活’的一部分——这至少是我的观点——我也完成了”（108）。然而，这次性放纵的目的是丝丽伊为了证明自己拥有人类的自由意志，是一次自我回归的体验，“那些该死的基因：让它们见鬼去吧！”（107）这个性行为并没有使丝丽伊更加快乐，反而加剧了她内心的矛盾。在任凭本能释放后，丝丽伊的人性因子与兽性因子再次交锋对抗，她没有丧失伦理意识，深知追求自由并不等同于性解放，这不是人类真正的自由意志。道德羞耻感让她产生了顿悟，开始为自己的行为感到懊悔：“自由的意志也不是万能的，特别是在夜里，我们就失去了对它的控制”（108）。

在伦理困境面前丝丽伊表现出对生命与道德的忧虑，她再也没有任凭原欲泛滥，而是让理性意志严格控制着自由意志。可见，丝丽伊的成长历程中最重要的一次选择便是伦理选择，这也是人类进化过程中最重要的一次选择。她深知伦理道德对行为的约束力，深知逾越伦理禁忌会带来伦理恐慌。人类拥有“人形”还不是真正意义上的人，只有能够分别善恶是非，才可为人。而克隆人丝丽伊完成伦理选择后，也就意味着真正成人，人类也应当承认她作为“人”的身份。

### 三、人类社会前景与道德反思

小说最后，由于强大的遗传基因，丝丽伊也难逃厄运，同样患有致命的疾病。而造物主伊丽丝病重去世的那一刻，丝丽伊才算真正的解脱。那么，小说的核心是否只是描写丝丽伊作为克隆人的特殊生活？如果要探究丝丽伊的悲剧性，还应重新回到小说标题“蓝图”，发掘隐藏在其背后的寓意。“蓝图”本指设计出来的图纸，要晒成蓝色。晒图就是在透明的纸张上把设计图样描下来，然后去晒图机上用药水把它复制到纸张上，这样就可以复制很多张。诚然，克隆人丝丽伊如同晒图原理，她的诞生改写了人类发展的历史，人类可以用基因干预的复制技术去制造人类。

丝丽伊到底复制了 DNA，还是复制了人？丝丽伊的人生在自我与复制的双重人生中轮回，她拥有生物 DNA 和信息 DNA，即拥有高级的生物性选择结果和人类的伦理意识，这两大因素使她在“存在”与“迷失”中徘徊，时而清醒，时而困惑，“存在两次，听起来总是有点荒谬，就像是我”（100）。有学者认为“克隆技术给人类的生死问题带来了一种新的解决途径，比较而言，它似乎更接近于中国古代道教的理念，是此‘生’之永生的某种程度的实现”（王晨 10），这似乎很有道理。但是，从理论上而言，道家思想首先是尊重生命和自然规律的。自然人与克隆人的关系就是“原版”与“摹本”的关系，正如伊丽丝和丝丽伊一样，她们各自拥有不同的生命、不同的自我意识，并且不同的成长环境和教育还能造就不同的性格。没有一个人的人生是可以被重复制造的，并且人生还包括精神和意识，这不完全取决于一个人的遗传密码。

有学者认为，克隆是自恋的表现，“克隆人被当做个人与自我关系的象征，是一种自恋”（Ferreira 44），克隆人为“原版”提供了一面镜子，镜中的形象可以完成他在现实生活中未完成的梦想与愿望。因此，作为“原版”的伊丽丝不仅将 DNA 复制到下一代，也将她的才华和天赋复制到下一代，她与克隆人相互转化、相互依存。如果将那个“斯芬克斯之谜”放置于自然人与克隆人共存的社会语境之下，我们很难分清自然人与克隆人之间的界限。丝丽伊与自然人与人之间的人性并无明显区别，他们在伦理选择与道德诉求中甚至形成鲜明对比。丝丽伊的身份诉求无论表现为抗争或是同化，她已然具备人类的理性；相反，与其说伊丽丝与费希尔医生成为了造人的“上帝”，不如说他们才是失去理性头脑的怪物。他们突破了人类认知底线，“人造人”已经跳出传统道德的藩篱，动摇了人类的价值根源。这幅“蓝图”体现了科幻小说的重要功能：“科幻小说是小说的一个分支，主要反映在一个想象的未来、虚构的现实或过去中，被改造了的科技或者社会制度对人类产生的可能影响”（转引自吴岩 10）。

丝丽伊的身份诉求过程实则书写了一部打破复制蓝图的成长史，也是一部克隆术的伦理启示录。它迫切要求人类在科学选择时代到来之际，重新建构伦理体系与道德规范。纵观人类历史进程，几乎每一次社会转型都将带来革命性的影响，都不可避免地导致伦理道德的变化，甚至是颠覆性、毁灭性的改变。科学选择时代的理性绝对不是建立在生物基因之上，如果一味地追求欲望与目的，就会形成工具理性与价值理性的对立，正如丝丽伊在解开伦理结的过程中向我们展示的滥用科技引发的伦理危机与恐慌。一方面，科技发展加剧了人类对工具理性的崇拜和运用；另一方面，自启蒙运动以来的追求人类自由、平等、权利、尊严等普适性的价值理性也日益重要。当工具理性恶性膨胀后，势必会破坏人类的价值和道义，甚至导致人类的灭亡。“克隆人永远生活在危机之中”（110），这是丝丽伊的呐喊和控诉，但是，与其说克隆人生活在危机之中，不如说人类生活在危机之中。丝丽伊与伊丽丝的故事警告人类：复制将使人找不到原版与摹本，“我”的主体性逐渐消失，成为语言符号而已，人类将无法感知自己与现实、个人与他人的真实联系。

因此,小说的英文标题“Blueprint”便具有更深层的伦理寓意。“蓝图”的另一意义是指美好的蓝图,即希望与前景。如果把“复制”与“前景”两种意义结合,便形成一种反讽,克隆术确实是一种复制技术,也是对未来的“展望”,但前景并不美好。丝丽伊饱受精神压抑后,再次失去自我,发出了最后的感叹:“蓝图是忠于原件的。因为蓝色是悲伤的颜色。有一种蓝色的小花叫做勿忘我。永远勿忘我!否则你就会死去,我的生命!”(118)对生命的呼喊向世人发出警示:“道德通过对主体使用现代技术的目的及其手段的价值规导,使技术的使用合乎人性,合乎人的目的,为人类造福”(高兆明,孙慕义 188)。让人类理性地对待科技,理性地运用科技,不可超越“人是目的”的最基本的道德底线。

### 注解【Notes】

1. 参 见 Haraway, Donna. *The Cybersexualities: A Reader on Feminist Theory, Cyborgs and Cyberspace*, edited with an introduction by Jenny Wolmark, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999.
2. 参 见 Fukuyama, Francis. *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology*. Saint Martin's Press Inc., 2003.
3. 本文所有引文均出自《我是克隆人》,夏洛特·克纳著,王泰智 沈惠珠译(北京:人民文学出版社 2006年)。
4. 关于“生物性选择”和“科学选择”的观点,详见聂珍钊《文学伦理学批评及其它》(华中师范大学出版社 2012) 16-17。聂教授认为从达尔文进化论的观点考察人类,可以发现人类文明的出现是人类自我选择的结果。从猿到人是人类在进化过程中作出的第一次选择,然而这只是一次生物性选择。这次选择最大成功就在于人获得了人的形势,即人的外形,从而使人类能够从形式上同兽区别开来。而人兽区分的本质在于,人能分别善恶是非,具有理性,即伦理意识,因此伦理选择是人类发展史上的第二次选择。现阶段人类正进行第三次选择,即科学选择。人类现在与未来都处于科学选择时代。
5. “自然选择指由于物种个体之间基因组成的差异,个体的生存能力与繁殖能力不同,于是,随着自然环境条件的变化,一些个体能繁殖较多的后代,而另一些个体则不能繁殖戴很少繁殖”(《生物进化的原动力——性选择》《科学中国人》2002年第6期)。
6. “生物的本能使个体采用各种各样的繁殖计策来扩散自身的基因。动物的繁殖行为是自然选择的中心。当自然界一种性别动物个体竞争异性个体戴异性个体产生的配子时,当一种性别动物个体会挑选异性个体交配时,这时就会产生性选择”(《生物进化的原动力——性选择》《科学中国人》2002年第6期)。
7. 详见吴岩主编的《科幻文学理论和学科体系建设》第74页,“在当代,科幻中的‘机器人’泛指一切‘人造人’。因此,在西方科幻小说中‘robot’一词出了只钢铁型的机器人(mechanical men)之外,还包括所谓的‘生物机器人’等用生化方式制造出来的‘robot’,甚至‘克隆人’也被包括在‘robot’当中……科幻作品中的机器人是人类自身的一种镜像”。

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# 《洪堡的礼物》：城市考古、居民记忆与城市感伤

张 甜

**内容摘要：**《洪堡的礼物》出版于1975年，一经问世便好评如潮，并与次年帮助贝娄赢得普利策文学奖以及当年的诺贝尔文学奖。该小说描写了城市的变化，城市人生存的精神状态，尤其选择两代知识分子的遭遇来烘托战后三十年艺术如何在物质主义的诱惑面前变得软弱无力，城市呈现出枯萎病状态，人们在这种纷繁杂乱的生活变得狂乱不堪。小说以丰富的城市符号传达出战后美国从商业化城市向工业化城市的转变以及在这种转变下城市灵魂的封闭性和压抑性。

**关键词：**《洪堡的礼物》 城市个体 城市符号

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**Title** *Humboldt's Gift: Urban Archaeology, Inhabitants' Memory and Urban Sentiment*

**Abstract** *Humboldt's Gift* has been favorably reviewed since its publication in 1975, which contributes in Bellow's crowning of the Pulitzer Prize and Nobel Prize for Literature in the following year. The novel describes the transformative history of urban landscape and the spiritual world of urban citizens. The sufferings of two intellectual generations reveal how arts become useless and powerless in its confrontation with urban materialism within the thirty years after WWII. Cities show less vitality and vigor as they used to be. Anxiety, hysteria and suppression have been the main personality traits for urban individuals. Abundant urban signs in the novel have demonstrated the transformation of cities from commercialization to industrialization and its impact on urban individuals.

**Key words** Saul Bellow; *Humboldt's Gift*; urban individuals; urban signs

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《洪堡的礼物》(*Humboldt's Gift*) 创作于1975年，一经问世便好评如潮，被美国《时代》周刊推选为当年十大优秀著作之一，并与次年帮助贝娄赢得普利策文学奖以及当年的诺贝尔文学奖。这部小说被认为是一部“其他同时代小

说家无法像贝娄这样收放自如的作品”(Shattuck 21-5)。迈克·格兰迪(Michael Glenday)认为这部小说里贝娄极力寻求一种生活的基本原理,并为从这种生活中撤离而提供载体,小说在超验与现实中展开(Glenday 124)。

《洪堡的礼物》是贝娄最重要的代表作之一,通过对两代作家命运的描写,揭露了物质世界对精神文明的压迫和摧残以及当代社会的精神危机。小说中曾两获普利策奖并获封法国骑士勋章的中年作家查里·西特林一切都在走下坡路,前妻丹妮丝刮尽他的财产、流氓也砸烂了他的奔驰车、现有的情妇莱娜达是个敛财娘,并对艺术一无所知,最重要的是他泉思枯竭,写不出有价值有创造力的作品。他对穷困潦倒而死的导师和挚友的洪堡一直心怀歉疚,洪堡是位有抱负的才华横溢的诗人,曾教他认识艺术的力量,要他忠于自己的创造精神,然而西特林在洪堡贫病交加、流落街头时却并未伸出援助之手。最后在面临物质和精神双重破产的窘境下,西特林终于借助洪堡留给他的一份礼物——一个剧本提纲——摆脱了物质危机,同时他也深深体会到洪堡当年的精神苦痛。

小说中的美国是一个充斥着金钱、美色、生意经、爱欲以及犯罪的社会,在精神生活的匮乏以及物质主义的盲目崇拜下,整个社会让人窒息,甚至是心烦意乱,不堪忍受。两位作家身边又鲜有志同道合的艺术挚友,社会让他们的性格也发生了扭曲。该小说描写了城市的变化,城市人生存的精神状态,尤其选择两代知识分子的遭遇来烘托战后三十年艺术如何在物质主义的诱惑面前变得软弱无力以及城市呈现出的枯萎病状态。

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小说中最显著的特征便是展现出商业化城市向工业化城市的转变,而这一转变凸显的主体便体现在以记忆考古的方式挖掘个体对过往的回忆上。西特林在自己的回忆中收拾起记忆的片段,并将它们重新拼贴在一起,并以记忆为载体拼贴展现出城市的变迁。小说以非常别致的叙述方式挖掘个体的记忆,正如本雅明所说:“试图走近自己被埋葬了的过去的人必须扮演挖掘人的角色。”(本雅明 221)。小说叙述者是西特林,西特林在回忆中讲述着发生在他和洪堡之间的故事。此外,这种回忆不是单一的对过往事情的简单描述,而是包含着多重层面的回忆,比如对往事的回忆,以及对往事中的往事的回忆。从故事讲述者西特林于30年代拜访洪堡到70年代重新安葬洪堡,时间跨度三十多年。小说中间只有两个月是用现在时展现进行中的事情。小说叙事由三条线索构成:现在、过去、过去的过去。小说以第一人称展开,主人公西特林回忆着发生在导师洪堡和自己身上的种种事情叙述中的往事还有深一层的往事叙述。这种追思以及交叉叙事的方式反映出叙述者心理的沉重,精神的萎靡,尤其体现了作者沉浸在对过去美好的追思以及对现有生活的忏悔中。正如一位评论家认为记忆是西特林“否认城市及其几百万人口的匿名性以及悄无声息。对于贝娄笔下的生存者而言,生活的每个片段都是独特而又珍贵的;如果没被记住,就如同从未存在一样”(Rovit 100)。

这种回忆作为载体也夹杂着故事叙述者对不同城市场景的评述，并且场景间的切换自由而流畅。整部小说的场景设置在贝娄再熟悉不过的城市——芝加哥，芝加哥“并不仅仅只是一个背景，而是一个满载着各种关系的人和地点的生气勃勃的城市”（Shattuck 21-5）。虽然小说情节当中也穿插着纽约、马德里、巴黎等城市，但这些城市往往只是充当小说人物的背景，并没有包含太多作者和故事叙述者太多的情感。“芝加哥代表着一个它自己的角色，有着令人兴奋的物质存在。即便它没有心灵，但至少它充当了一个人物”（Shattuck 21-5）。城市以隐喻的方式作为人物参与到情节的构建中，它以一种异己力量与主人公在抗衡。

小说以城市考古的方式对照性地呈现出商业化城市向工业化城市转变的图景，不断挖掘藏匿在记忆深处的城市景象。作者将回忆定格在1952年9月的一天，洪堡开着四缸车去接西特林。然而作为“自称是美国第一个拥有机动车辆汽车的诗人”（*Humboldt's Gift* 20）<sup>1</sup>的洪堡开着车横冲直撞。他开始讲述着自己一生亲眼看到的泽西沼地的巨大变化。“五十年前，在这里，就连这种装有机动闸和动力转向的别克车都是无从设想的；而如今，道路啦，垃圾堆啦，工厂啦，比比皆是”（21）。几十年后，城市完全展现出工业化的景象，“高耸的烟囱就像一尊尊生锈的大炮，静悄悄地向星期天的天空喷吐着美丽的烟团。煤气加工厂的酸臭气味直刺人的肺腑。灯芯草像洋葱汤一样，呈现着深褐色。远洋油轮缩在水道里。狂风骤起，涌起一堆堆大块大块的白云。远方鳞次栉比的平方看起来像未来的墓地，或人们在惨淡的太阳下走过街道去做礼拜”（22）。简单的生活被打破，取而代之的是工业和后工业社会带来的种种标记。“煤气加工厂”、“烟囱”等正是工业化城市的突出符号，而人们也就在这种后工业状态下逐步丧失自我，开始寻求更高的生活目标和自我价值，而洪堡也不例外，在回忆过去的过程中，“他大谈机械、豪华、控制、资本主义、技术、财神、尔尔普斯和诗歌，以至人心的复杂、美国的状况和世界的文明。而他的任务就是要把这一切的一切，甚至更多的东西都结合在一起”（22）。这也导致了洪堡日后的悲剧，而这种悲剧贝娄在“杰弗逊讲座演说”一文中对社区毁灭带来的三种后果做过说明：“美国城市里温暖街道生活的消失；从不断扩张的巨大郊区升起的、文化霉菌的阴冷而压抑的气味；豪放不羁的艺术家从贫民窟向大学的转移”（《集腋成裘集》184）。一切已不再温暖，人的心灵受大了极大的压抑。

小说以主人公细致入微的观察刻画着城市的变迁。西特林生活在芝加哥，他的梅赛德斯车被砸之后，他拦了辆出租车，在车上他也看到了城市的变化：“芝加哥的大部分地区都破烂不堪。有的地方在重建，有的地方还是老样子。这个城市就像电影的蒙太奇，升起，倒下，又升起”（71）。在西特林途经的迪维仁街以前是波兰人聚居的地域，现在几乎全是波多黎各人。“在波兰人居住的时候，那里小小的砖房都漆成了鲜红色、栗色和糖果绿。草坪都用铁管围起来”（71）。西特林还回忆到若干年前他曾领着洪堡来看过芝加哥的情景。那时候

洪堡是为《诗刊》举行诵诗会的。西特林“带洪堡乘高架铁去过屠宰场，也观看了闹市区。洪堡的兴致主要在于这里古老的街道。漆成银色的烧水罐柳钉和显眼的波兰天竺葵触动了他的感情。他听着旱冰鞋在坚硬的水泥地上发出的声音，深受感动，脸色都苍白了”（102）。这段刻画使西特林深深感受到当年的平凡，与现代的潮流比起来，那种感觉与回忆是美好的，令人感动的，而如今，盛行的是一些卑劣的东西，平凡似乎被赎回了。卡尔维诺曾说：“城市不会泄露自己的过去，只会把它像手纹一样藏起来，它被写在街巷的角落、窗格的护栏、楼梯的扶避雷的天线和旗杆上，每一道印记都是抓挠、锯刻凿、猛击留下的痕迹”（卡尔维诺 9）。正是这种城市的印记镌刻在西特林的灵魂深处，对过往的追思也正印证了他对现实的无奈和逃避。

城市影像的对比不仅展示了城市的发展变迁，也将城市居民的怀旧与伤感镌刻在字里行间。西特林不想在街道上闲逛，只想到处看看。他细致入微，过去的记忆历历在目，却越发陷入伤感的轮回中：“整整一条街被拆掉了。罗维的匈牙利餐厅被清除了，还有本的台球房和砖砌的古老车库，还有格拉齐的殡仪馆。我的双亲都是从这里抬出去埋葬的。这里永远不会有美好的间歇。时间的废墟都被推到了，而且被堆积起来，装上卡车，然后当垃圾倒掉了。新的钢梁正在竖起来”（75）。

城市作为一个复杂的符号集合，其间的每座建筑、每条街道、每条河流都作为符号彰显着城市的文化内涵。旧街道、餐厅、车库的拆除带走的是往昔的城市，取而代之的是新都市的面貌，正是这种留心的观察突出了西特林怀旧的情愫，对如烟往事的追思。这种对故国的思念也是西特林的导师洪堡一心向往的。博伊姆在《怀旧的未来》中提到：“城市里的地点不仅仅是建筑学上的比喻；也是城市居民的屏幕记忆，相互竞争的种种记忆的投射。在这里，令人感兴趣的不仅仅有建筑的项目，而且还有所感受到的环境、城市居民的日常方式、遵循和偏离规定、城市身份的传闻和城市生活的故事”（博伊姆 88）。随着旅途的继续，西特林看到了自己曾经熟悉的地方已被断壁残垣所取代。芝加哥的变化不仅于此，城市商业模式也发生了改变。芝加哥世界领先的屠宰产业也受到遏制。在回忆了平凡而平民的生活之后，贝娄还不忘精心设计一下金钱物欲下的城市景观，将城市的剧变跃然纸上。欠钱的西特林与债主罗纳尔多·坎特拜尔约定在狄维仁街碰头，之后西特林坐着坎特拜尔的时髦白色蓝鸟车来到花花公子俱乐部，西特林发现了现代城市的另外一个特征：“现在我们处于芝加哥最迷人的一角，我得描述一下周围的环境。……人已经驱走了这篇土地的空旷，而空旷的土地对人的回报只有微乎其微的善意。我们坐在这里，周围充斥着美女、醇酒、时装，以及戴着珠宝、洒着香水的男子，一片财富与权势的阿谀奉承”（93）。

这种城市的景观是发达工业社会的缩影。城市里旧有的公寓被新的房屋所取代，美女与美酒让人们忘乎所以、流连忘返，整个社会弥漫着财富与权势的肮脏交易。而这种肮脏与清澈的湖水以及与西特林对过去芝加哥的记忆形成鲜明的对比。以记忆为载体的这种城市考古方式的展现方式凸显了已逝生活得美

好与静谧，而与之形成鲜明对比的则是现代人在物欲和诱惑下的妥协与苟合，这种对立关系清晰地投射在艺术与金钱的博弈和对垒中。

## 二

广义的艺术最能表现一个时代的精神。尼采认为艺术创作是最高贵的人类任务。贝娄曾说：“没有艺术，就不可能去阐释事实，……艺术和语言的倒退会导致判断的衰退”（qtd. in Glenday 1）。然而在浮华的现代城市面前，艺术也无可避免地卷入一场漩涡中。在城市的漩涡里金钱是基点，斯宾格勒把城市归结为“一个点”：它聚积能量，吸收它周围的一切，并且这个点离不开金钱（转引自利罕 283）。而政府和国家也没有把作家为代表的艺术放在重要地位。贝娄在《作家文人政治：回忆纪要》（“Writers, Intellectuals, Politics: Mainly Reminiscence”）一文中指出：

我们的政府，根本不把作家放在心上。[国家的]奠基者们，为了平等、稳定、正义，以及消灭贫困等等，策划出了一项开明计划。艺术、哲学和人类更高的关注，并不是国家的事情。这里所强调的，在于福利，在于一种实用的人文主义。凭借着科学，我们将会征服自然，迫使它赡养我们。匮乏将得到消除。总的说来，我原来是相信这项计划取得了成功的。在商业社会，没有什么妨碍人们创作小说，或者用水彩作画，然而，文化所得到的关注，与稼穡、制造或银行却不尽一样。（*It All Adds Up* 110）

小说中一个非常明显的特征便是贝娄塑造了以作家为代表的两代知识分子形象，两人都有伟大的抱负，洪堡是位诗人，西特林是位剧作家。两位作家都有着理想和艺术追求，在艺术殿堂里取得了不俗的成就，并对改造社会抱有一定的期望，尤其是诗人洪堡，然而在社会的影响下，两位都不约而同受到物质社会的影响。

洪堡这位“先锋派作家，新一代的奠基者”（1）最初的伟大理想就是要当一位美国诗人，他于二十二岁时便出版了自己的第一部歌谣集。他的诗集在三十年代一问世，便立即引起了轰动。他一直都“认为富丽堂皇、纷纭万状的人类事业必须由非凡的人物来安排管理。而他自己恰恰就是这样一位非凡的人物，而且也是一个合格的当权候选人”（29）。洪堡思想深刻，胸罗万卷，“他的歌谣节奏明快，妙趣横生，纯正而富于人道主义气息”（11）。洪堡诗歌创作的“主题之一就是永恒的人类感觉，认为有一种失去了的古国旧土”（24）。他甚至还会“诗比作仁慈的埃利斯岛，在那儿一群异邦人开始改变国籍。洪堡把今天的世界看成是昔日故国旧土的一种令人激动的缺乏人性的摹仿。他把我们人类说成乘船遇难的旅客”（24）。因而他认为自己应当承担起改良社会的责任，他积极地投身于政治之中。

然而洪堡这种美好的理想其实是与社会现实相矛盾的，正如他诗歌的超然

脱俗,很难与社会现实相融合。在西特林看来洪堡的诗歌是一种柏拉图式的诗歌,即饱含着一种“全人类渴望回归的原始的完美形态”(11)。这种平和的理想化的方式又与美国当时狂乱的状态无法融合,因此洪堡也陷入了思想上的困境。在声名鹊起和锦衣玉食之后,洪堡开始寻求自己的政治梦想。如西特林回忆的:“要当一个美国诗人的崇高思想,有时使洪堡觉得自己是个可笑的角色,像个孩子,像个小丑,像个傻瓜”(5-6)。贝娄在“自我访谈录”中以讽刺自嘲地笔触提及以作家为代表的艺术家们的窘境:“美国作家并没有完全受到冷落;他们间或混迹于大人物之中,甚至可能应约去白宫,不过在那儿,谁也不跟他们谈论文学。尼克松先生不喜欢文学,直截了当地拒绝他们到白宫来,但福特先生对作家之温和,一如他对演员、音乐家、电视新闻播音员、以及政客。”<sup>2</sup>艺术家在社会上似乎用处不大,在这种高级宴会中,作家与大人物们谈论的也不会是语言或风格问题,小说结构等等,借用西特林的理解:“我们都像流浪汉和毕了业的学生一样,在浑浑噩噩地打发日子。或许美国是不再需要艺术和内在的奇迹了,因为它外在的奇迹已经足够了。美国本身是一宗大投机买卖,很大。它掠夺得越多,我们剩下的也就越少”(6)。这种投机风气盛行之下的美国社会也让洪堡逐渐放弃艺术,转而寻求投机的方式来实现自己的理想。“洪堡起初只谈靴子、号角、野营什么的,而到了后来,便也谈起佛罗里达的轿车、豪华旅馆和娱乐场所来了”(4)。

在投机这一动机的诱使下,洪堡策划出各种行动,并一步一步加以实施。洪堡的死在西特林看来是场悲剧,因为洪堡没能力挽狂澜,由于他的初衷与现实社会的狂乱现实相去甚远,“因此,洪堡的所作所为势必成为离奇滑稽的笑料”(6)。西特林认为“洪堡在苦苦思索着,如果在过去与现在、生与死之间周旋,才能使某些重大问题得到完满的回答。然而,苦思冥想并没有使他头脑清醒”(6)。西特林在洪堡死后也回忆着洪堡的一生,他对作为诗人的洪堡作出了评论:

美国的现实是如此冷酷无情,而这个国家反而从中获取令人寒心的满足。当一个诗人,要干学者的事,女人的事,教会的事。精神力量的软弱在这些殉难者的幼稚、疯狂、酗酒和绝望中得到了证明。俄耳甫斯感动了木石,然而诗人们却不会做子宫切除术,也无法把飞船送出太阳系。奇迹和威力不再属于诗人。诗人之所以受到爱戴,正是因为他们在这方面无能为力。他们的存在,只是为了反映那种无边的纷乱,为某些人的玩世不恭辩护(118)。

在这段话里,贝娄感叹艺术家地位的日益低下,尤其在美国这个不重视艺术的国度里。在艺术和物质之间,知识分子不得不作出妥协。西特林说:“我对钱的认识仍然停留在最初的水平上。我不知道有多少人,他们孜孜以求,精明能干,热情满怀。在他们看来,他们理所当然地应该占有你全部的钱。洪堡坚信世界上是有财富的,尽管不是属于他的,而他对这些财富拥有绝对的要求

权，同样他也坚信自己一定能弄到手”（159）。洪堡曾经对自己的金钱追求进行过解释：“如果我还有一点诗人不应该有的财迷的话，那是有原因的。”“其原因是我们毕竟是美国人。我问你，如果我不在乎钱，那我还算什么美国人呢？”（159）因为美国就是一个让人丧失理性的地方。按照西特林的回忆，洪堡一贯坚持说，“在无意识之中，在物质的无理性的核心中，金钱就像血或浸润着脑组织的液体，是一种有生命的物质”（242）。因此对金钱的追求已经渗透到每个现代人的血液中。西特林自己也为自己的行为百般开脱：“我赚的那些钱是钱自己赚来的，是按照资本主义那些说不出的古怪道理赚来的。世道就是这样嘛”（3）。这种资本主义的“古怪道理”就是违背人性，违背艺术，违背本心的处事方法。正如同西特林声称“我赚的那些钱是钱自己赚的”，他忽视了金钱运作背后人的主观作用。然而在看到洪堡的失败以后，尤其是自己纠缠在与妻子的离婚诉讼以及情人的敛财中时，西特林在真正感受到人类生存的问题，尤其是作家在选择艺术与金钱里所应该持有的态度。

具有讽刺意义的是洪堡和西特林的婚姻都受到金钱的左右。他们心中的情人似乎都对自己的艺术追求毫无兴趣。比如西特林的妻子丹妮斯总要问西特林什么时候立遗嘱。西特林的情人莱娜达也沉迷于锦衣玉食之中。西特林年少钦慕的对象对西特林的爱好似乎毫无兴趣，始终认为自己无法理解他所写的内容，包括西特林的哥哥。尤其在目睹了洪堡的离世以及自己经历了诸多事情之后，西特林最后总结出艺术家的最终价值以及最终归宿，正如看到洪堡所遭遇的一样：

现在的一切都成了拙劣的模仿，亵渎，剑客的笑料。不过，还得忍受。而是世纪又为那些神圣的殉难加上了滑稽的殉难者。瞧吧，这就是艺术家。为了想在人类命运中扮演一个重要角色，他也就变成了无赖和小丑。作为意义和美的自封的代表，他遭到了双重的惩罚。当艺术家在磨难之中学会了如何忍受沉沦和毁灭，如何去拥抱失败，如何保持虚无和克制自己的意志，并接受了进入现代真理的地狱的任务的时候，也许他的俄耳甫斯的神力又恢复了。（345）

洪堡由于心脏病而死在鲍里街，他是如此的无足轻重，在物质世界与精神世界的双重折磨下他走向灭亡。华尔街和鲍里街隔得如此之近，然而却代表着两种完全不同的生存状态。诗人已经等同于贫民、乞讨者，并不是他们没有追求，而是他们似乎与社会相去甚远、不合时宜，正如西特林总结的：“诗人就像醉汉和不合时宜的人，或者精神变态者，可怜虫；不论穷富，他们毫无例外地都处于软弱无力的地位”（155）。洪堡凄惨的下场也社会的悲剧，因为他不得其所，他希望成为时代的弄潮儿，在学会了政治里的阴谋诡计、尔虞我诈之外，他放弃了自己的原初本行。贝娄在这里不仅嘲讽作家们的生活态度和处事方式，更是为了嘲讽整个没有文化内涵的民族。

### 三

贝娄在评价美国的状况时称“我们的处境是特别革命的，是处于危机状态的，是一种永无休止的焦虑”（*It All Adds Up* 82）。西美尔也曾描述这种生活状况，他指出“现代生活最深层次的问题来源于个人在社会压力、传统习惯、外来文化、生活方式面前保持个人的独立和个性的要求”（Simmel 409）。而这种独立和个性的要求与社会现实的冲突之中会带给现代人厌烦与狂躁。就像西特林所说：“我的心理处于一种芝加哥状态之中。我该怎么描绘这种现象呢？一处于芝加哥状态，我就模模糊糊地觉得一种无名的空虚，心在扩张，感到一种难以忍受的渴望，灵魂的知觉要求表现自己，有些像服用过量的咖啡因的那种症状。同时我还有这样一种感觉，觉得自己成了外力的工具。这些外力在利用我，或者把我当人类错误的实例，或者仅仅当做未来的称心如意的事物的影子”（66）。这种“要求表现自己”的状态正是为了“保持个人的独立和个性”，但是由此而生的空虚和烦躁成为城市精神的一个最显著的特征。

成名后的西特林，在目睹了工业主义中的各种狂躁之后，他“开始苦苦思索不朽的精神问题”（109）。最直接的精神状态就是对生活的无奈与烦躁，因此“厌烦”也就成为了他最想写的主题。西特林对“厌烦”有着自己的理解，他甚至从社会学家的角度给他下了定义并进行一番历史上的考究：

人类一开始就经历了种种厌烦状态，然而从来没有人把它作为一个正式的课题从正面来触及它的核心。而在现代，这个问题是被作为资本主义劳动条件的后果，作为在群体社会里趋于平等的结果，作为宗教信仰衰落或者神授或预言因素的逐渐消失，或者对无意识力量的忽视，或者在这个技术社会里理性化的增加，或者官僚主义加强的后果，用“社会反常”或者异化处理的。但是在我看来，一个人可以从对当代世界的信念开始——要么燃烧，要么腐烂。（198）

西特林进而解释了厌烦的特征和来源，厌烦是一种痛苦，厌烦的产生主要是因为人们的期望太高，甚至感觉怀才不遇，才有了各种各样的厌烦。西特林最后将厌烦的根源归结到堕落的世界之中。这个堕落的世界让许多心怀憧憬的天真之人希望破灭，并热忠于阴谋诡计、尔虞我诈，结果就是付出沉重的代价。

厌烦的结果就是城市的枯萎病，人们变得麻木，一味追求物质、金钱、欲望以及享受的同时，丧失了自我，灵魂也在枯竭，放弃了自己的初衷和梦想：“最壮观的事物，生活最需要的事物，已经退缩了，隐没了。人们对目前的生活的确烦得要命。人们正在丧失一切属于个人的生活。千千万万的灵魂正在枯萎。大家都可以理解，在世界上的许多地方，由于饥饿和警察转业而失去了生活的希望。但在这儿，在自由世界里，我们有什么借口呢？在社会危机的压力下，个人的领域正在被迫放弃……”（250）而洪堡和西特林就是这千百万“正在被

迫放弃的人”中的成员。美国这个畸形的社会到处充斥着小丑。西特林认为他们家兄弟俩就是最好的代表。哥哥尤利克非常具有经商的才能，瞧不起弟弟的作为，而西特林自己则对经商毫无天赋，“我们旧世界堂堂正正的父母可真是生下了一对美国小丑——一个是恶魔似的百万富翁小丑，一个却是高超思想的小丑”（391）。

因此小说结尾意味深长，当西特林被问及路边的小花是什么花时，西特林的回答是：“我可不知道，我是自小在城里长大的”（487）。“城里”是个桎梏人思想的地方，这一结尾传达出城市是个巨大的未知数，未来在何方，将有如何变数，都是不可预计的。这也从另外一个角度展示出现代美国精神的封闭以及人们的无知。人们很多时候是随主流，在主流价值观面前丧失了自己的立场。

作为贝娄中期创作的一部作品，贝娄将成功与堕落、友谊与财富、艺术与金钱进行并置，并以最为犀利的口吻得出他的结论：“所有伟大的成功——经济、技术和组织上的成功——的代价，就是人类的谦卑，就是人们在芝加哥（或者纽约，或者罗马，或者基辅）所见到的那种堕落。要想回到人类原来的样子，就不得不回到《圣经》那儿去，回到柏拉图那儿去，回到莎士比亚那儿去”（*It All Adds Up* 151）。

### 注解【Notes】

1. 本文所选小说引文，除非特别说明，均取自 Saul Bellow, *Humboldt's Gift*. New York: Penguin, 2007.
2. 此次围绕艺术家、文学、科学家的访谈颇具讽刺意味，贝娄称之为“An Interview with Myself”，可见贝娄对艺术问题的重视。该访谈原载于《安大略评论》（*Antario Review*）1975年第四期。可参见 Saul Bellow, *It All Adds Up: from the Dim Past to the Uncertain Future*, (Viking, 1994)80.

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# 国外查尔斯·约翰逊研究述评

陈后亮

**内容摘要：**美国 1990 年度国家图书奖获得者查尔斯·约翰逊被誉为二战之后美国文学界最重要、最有创新性的严肃小说家之一。在吸取东西方不同哲学和宗教文化营养的基础上，他有意增强小说的哲理内涵，同时淡化其种族政治属性，颠覆了人们对黑人文学的传统认知。从 1980 年代之前的寂寂无闻到 1990 年代以来的炙手可热，约翰逊小说在评论界经历巨大转变。本文通过梳理国外学界在黑人哲理小说研究、东方宗教思想研究以及后现代主义研究三个维度上取得的成果，找出目前尚存在的不足，为我们开展下一步研究提供借鉴。

**关键词：**查尔斯·约翰逊 黑人哲理小说 东方宗教 后现代主义

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**Title** A General Review of Charles Johnson Scholarship in the West

**Abstract** Charles Johnson, the 1990 National Book Award winner, is praised as one of the most important and innovative writers of serious fiction in post-World War II American letters. A man of great learning in both Eastern and Western philosophies and religions, Johnson deliberately makes his writings full of philosophical thinking while diluting their racial and political references, hence challenging the readers' familiarity with conventional black writings. Rarely noted in the 1980 scholarship but warmly hailed since the 1990s, Johnson has experienced dramatic changes in critical responses. With a general survey of Western Johnsonian scholarship on three dimensions, that is, philosophical black fiction, Eastern religions, and postmodernism, this article tries to analyze their values and drawbacks respectively, and then to inspire further studies in the future.

**Kew words** Charles Johnson; philosophical black fiction; Eastern religion; postmodernism

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查尔斯·约翰逊（Charles Johnson, 1948-）是美国当代杰出的黑人作家，

被誉为“二战之后美国文学界最重要、最有创新性的严肃小说家之一”（Conner 481），现为美国华盛顿大学首位“S. 威尔逊与 G. M. 波洛克讲席英语杰出教授”。迄今为止，约翰逊共出版长篇小说 4 部，分别是《菲丝与好东西》（*Faith and the Good Thing*, 1974）、《牧牛传说》（*Oxherding Tale*, 1982）、《中间航线》（*Middle Passage*, 1990）以及《梦想家》（*Dreamer*, 1998），其中《中间航线》于 1990 年荣获美国国家图书奖，成为继拉尔夫·埃里森之后第二位获此殊荣的黑人男作家。约翰逊获得的其他重要奖项包括 1998 年的麦克阿瑟奖，以及 2000 年由美国艺术委员会颁发的艺术终生成就奖。2003 年，约翰逊当选美国艺术与科学院院士。

除了长篇小说，约翰逊还著有 3 部短篇小说集，分别为《魔法师的学徒》（*The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, 1986）、《招魂人及其他故事》（*Soulcatcher and Other Stories*, 2001）以及《金博士的冰箱及其他睡前故事》（*Dr. King's Refrigerator and Other Bedtime Stories*, 2005）。由南加利福尼亚大学开展的调查显示，约翰逊荣膺美国当代最杰出的十位短篇小说家之一，其短篇小说荣获欧·亨利故事奖，入选 1992 年度美国最佳短篇故事。在文学创作之余，约翰逊还在漫画、哲学研究以及文学评论方面颇有建树，他的《存在与种族：1970 年代以来的黑人文学》（*Being and Race: Black Writing since 1970*, 1988）和《转动法轮：佛教与文学》（*Turning the Wheel: Essays on Buddhism and Writing*, 2003）已成为黑人文学和佛教文学研究领域的重要著作。另外自 1990 年代以来，约翰逊还越来越多的参与社会公共事务，成为与理查德·罗蒂、查尔斯·伯恩斯坦以及玛莎·纳斯鲍姆等人齐名的公共知识分子（Selzer 158）。

虽然早在 1974 年约翰逊就凭借处女作《菲丝与好东西》一举成名，而且随后包括《牧牛传说》在内的几部长、短篇小说（集）也屡获奖项，但在整个 1980 年代之前，文学评论界对他的关注都非常少。甚至直到他获得国家图书奖之后的 1990 年代初期，这种情况依然未有改观。有关文学评论界对约翰逊的这种“选择性忽视”的原因，我们将在下文再做介绍。从 1990 年代后半程开始，在多种文学内外因素的影响下，约翰逊逐渐成为评论界关注的焦点。以美国非裔文学研究的主阵地《非裔美国评论》（*African American Review*）在其 1996 年的冬季号上发表约翰逊研究专刊为起点，美国现代语言协会也在同一年出版约翰逊研究特刊，国际哲学与文学协会也在 2000 年和 2001 年连续两年出版约翰逊研究特刊。在美国文学协会的 2003 年会上还成立了查尔斯·约翰逊研究会。在过去大约 20 年时间内，国外约翰逊研究界快速涌现出大量重要成果，包括专著、论文集和传记等，外加各种访谈约 300 篇（次）、以及期刊文章近百篇。下面本文将对国外约翰逊研究状况做一下综述，从中梳理出几个主要的研究维度，总结各自成就和不足，以期对未来研究提供借鉴。

## 一、黑人哲理小说研究

二十世纪非裔美国文学与哲学的紧密联系是一个非常引人关注的现象，很

多最有代表性的黑人作家都喜欢在小说中融入深刻的哲学思考。从基恩·图默（Jean Toomer）、理查德·怀特（Richard Wright）到拉尔夫·埃里森（Ralph Ellison）、再到托妮·莫里森（Tony Morrison）和爱丽丝·沃克（Alice Walker）等，他/她们作品中的哲理化倾向经常受人关注。鲁道夫·拜尔德（Rudolph Byrd）总结后认为：“运用复杂的哲学体系——比如柏拉图主义、东方哲学、大陆哲学、基督教哲学和精神分析理论等——来创建一个有条理的小说世界，这看上去……像是非裔美国文学特有的传统”（Byrd, “Oxherding Tale” 557）。约翰逊显然也继承了这一传统，并且比其他黑人作家进一步拓展了黑人哲理小说范畴的广度和深度。在一次接受采访时，查尔斯·约翰逊如此表达了他的创作理想：“自从1970年开始写小说之时，我就有一个坚定而明确的目标，那就是去拓展我们所谓的黑人哲理小说的范畴，把黑人文学引向我作为一名哲学专业学生一直在努力思考的同样的伦理问题、本体论问题和认识论问题，不管是东方的还是西方的”（Boccia 612）。这句话也就成为打开约翰逊的小说世界的第一把钥匙。

由于约翰逊作品的明显哲理化倾向，“评价约翰逊作为一名作家的地位的主要策略之一就是去描述他对不同哲学传统的娴熟运用”（Whalen-Bridge 247）。拜尔德的《书写美国羊皮卷：查尔斯约翰逊小说研究》（*Charles Johnson's Novels: Writing the American Palimpsest*, 2005）是这方面较有代表性的成果。他发现：“吸引约翰逊的各种问题都源自他对不同哲学传统的研究运用，它们为他小说中的黑人世界搭建了一个扩展的平台”（8）。比如在《菲丝与好东西》中，约翰逊就受到柏拉图在《理想国》中所讨论的善的理念的启发，在借鉴后者的诸多象征和隐喻的基础上，进一步探讨了人生究竟应追求什么样的“好东西”的问题。在《牧牛传说》中，约翰逊则转向了东方哲学传统，以禅宗和道家思想为依托，他思考了自由和欲望的关系。《中间航线》依然是对自由问题的关注，但更多受到欧陆哲学、尤其是黑格尔精神现象学的影响。在约翰逊最晚近的长篇小说《梦想家》中，拜尔德更多发现了怀特海过程哲学和《圣经》寓言的影子。在对约翰逊的主要作品进行认真分析后，拜尔德指出：“约翰逊在每一部小说中都推进和发展了他所谓的‘黑人哲理小说’的远大艺术规划，并由此丰富和扩展了美国小说的广阔传统”（9）。

由马克·康纳（Marc C. Conner）和威廉·纳什（William R. Nash）合编的论文集《查尔斯·约翰逊：作为哲学家的小说家》（*Charles Johnson: The Novelist as Philosopher*, 2007）是从哲学维度研究约翰逊小说的又一力作。该文集在研究方法上基本延续了拜尔德的做法，即把约翰逊看成是一位受到众多哲学传统影响的作家，包括欧洲现象学、美国实用主义、佛教哲学、存在主义以及基督教哲学等，认为约翰逊小说中涉及的那些命题通常更为哲学家所偏好。两位编者在“导言”部分肯定了约翰逊的做法，即“运用最宽泛意义上的哲学去理解和处理人类所面对的深刻社会问题和精神挑战”（xx），因此，我们要想充分理解约翰逊小说中的美学和文化内涵，就“必须考虑约翰逊所接受的那些具体的哲学文本和传统，并且综合运用东西方的哲学研究传统”（xx）。

琳达·塞尔泽 (Linda F. Selzer) 的《语境中的查尔斯·约翰逊》 (*Charles Johnson in Context*, 2009) 是一部非常值得关注的研究专著。与前人更关注约翰逊作品中的哲学内涵不同, 塞尔泽更强调约翰逊的小说创作与他所处的社会语境之间的互动关系。塞尔泽在对约翰逊不同阶段的作品和社会背景进行深入交叉分析后认为, 约翰逊作为一名哲学专业学生在 1960 至 1970 年代的学习经历引起了他对种族经验和种族身份等问题进行哲学思考的兴趣, 表现在他的处女作《菲丝与好东西》中。到了 1980 年代, 随着禅宗热潮在美国兴起, 约翰逊又从佛教视角重新审视了后奴隶制时代的黑人解放问题, 《牧牛传说》成为这一时期的代表作。从 1980 年代末以来, 约翰逊又越来越关注知识分子在社会公共事务中的作用, 开始尝试化解知识分子在个人层面上的形而上探索与其应该担负的社会使命之间的矛盾, 《中间航线》和《梦想家》是这方面的典范。

几乎所有从哲学角度研究约翰逊小说的人都注意到了约翰逊的“黑人哲理小说”(philosophical black fiction) 与传统黑人文学之间的差异。一提到黑人文学, 很多人立刻想到种族问题、奴隶制、血腥的压迫与反抗, 如此等等。但约翰逊认为这实际上是一种非常狭隘的视角, 它把黑人原本丰富的生活经验模式化、本质化了。这种思维模式在二战之后的黑人抗议小说 (protest novel) 中表现的尤为突出。他在《哲学与黑人小说》、《全景: 新黑人小说札记》、以及《小说与哲学相遇之处》等重要文章中细致阐述了他所理解的“黑人哲理小说”范畴, 并在专著《存在与种族》中梳理了 1970 年代以来的黑人文学的特点、成就和不足。他认为, 当代黑人文学的最大缺点就是把文学过多的绑定在了种族政治主题上, 从而限制了文学对更多超越种族主义的问题的关注。黑人没有被当做普通的“人”来看待, 而只是被当成了带有特殊标记的“黑人”。他大胆表达了他对除埃里森之外的大多数当代黑人作家的不满, 认为他们“只创作了很少的‘好作品’, 能够流芳百世的更是少的可怜” (Johnson, *Being and Race* 120)。即便是备受追捧的莫里森和沃克等人, 在他看来也“时常摇摆 in 狭隘的性别观念边缘, 缺乏那些能够超越抗议政治议题的小说所应有的平衡感” (Johnson, *Being and Race* 120)。与之相反, 他所主张的黑人哲理小说“首先、并且主要是一种思维方式、一种诠释过程, 它是一种试图悬浮和搁置一切与非裔美国人的生活相关的假定、并把它们放入括号 (保留怀疑意见) 的一种小说” (Byrd, *Charles Johnson's Novels* 13)。在他看来, 黑人问题更是普遍的人的问题, 我们关注黑人遭受的歧视、压迫和奴役, 更是为了探索全人类的彻底解放、自由和正义的问题。与传统黑人文学不同, 约翰逊在作品中创造了众多极具颠覆性的黑人形象, 他们往往既不是受压迫的无助羔羊, 也不是充满暴力与仇恨的反抗英雄; 他们既没有受过让人发指的非人奴役, 也做不出惊天动地的大事件, 甚至说不清楚自己究竟是黑人还是白人, 是主人还是奴隶, 如此等等。

由于约翰逊对传统黑人文学的这种反叛, 他的作品在很长时间内都没有得到评论界、尤其是黑人评论家的认可。尽管他在普通读者那里赢得了不错的口碑, 多次登上各种畅销书榜单, 但是习惯了传统口味的批评家们还是谴责他是黑人

文学的叛徒，是在向白人文学传统屈服和妥协。比如理查德·哈戴克（Richard Hardack）就批评他和超验主义者爱默生一样，只喜欢对包括种族压迫在内的现实生活中的各种不幸做形而上的思索，却对造成不幸的种族歧视和社会制度提不出任何具体有力的批评。然而近些年来，评论家们大多转变了这种看法，开始积极肯定约翰逊的黑人哲理小说的成就。其中拜尔德的意见较有代表性，他认为，约翰逊的一方面根植于非裔美国文化土壤，同时又广泛吸取东西方不同文化传统的思想智慧，“他在其小说中创作了许多全新的人物形象和情景，不但推进了美国小说的发展演化，还推动我们穿越种族问题的迷障，为我们揭开种族就是一个假象”（196）。另外塞尔泽也表扬约翰逊“一方面极具原创性地综合了文学、哲学与佛教，同时又有力地参与和推动美国知识和文化生活，并且还为我们指明了更远大的方向”（254）。

## 二、东方宗教思想研究

除了富有哲理性，约翰逊的小说创作还有一个重要特点，那就是他深受东方宗教、尤其是禅宗佛教和道家思想的影响。自二战以来，在日本禅学大师铃木大拙和越南禅师释一行等人的推动下，禅宗思想在美国得以快速传播，并在1960年代掀起一股强大的禅学热潮，吸引了包括艾伦·金斯堡、杰克·凯鲁亚克、加里·斯奈德和查尔斯·约翰逊这样的文化名人成为佛教信徒。约翰逊熟读佛教经典，对六祖慧能的《坛经》更是推崇备至，并把后者宣扬的“自性真空”、“见性成佛”和“无念为宗”等理念融入到自己的小说创作之中。从某种层面上来说，他的小说中的每一位主人公都经历了从迷失本性到逐渐觉悟的禅修之旅。与此同时，约翰逊对中国道家思想也非常着迷，老庄哲学所讲的“无为”、“无欲”、“无待”和“无己”等思想也深刻渗透进他的小说世界。这些东方传统思想之所以对约翰逊有如此大的吸引力，主要由于它们传达了一种完全不同于西方的价值观和伦理观，为人类实现对现实生活的超越指出了不一样的途径，并对以白人种族主义意识形态为主导、坚持二元对立思维的西方思想构成质疑。因此，从禅宗和道家思想入手来解读约翰逊小说也就成为一个非常重要的研究维度。

事实上，最早引起评论家兴趣的也正是约翰逊作品中的宗教内涵。威廉·格里森（William Gleason）最早分析了《牧牛传说》与中国宋代高僧廓庵师远所绘的《十牛图》之间在结构和主题上的对应关系。在《十牛图》中，牧童象征着未能摆脱各种束缚的自我，牛象征自由的本性，寻牛象征着寻找本真的自我或自由的过程。小说主人公安德鲁·霍金斯对自由和身份的追寻也正是《十牛图》中所描绘的故事在非裔美国文化背景下上演的翻版。在对两者进行细致的比较后，格里森认为：“《牧牛传说》有意识地对非裔美国传统和禅宗思想进行了后现代的跨文化融合，进而试图打开佛教徒所谓的‘天眼’，或者实现约翰逊所理解的严肃小说的最终目的，即感官的解放”（705）。理查德·柯林斯（Richard Collins）同样分析了《十牛图》对《牧牛传说》的影响，认为约翰逊的这部小说以隐喻的方式证明：“我们只有经历逐步的精神改造，就像《十

牛图》中所描绘的步骤那样，才能达到最终开悟，彻底摆脱二元对立或本质主义的思维习惯”（72-75）。

前文提到的拜尔德则特别关注了道家思想对《牧牛传说》的影响。他指出，虽然佛教《十牛图》对这部小说的影响毋庸置疑，但“以《庄子》为代表的道家思想同样支撑并推动者小说故事从奴隶到自由、从无知到智慧的发展轨迹”，并且认为“道家思想为约翰逊提供了一个思想平台，可以让他在奴隶制的框架内检验、质疑并且最终重新界定有关反抗和自由的概念”（*Charles Johnson's Novels* 71）。在小说中的重要人物睿伯身上，拜尔德发现了道家推崇的“大道不称”和“无欲则刚”等精神境界的完美体现，认为“他正是那位将指引霍金斯摆脱奴役走向自由、并且走向最深层意义上的‘大道’的人”（72）。

乔纳桑·利特尔（Jonathan Little）的《查尔斯·约翰逊的精神想象》（*Charles Johnson's Spiritual Imagination*, 1997）是第一部以约翰逊为研究对象的学术专著，并且也重点关注了约翰逊作品中的宗教内涵。利特尔认为：“（约翰逊的作品）促使作家们超越各自有限的视角，拥抱尽可能多的不同视角，以避免在种族和地域上的偏狭见识，促进不同种族间的相互理解、甚至是跨越文化樊篱的共同情感”（3）。从佛家思想来看，世界上的一切物质和精神现象都是虚假的，它们都不过是由意识制造出来的幻象。这其中也包括过去被人们认为无法克服的种族差异。不管是白人还是黑人，倘若执著于对彼此妄加区别的偏见，执著于对黑人和白人各自属性的本质主义的界定，他们就永远不可能真正消除痛苦的根源，无法获得彻底的自由和觉悟。在利特尔看来，禅宗所倡导的“不二法门”和“去分别智”——即超越有/无、善/恶、是/非、主/客等二元对立思维，获得平等看待一切事物的大智慧——深刻影响了约翰逊对黑/白种族关系的理解，导致他不遗余力的倡导种族融合论。

盖里·斯托霍夫（Gary Storhoff）的《理解查尔斯·约翰逊》（*Understanding Charles Johnson*, 2004）称得上是一部从东方宗教视角研究约翰逊小说的集大成之作。斯托霍夫积极肯定了约翰逊对佛教思想的阐发，认为“约翰逊对佛教思想的运用并非还是还原式的，在他的文本与佛教原典之间并不存在严格对应关系。事实上，约翰逊明确回避说教式的和还原式的文学表达，而是让自己的作品富有幽默感”（7）。在他看来，约翰逊的创作意图与佛教想要带给信徒的那种精神改造或悟性的提升很接近，“‘佛’是一种尊称，意为‘觉悟的人’，而约翰逊的目的就是要唤醒读者。其作品的基础即是佛教对普遍的、无处不在的、无休止的、彻底的人生不幸福状态的认识”（16-17）。对佛教徒来说，我们所感知的世界完全是假象，所谓“色即是空”，而一切不幸和痛苦的根源也恰在于人们总是“以假当真”。这也意味着人们可以通过改变自己对世界的“看法”来改变自己的不幸福状态，达到佛教所谓的“涅槃境界”。斯托霍夫认为约翰逊的全部作品就是要唤起读者的这种思想转变。换句话说，我们需要改变的并不是客观世界，而是主观认识。需要指出的是，斯托霍夫并不认为约翰逊的这种想法在政治上是消极的，而是号召我们“在一个更包容的宗教语境下理解约翰

逊的积极主张”（22）。

很多研究者在关注约翰逊小说的佛教主题时，也留意到了其中日渐被强化的社会政治维度。比如威廉·纳什（William Nash）在专著《查尔斯·约翰逊小说研究》（*Charles Johnson's Fiction*, 2003）中认为，约翰逊的后两部小说，即《中间航线》和《梦想家》，标志着作者正从佛教意义上的个人精神修行和解脱转向“行动主义”（191），并且开始“肯定他所谓的黑人哲理小说在社会和知识上的使命”（191）。纳什通过认真的文本细读后发现，尽管约翰逊在早期相信佛教意义上的“开悟”可以帮助人们（尤其是黑人）摆脱现实生活中的奴役和不幸，但他在后期作品中却越来越怀疑这种可能性，而是更强调实际社会行动在改造生活方面的作用。他选择美国历史上最有影响的民权运动领袖马丁·路德·金作为《梦想家》的主人公，这本身就足以说明他的这种思想转变。或许约翰逊已经认识到，仅仅换一种对世界的看法还不够，我们还需要用行动改造世界。不过纳什的观点遭到了利特尔的反驳，后者并不认为后期的约翰逊在其佛教立场上有什么动摇，相反，“约翰逊对佛教的信念看上去与日俱增”（745）。《中间航线》和《梦想家》中的佛教思想非但没有削弱，反倒被强化了，约翰逊只是更深刻地意识到了美国种族关系的复杂性，并试图以更可行的方式探讨佛教在化解种族问题上的作用。

### 三、后现代主义研究及其他

约翰逊的小说创作深受其启蒙恩师约翰·加德纳（John Gardner）的影响，而后者对后现代文学始终持批评意见，认为它们“沉溺于时髦的绝望、痼、失败主义、廉价的炫技、以及玩世不恭的人生观之中”（See Byrd, *I Call Myself an Artist* 127）。这种观点自然也影响到约翰逊对先锋实验文学的评价，他说：“随着年龄长大，我发现自己越来越对文学炫技不感冒了，而是愈加欣赏充满精神力量的讲故事方式以及传统的阅读方式”（See Byrd, *I Call Myself an Artist* 133）。然而，要在后现代文学如日中天的时刻进行文学创作而又丝毫不受其影响是很困难的。近些年来，约翰逊小说中的后现代特征也得到越来越多的承认和发掘。格里森认为“约翰逊在实践上（如果说不是在理论上）是一位自觉的后现代作家”，至少他的《牧牛传说》可以被确切地视为“一部后现代小说”（707），它在许多方面都具有典型的后现代文本特征，比如文类混杂、互文性、错时叙述、无处不在的反讽、戏仿和意义含混等。桑奈特·雷特曼（Sonnet Retman）也认为约翰逊在《牧牛传说》中解构了一切二元对立结构，同时又戏仿和重构了不同的文学形式，不断让读者注意到内在于一切有关种族、性别、身份和自由等的历史和哲学叙述的内在矛盾，从而“借用一则东方寓言实现了对经典美国奴隶叙述的后现代颠覆”（418）。

除《牧牛传说》以外，《中间航线》也是很多评论者眼中的标准后现代文本。芭芭拉·塞登（Barbara Thaden）认为：“这部小说最显著的特征之一就是……它是琳达·哈琴所谓的‘历史书写元小说’的一个重要实例”（753）。完

全符合哈琴对这一类后现代小说的界定，即“它们既具有强烈的自我指涉性，又自相矛盾地宣称与历史事件和人物有关”（Hutcheon 5）。“它不仅是彻底的自我关照的艺术，而且还根植于历史的、社会的和政治的现实之中”（哈切恩 29）。它一方面拥有历史小说的题材，选取真实的历史事件作为叙述背景，像是在讲述那段真实的贩奴贸易史，另一方面又以各种方式有意把历史破坏的面目全非，从元小说的角度重新思考历史与小说之间在认识论和本体论上的关系，同时又将其问题化和政治化。塞登认为：“约翰逊要求读者重新看待关于美国奴隶制和中间航线的叙述历史，不仅去质疑它们的视角，而且质疑这些叙述对今天的我们有何意义，或者它们应该有什么意义”（754）。塞登重点分析了《中间航线》对经典奴隶叙述的戏仿和颠覆，并且为之辩护。很多评论家认为约翰逊非但没有谴责白人奴隶贩子的罪行，反倒以那段不堪回首的历史开玩笑，这是在亵渎黑人历史。然而塞登却认为约翰逊并非简单地玩弄历史，而只是在强调我们对那段历史上的理解应该更好地服务于我们当下生活。如果对历史的记忆成为让今天的生活陷入痛苦的负荷，那么我们有必要重新解读那段历史。换句话说，约翰逊关心的不是去还原那段历史，而是如何重构那段历史记忆，以便服务于当下。马克·斯坦伯格（Marc Steirberg）同样分析了《中间航线》中的后现代主题和手法，认为约翰逊通过对经典奴隶叙述的彻底改写，“让我们重新思考与身份、历史和历史的准确性有关的一切既定观念”（375）。

约翰逊的短篇小说集《招魂人及其他故事》被很多批评家们视为一部失败的作品，认为它的故事结构短促、充满说教性、而且商业气息太浓厚等。但史蒂芬·卢卡斯（Stephen Lucasi）却认为它是一部成功的后现代作品，“约翰逊事实上在《招魂人》中开创了一种后现代主义形式的传记写作模式。这部故事集非但不拒绝、反倒欢迎在美国历史和历史书写中掺入一种复杂的谬误成分”（289）。约翰逊既运用了大量真实的历史人物和事件，比如美国国父华盛顿和杰弗逊、美国独立战争、1739年的史陶诺动乱等，同时还经常刻意采用新闻报道和文献记录等体裁以增强故事的真实性，但无处不在的后现代戏仿手法又暴露出故事的虚构性。卢卡斯认为：“《招魂人》同时把人物传记在形式和意识形态上的意图置于虚构作品的中心，并质疑这些知识的文本依据和历史效果”（306）。

近年来，除了在黑人哲理小说研究、东方宗教思想研究和后现代主义研究三个方面取得丰硕成果之外，国外约翰逊研究还不断开拓新的研究视角。其中拜尔德和提姆·麦克威廉斯（Tim McWilliams）的传记资料研究值得一提。前者主编的《我称自己为艺术家：查尔斯·约翰逊文选及其它》（*I Call Myself an Artist: Writings by and about Charles Johnson*, 1999）收录了约翰逊的自传、论文、信札、和书评等，后者主编的《穿越三重门：约翰逊访谈录》（*Passing the Three Gates: Interviews with Charles Johnson*, 2004）则汇聚了约翰逊接受过的各种访谈中的精华。两者均为开展约翰逊研究搜集了大量珍贵的文献资料。另外女性主义、后殖民主义、神话批评、印度宗教等视角也被纷纷引入约翰逊

研究，只不过到目前为止取得的成果仍略显分散和单薄，在此不做介绍。

#### 四、当前约翰逊研究中仍存在的不足

从 1980 年代的寂寂无闻到 1990 年代以来的炙手可热，约翰逊在评论界的命运经历了翻天覆地的变化。引起这种转变的因素有很多，但最主要的还是变化了的社会语境。在 1980 年代以前，黑人民权运动的余波尚未褪去，黑人民族主义仍旧是影响当时黑人文学创作和批评的主要思想。是否对白人种族主义提出了明确批评几乎成为衡量黑人文学价值的唯一标准。在这种语境下，约翰逊的小说创作显得非常另类，自然很难得到批评界认可。被他寄予厚望的《牧牛传说》一开始竟然被多家出版社拒稿，好不容易在 1982 年出版后又恰巧和同年问世的沃克的《紫色》以及格洛莉亚·内勒（Gloria Naylor）的《布鲁斯特街的女人》（*The Women of Brewster Place*）发生撞车，后两部作品立即成为批评界的宠儿，且先后荣获普利策奖和国家图书奖，《牧牛传说》却遭人冷落。然而时过境迁，随着美国种族矛盾的不断缓解，那种一味偏好揭种族主义伤疤的文学类型逐渐让读者失去兴趣，因为对很多 1980 年代后出生的美国黑人中产阶级来说，对那段悲惨历史的记忆非常模糊，甚至像是不真实的传说一样。在这种情况下，以约翰逊小说为代表的后现代新奴隶叙述开始受到青睐。相比于传统奴隶叙述更多地把目光投向痛苦的过去，这种新奴隶叙述更关注当下生活，它不希望在读者心中继续激起对白人的仇恨或对黑人悲惨命运的哀怜，而是更希望重塑我们对历史的记忆和理解，以便有助于构筑新形势下不同文化和种族之间相互友爱的群体。恰如约翰逊所说：“我们应该怎样生活？这个前苏格拉底时代的古老命题占据着我从青年到成年时期的想象和求知的兴趣中心”（Johnson, *Turning the Wheel* xvi）。可能这也正是让批评界对约翰逊的研究持续升温的主要原因。

综观近二十年国外约翰逊研究状况，可以说已取得累累硕果。但同时也存在一些不足，主要表现在以下几个方面：

首先是伦理批评视角的缺失。约翰逊关注伦理问题，包括人在现实生活中的伦理责任、伦理身份以及文学应当对社会承担的伦理功能等。他在青年时期参加了加德纳开设的文学创作班，而且在后者的亲自指导下完成了自己的成名作《菲丝与好东西》。两人还是彼此最亲密的忘年交，在很多方面都志同道合。约翰逊始终都把加德纳奉为自己的启蒙恩师，对后者的“道德小说观”非常认同，并多次通过访谈或撰文表达对加德纳的敬意和感激。他称赞道：“加德纳就是我们的领路人，帮我们清理掉由那些缺乏信仰的作家和批评家们埋下的地雷，引领我们走向传统的伦理关切和艺术创作交汇的地方”（See Byrd, *I Call Myself an Artist* 134）。受加德纳影响，约翰逊始终把文学创作视为一种高尚的社会使命，认为作家必须凭良心来写作。他说：“在这个盛行媒体炒作的时代，艺术家的任务就是去重新认识到，只有在哲学和道德上的目标才值得追求，即便要冒着让读者不喜欢的风险”（qtd. in Gleason 706）。可以说，约翰逊的每一部小说

都是对人生、社会和家庭伦理问题的关注，伦理批评自然应该成为一个当仁不让的重要研究维度。

其次，东方宗教研究视角有待进一步深化和细化。自1960年代以来，佛教在美国黑人团体中影响日盛，对黑人文化和价值观产生重大影响。随着文化全球化时代的到来，不同文化和宗教信仰之间的交流和影响正成为广受关注的研究热点。而约翰逊正是这样一个研究标本，通过他的作品，我们可以逐步探讨东方传统思想如何在非裔美国文化土壤上生根发芽、开花结果。但当前国外相关研究者对佛教的理解过多依赖于铃木大拙的阐释，很少了解未经铃木先生“过滤”的禅宗本义，这就导致他们对约翰逊作品中的禅宗内涵的发掘只能是雾里看花。更重要的是，由于他们只能从铃木大拙等少数人那里了解佛教，他们对佛教的理解便被本质化了，没有注意到佛教也包含不同派别，彼此在教义上存在不少差别，不能笼统地说佛教如何如何。个别西方研究者也已认识到这一点，比如威伦—布里奇（Whalen-Bridge）就曾指出：“佛教并非一块铁板状的思想体系。但由于许多西方读者对佛教哲学和宗教实践都不熟悉，要想在一些具体层面上弄清楚总是很困难的”（252）。而这也就为中国学者继续深化研究留下了空间。此外道家思想对约翰逊的影响也未得到足够的关注。目前只是涉及了少量文本细节。既然约翰逊在小说中运用了那么多的《庄子》典故，比如“庖丁解牛”、“齐一万物”等，我们有必要对此做进一步研究。

最后，约翰逊作品中的后现代精神同样值得我们更多关注。后现代主义在约翰逊这里更主要的表现在小说的内在主题上而非写作技巧上。虽然他的小说初看上去很像是传统现实主义小说，但他对主人/奴隶、白人/黑人、自由/奴役、自我/他人等二元对立结构的质疑和颠覆却实实在在是后现代主义的。虽然目前有不少研究成果都关注了约翰逊作品中的后现代特征，但这些成果的分量仍有限，进行系统研究的学术专著尚未出现。尤为值得一提的是，以后现代主义为视角，有助于破解约翰逊研究中的一个政治困局，即约翰逊的小说到底是政治的还是非政治的？虽然他多次表明对充满政治性的黑人传统文学的反感，但实际上他反对的只是在小说中掺入过量的、狭隘的种族政治内容，更反对把种族政治考量凌驾于哲学的、美学的和伦理的考量之上。他说：“我感觉真正有必要反抗的事物只是人类的无知和愚蠢（其中也包括种族主义）、幻觉与自私，从这个意义上讲，我不认为我的美学立场与所谓的‘抗议小说’是对立的”（371）。这也为未来的研究提供了启示。

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# 人生博弈，伦理抉择

——评武月明《爱与欲的南方：福克纳小说的文学伦理学批评》

聂珍钊

**内容摘要：**福克纳研究一直是国内外文学批评领域的热门，新世纪却鲜有热点。武月明的新作《爱与欲的南方：福克纳小说的文学伦理学批评》是迄今国内第一部运用文学伦理学的批评方法，对福克纳的主要作品进行了深刻阐释的论著。该书运用文学伦理学批评视角，回到福克纳创作的历史现场和伦理语境中，从阐释美国南方特定历史条件下人与自然、人与社会、人与人、人与自我的伦理关系入手，剖析被福克纳记录在文本世界中的 20 世纪初美国南方社会有别于北方的伦理现象与伦理关系，因而具有很高的学术价值。

**关键词：**文学伦理学批评 美国南方 武月明 《爱与欲的南方：福克纳小说的文学伦理学批评》

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**Title** A Review of *Ethical Literary Criticism of Faulkner's Novels*

**Abstract** The Faulkner study has been in the limelight on both sides of the Atlantic and in the Far East, and yet seems to lack more inspiring focus in the new millenary. *Ethical Literary Criticism of Faulkner's Novels* lately written by Prof. Wu Yueming takes the prospective of ethical literary criticism and carries out a systematic study of Faulkner's major novels. The book argues that only on the basis of the historical locale and ethical context can the Faulkner study reap significant harvest. By dialectically interpreting the ethical relations between man and nature, man and society, man and man, and man and himself, the book discusses the ethical mapping of the American South in the early twentieth century, which is different from that of the North, recorded in the textual world created by Faulkner.

**Key words** Ethical literary criticism; American South; Wu Yueming; *Ethical Literary Criticism of Faulkner's Novels*

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收到武月明教授的新作《爱与欲的南方：福克纳小说的文学伦理学批评》，开卷翻阅，即为书中文字吸引，顿时有了爱不释手的感受。作者从新的视角出发，在伦理批评的立场上展开对福克纳的小说研究，对福克纳的一系列重要小说重新阐释，形成了自己的研究特色。从书中可以看出，武月明在研究过程中表现出扎实的研究功底和良好的学术素养，思维开阔，小心求证，大胆论述，多有发现。

福克纳不仅是西方学界备受关注的热门美国作家，也是中国学界重点关注的美国作家。早在上个世纪30年，福克纳就被介绍到了中国。1934年5月，施蛰存先生主编的《现代》杂志第5卷第1期发表了赵家璧翻译的弥尔顿·华尔德曼（Milton Waldman）的文章《近代美国小说之大趋势》，其中论及的福克纳以“福尔克奈”的译名第一次出现在中国的读者面前。1934年11月，《现代》杂志第五卷第6期出版“现代美国文学专号”，不仅集中介绍了白璧德、杰克·伦敦、辛克莱、德莱塞、刘易士、奥尼尔、庞德、海明威、福克纳等一批美国作家，而且还发表了赵家璧的《美国小说之成长》和凌昌言的《福尔克奈——一个新作风的尝试者》两篇专题论文以及江兼霞翻译的福克纳的短篇小说《伊莱》。赵家璧评价福克纳说：“福尔克奈的散文，正像美国的文化一样是受了许多外来的影响而产生的另一种东西。他应用简单的字汇，写得独创而特殊，流畅而美丽。许多对话是黑人的，这些黑人的对话是每部书中最美丽的一部分，而在对话以外，更混杂许多黑人口里所说的那种不合英国文法的话，有时更发明许多像德文般用许多字拼合而成的新字。在叙述故事的时候，更把对话、心理描写拼合在一起，这一种形式上冲破英国束缚的勇气，比海敏威和安特生的更值得纪念”（*qtd.* 黄春兰 16-17）。赵家璧还在1934年出版的《世界文学》第1卷第2号上发表了《福尔克奈研究》的专题论文，此后又于1936年8月出版论文集《新传统》，在其重点评介的十个作家中，福克纳就是其中的一个。

从30年代我国对外国作家的介绍中可以看出，福克纳最初就受到我国学界的重视，是我国学者重点关注的对象。改革开放以来，我国掀起了研究外国作家的热潮，福克纳作为我国研究美国现代派文学的代表作家之一，理所当然地成为我国重点关注的对象。从上世纪80年代开始，我国开始译介福克纳，研究福克纳的热情开始显现。不过自20世纪末期以来，尽管研究福克纳的专题论文和学术专著还在不断出版，但无论西方学界还是中国学界对福克纳的研究热情已经有所减弱。这种状况的出现一是因为随着世纪末理论热的消退，文艺理论

和批评方法进入了一个相对的沉静期，越来越多的批评家们认识到激进的批评方法对于紧迫的社会问题没有给予足够的关注，忽略了具有多元内涵的文学作品及其与产生、接受和流通的“世界”之间的错综复杂的伦理关系。其次经过经典结构的热潮后，主流经典作家，特别是白人男作家，受到新兴边缘作家的挑战与冲击，甚至被冷落。相对而言，少数族裔作家和女性作家，特别是少数族裔女性作家，更吸引人们的眼光。但不可否认的是，后现代社会中的去经典化进程，对于推动人类文明的多元化建构有一定历史意义，但也应该看到作为历史文化积淀的文学经典，即便有这样或那样的政治、阶级、种族和思想的局限性，也仍然是人类宝贵精神财富中的精华。因此，福克纳的小说作为文学经典，尽管有时也有被去经典化和边缘化的危险，但是它们作为经典作品的生命力却是永恒的。

具体到中国的福克纳研究，上个世纪后半期主要集中在《喧哗与骚动》（1929）、《我弥留之际》（1930）、《圣殿》（1931）、《八月之光》（1932），以及《押沙龙，押沙龙！》（1936）这些早期创作上，而对于他后期的小说如《野棕榈》（1939）、《村子》（1940）、《去吧，摩西》（1942）、《坟墓的闯入者》（1948）《小镇》（1957）、《大宅》（1959）显然关注不够。研究的内容大多带有西方影响的痕迹，往往局限于南方的蓄奴制、种族、性别、战争、意识流艺术、对中国作家的影响等问题上。显然，这些研究有一个共同不足，即缺乏应有的伦理关怀。可以说，正是这种伦理关怀的缺乏，导致整个福克纳研究无法继续深入发展。

武月明敏锐地意识到福克纳研究面临的危机，并勇敢地寻找解决这种危机的途径。她在仔细阅读福克纳小说的基础上，对福克纳的研究现状进行深入思考与分析，尝试运用新的文学伦理学批评方法，回到福克纳创作的历史现场和伦理语境中去，从历史辩证的角度，结合当时的伦理道德、社会政治、经济及法律制度，对美国南方特定历史条件下人与自然、人与社会、人与人、人与自我的伦理关系作出符合历史实际的辩证解释。武月明认为，美国南方社会的种种矛盾纠结，无论种族问题、性别问题、历史问题还是政治问题、经济问题等，都受到当时伦理的制约，绝非简单的政治运动能够解决的。政治斗争，诸如战争、示威游行、修宪等，可以让黑人走出奴隶主的种植园，却难以让他们真正融入白人主流社会。政治权力的争取，可以让女人走出家庭，却难以让她们真正摆脱男权社会的阴霾。福克纳的作品中独特的伦理内涵，构成了福克纳创作的本质特征，并无疑影响到如何评价它们的标准和尺度。而这一点，应该是进一步研究福克纳关键之处。

武月明对福克纳的独特理解表明，她在文学研究中有一种道德自觉，这就是一个学者在研究文学中应该担负的社会责任以及应该坚持的道德立场和标准，应该在研究中形成自己的学术个性。无论研究外国文学还是中国文学，研究者都应该充分认识到文学的特殊价值，这就是文学的教诲作用。当代的文学理论往往片面地强调文学的审美，忽视文学的人文精神和道德教诲。尤其是解构

主义对文本意义的消解，其结果是摧毁了文学批评赖以存在的道德基础。早在上世纪 80 年代，西方学者已经认识到文学研究中潜藏的危机，因而导致了文学研究的伦理转向。中国学者的伦理意识相对出现得晚一些，直到 21 世纪初，文学伦理学批评才开始在文学批评中流行开来。21 世纪以来，中国的福克纳研究已经从福克纳的写作技巧、意识流手法扩展到叙事学、阐释学、心理分析、后殖民主义、原型批评、美国黑人批评、女性主义、生态主义、比较文学、语言学等各个方面，出版了一批研究论文和专著。在中国学者的研究中，尽管也有不少学者运用文学伦理学批评研究福克纳，但是用文学伦理学批评研究福克纳的学术专著，还是武月明首开先河。

武月明这部著作不落窠臼，自有特色。总体而言，它由两大部分组成：文学伦理学批评的理论梳理与福克纳小说创作伦理主题的分析。

在这种研究结构中，武月明采用文学伦理学批评的方法作为研究福克纳的新尝试，对其进行归纳、总结和评价，这有助于对这种方法的理解，更是有利于运用这种方法去批评文学。在理论研究这一部分，武月明对文学伦理学批评的基本原理进行了讨论，对其有效性进行了论述，尤其是对文学伦理学批评与以往的道德批评、历史学批评、社会性批评的不同进行了区分。这种梳理表明，武月明在创新意识的推动之下，对文学伦理学批评的理解是深刻的，她掌握了文学伦理学批评的基本原理，懂得如何运用这一方法去进行文学的批评。正是有了这个前提，武月明才能准确地从福克纳的创作中发掘出一系列伦理主题，用于自己的文学伦理学批评的实践。武月明的研究目标是十分明确的，那就是尝试运用文学伦理学的批评方法，对福克纳的重要作品进行细读与分析，进而揭示在资本主义文明的侵蚀下南方人在精神上、道德上和相互关系上的异化，揭示机器文明对人性的扭曲、对大自然的价值与权利的漠视。通过对福克纳小说的分析，武月明揭示出是什么导致了人伦精神的恶化，从而肯定福克纳小说的伦理价值。正是在这样的逻辑基点上，武月明认为福克纳不仅继承了伟大的文学传统，更是继承了伟大的道德传统。

武月明在著作中提炼出福克纳小说中的基本伦理主题，如生态伦理、种族伦理、家庭伦理、女性伦理、成长伦理，选取福克纳的主要小说从分析人与自然、人与社会、人与人、人与自我的关系入手，探本求源，剖析被福克纳记录在文本世界中的 20 世纪美国南方社会有别于北方的伦理现象与伦理关系，以及他自己和社会所做出的伦理回应。她的这一研究路径表明一位年轻学者所具有的坚实的理论功底和学术素养，证明她在研究中能够做到举重若轻。

从这部著作中可以看出，武月明既有理论联系实际的学风，也有晓畅朴实的文风。她能够娴熟地把文学伦理学批评运用到批评实践之中，没有抽象空洞的理论说教，没有晦涩虚浮的学术话语，这是值得赞赏的学风和文风。她既对福克纳研究的学术史十分熟悉，也真正细读了福克纳的文学作品，并能够在自己的研究中把二者结合起来，充分表现出一位年轻学者求实严谨的学风。阅读作家的作品是进行学术研究的前提，因为只有细读文本的基础上才会有细腻

感受与深入理解,才能真正发掘出福克纳作品中伦理价值。武月明做到了这一点。

阅读武月明这部著作时可以感到,她的思考是十分深刻的,她力图表明一种观点,福克纳的小说是伦理环境的产物。福克纳的小说是在“南方”发生的文学现象,但从某种意义上说,南方只是他的写作方法。福克纳是一个南方人,他对南方熟悉,所以需要南方为他服务。但是,他并没有囿于南方的历史事实,而是用巧妙的方法将想象与真相、历史与现实糅合、增删、修改,创造出文本世界中的南方历史。福克纳的文本不只是被动地再现所谓的历史,而是在伦理现场中表现历史的力量。这段历史是他小说伦理结构的一部分,在他的内心深处积淀已久。文学文本往往体现了作家的主观意志,福克纳的小说同样如此,不仅带有自己的伦理倾向,也为文学伦理学批评提供了具有典型意义的研究范本。

武明明善于抓住福克纳的本质特征,能够准确归纳出自己的学术观点,发表自己的独特看法。在美国文学史上,福克纳是美国南方文艺复兴的标志性人物,艺术探索的目光不仅聚焦于个体的内心世界和南方人的精神领域,而且也投向了外部世界,以及人与外部世界的关系。作者用文学伦理学批评的视角审视福克纳创作的主要作品,认为它们的伦理主题表现出两个重要特点:一是肯定大自然所承载的文明价值,关注自然与技术文明之间的伦理冲突;二是思考文学如何反映美国经济发展、文明进步的历史,反映人类社会变革中存在与占有、和谐与对峙的伦理冲突以及人与自然的伦理秩序的嬗变。

从武月明的论述中可以看出,福克纳从高度关注人类内心世界的现代主义小说家而转型为一个关注人与外部世界伦理关系的小说家,并不是一个一蹴而就的过程。因此,这部著作研究了福克纳所经历的一个不断调整世界观的自我认知过程,反映了一个作家所具有的对社会和历史高度负责的道德责任感,这对我们今天那些不愿担负道德责任的作家和批评家来说,其警示的意义是不言而喻的。

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# **Absurd and Its Transcendence: A Review of *Black Humor and the Tradition of Humor in American Fiction***

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**Abstract** As the first important book on American (black) humor study in China, *Black Humor and the Tradition of Humor in American Fiction* by Su Hui undoubtedly represents a new advancement in that area. The monograph contributes its original ideas in many aspects of (black) humor such as its social background, narrative strategy, and aesthetic function. Most significantly, it closely grasps the realistic motivation of (black) humor—the absurdity of human existence and endows the study with profound philosophical foundation. This paper mainly endeavors to explore the book's elaboration on the philosophical foundation, the prerequisite of humorists, and the ultimate function of (black) humor from such aspects as the absurdity of human existence, the wisdom to detect the absurd, and the transcendence of the absurd.

**Key words** Su Hui; black humor; absurdity; wisdom; transcendence

To the academic circle of both humor and foreign literature studies, Professor Su Hui's monograph *Black Humor and the Tradition of Humor in American Fiction* (2013) can be said to be a big event. It deserves our attention and confirmation for many reasons. As the first important book on American (black) humor study in China, it undoubtedly represents an advanced level in that field and sets a good example for academic research. In terms of methodology, it is a successful application of the approach of comparative literature, freely travelling through works of different countries and times and carves out a road of inheritance and development of humor poetics in the world literature. In a sense, it rewrites the history of American Literature with the approach of (black) humor. Additionally, it is also a successful combination of philosophy and literature studies, endowing the argument with an enlightening effect to its readers. The monograph contributes its original ideas in many aspects of (black) humor such as its social background, narrative strategy, and aesthetic function. Most significantly,

it closely grasps the realistic motivation of (black) humor—the absurdity of human existence and endows the study with profound philosophical foundation. This paper mainly endeavors to explore the book’s elaboration on the philosophical foundation, the prerequisite of humorists, and the ultimate function of (black) humor from such aspects as the absurdity of human existence, the wisdom to detect the absurd, and the transcendence of the absurd.

### **I. The Absurdity of Existence: The Realistic and Philosophical Foundation of (Black) Humor**

The first significant contribution of Professor Su’s monograph lies in the fact that she establishes the absurdity as the keynote of humor—humor in general and black humor in particular, thus revealing the realistic and philosophical foundation of (black) humor, and carries out a convincing argument through different approaches, dimensions, and levels.

The absurdity of existence can be illustrated by the following three aspects:

First, the absurdity of the existence itself. Throughout the whole book this point is emphasized time and again and can be regarded as the essential element of (black) humor—the realistic and philosophical foundation (black) humor. For this, Prof. Su finds out the influence of existentialism upon black humor and approaches the topic on a level of ontology. According to existentialism, “the absurd is a state of being which is absurd, the absurd in the origin of the world and the absurd of human existence itself”(Su 254). On the one hand, as an individual life, a person can not decide his or her birth and can only accept everything the world gives him or her. On the other hand, each person is doomed to death, and death can be said the biggest nothingness. This basically determines the absurd nature of existence. In this sense, Su Hui correctly declares that “the black humorists tend to disclose the absurdity of the world from the ontological level, define the absurdity as the essence of the world, express the uncertainty of the world and life, and reveal the randomness and gradual declination of the universe”(267). Furthermore, from the social and cultural background, the rise of black humor was related to the spiritual crisis in American society after the second world war. In this spiritual crisis, “the intellectuals were the most sensitive. They determined that the world was an absurd, chaotic, and meaningless one, and expressed this notion with different forms. The black humorists were the typical representatives of such modern intellectuals” (Su 225). In face of the absurd reality permeated with nothingness, “the black humorists decide that they must use a correspondent technique of writing to reflect the illusion and fraudulence of the reality” (Su 279).

Second, the incongruity between people’s subjective desire and the frustrating

reality. This should be a most powerful motivation that propels the generation of (black) humor. On this point, the following two literary figures cited by the book are quite typical.

In Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant* (1957), there seems to be a incongruity between the protagonist Morris Bober's belief and his tragic life. Even though he is an honest, sincere, and diligent man, he is constantly fooled by fate, and ends his life in desolation and poverty. He believes that "hard work will definitely lead to wealth and sincerity will be rewarded in the end", but "his real circumstances prove to be very frustrating" (Su 157). Although Morris is a sincere man, "his neighbors dismiss him, his old customers abandon him, and even his wife does not regard his deeds as right. As for his effort to support his family, he suffers the most. What waits for him after his whole life's work is the bankruptcy of his business" (Su 156-157).

Another telling example is Lemuel Pitkin in Nathanael West's *A Cool Million* (1934). Even though Lemuel has all virtues needed for a successful man such as "honesty, self-discipline, strength, frugality, bravery, mercy, and kindness", he is "nevertheless robbed, assaulted, and cheated again and again" (Su 199). The most ironical part is, Lemuel's moral codes and his good virtues make him an easy target for utilizing and blackmailing, and his "heroic deeds" are treated with sneer.

Third, the big discrepancy between a person's advertisements and his real motivations. The German earl in Benjamin Franklin's *The Sale of the Hessians* is such a typical figure. He is one of the most notorious hypocrites in the literary world. On the one hand, "he keenly sends armies to North America so as to get the compensation for all the losses, and lives a luxurious life with the blooded money"; on the other hand, he is at pains to "emphasize the importance of courage, honor, and God" (Su 43). While talking about "public benefit" all the time and promoting goodness and virtues verbally, he shamelessly takes bribes from his people. Here, black humor exhibits its best weapon—satire, the satire to expose and criticize the dark side of humanity and the dehumanizing social mechanism.

## **II. The Wisdom to See Through the Absurd: The Subject Prerequisite of (Black) Humor**

The second brilliant point of Professor Su's monograph is that it defines the subject prerequisite of humor—humor in general and black humor in particular: wisdom, the wisdom to detect the absurd.

When analyzing Mark Twain's humor, Professor Su clearly claims that "humor needs wisdom and technique" (Su 118). Wisdom is a prerequisite of (black) humor because "the comedy in reality is usually beclouded with some false appearance

and can not be easily detected. Therefore, the artists need to undertake some rational thinking about the comic feature of reality. Simultaneously, they need to wield their wisdom to reveal the truth behind the false appearance with the special mentality of comic art and identify the comic nature of the reality. Only when the self-contradiction, perversion, and absurdity between the essence and phenomenon, content and form are brought to light, can comedy truly come into being. Therefore, to find out the comic configuration and people's comic consciousness in life, one indispensable thing is comic artists' wisdom" (Su 118-119). Not coincidentally, a well-known Chinese writer and scholar Lin Yutang expressed the similar opinion. To him, "when human civilization is in a low level and the flower of wisdom has not blossomed, human beings can not have high-level self-consciousness and comic consciousness can not be expected in such a state. Wisdom is the prerequisite for the formation of comic consciousness and this is the internal logic why many theorists in the world put comedy and wisdom side by side" (Su 119). To modern comedy master Charlie Chaplin, "the more highly-developed the wisdom, the more successful the comedy will be. Undeveloped humans can hardly have the sense of humor" (Su 119).

Yes, wisdom is a must for people to penetrate the absurd nature of existence, to realize the vanity of humanity, and to detect the dislocation between people desire and social reality. For this, Mark Twain is a remarkable representative among American humorist writers, "with penetrating eye and humorous mood, he undertakes a biting critique of society, a profound reflection upon human nature, and an ultimate exploration of the world. The reason why Mark Twain becomes the master of humor in the world lies in the fact that his humor is not only demonstrated in the form of art or narration, in portraying some funny characters, or in witty language, but also the embodiment of the author's super sagacity and insightful thoughts, the powerful weapon he uses to criticize the current malpractice and reflect upon humanity" (Su 90).

The reason why Flannery O' Connor could create "eccentric, wild, horrible, grotesque, and suffocating stories that contain deep substance in the apparently relaxing humor" is that she "has an amazing insight into the dark side of humanity" (Su 132). Soren Kierkegaard's words also shed some light on the importance of wisdom to humor: "Living in this world, one must be very sensitive to the absurd, the more thoroughgoing and practical a person's life, the more comic elements he will find in the world"(Su 256).

To live in this secular world and achieve a sense of transcendence at the same time, a person needs a wisdom most, as Su Hui insightfully observes, "to live but not feel like being confined in this world, to respect the law but feel highly above it at the same time, to possess something but feel like possessing nothing, to give up

something with the feeling of still having it, all these requirements put forward by the high human wisdom, can only be fulfilled by humor” (Su 332).

### **III. The Transcendence of the Absurd: The Ultimate Value or Function of (Black) Humor**

The ultimate value or function of (black) humor does not only lie in presenting the absurd, but also in endeavoring to transcend it. And it is an important content throughout Professor Su’s whole book. As exhibited in her book, “laugh” is the weapon utilized by black humorists to match the absurd world and the defense mechanism against the horror. Throughout the whole book, the transcendence of the absurd is demonstrated as the follows:

First, with satire as its weapon, (black) humor strives to expose, reflect, and transcend human ugliness, flaws, and the absurd in society. Professor Su sharply points out that “aided by satire, to disclose the social and human defects is also the persistent tradition of American humor” (34). Mark Twain is such a writer. He “combines humor with satire and mercilessly exposes and criticizes all kinds of ugly phenomena in American society” (Su 90). For this, he is regarded as “the mirror of American society”. In *The Gilded Age* (1873), he bitingly satirizes the greediness of humanity. In *The Adventure of Tom Sawyer* (1876), he satirizes “the vulgarity, controversy, and greediness of urban petty bourgeois and the hypocrisy of the morality and religion of the bourgeoisie” (98).

Similar function can also be seen in the humor of black writers. To a great extent, “the purpose of black writers’ humor is to unmask and criticize the dark side of society, thus promoting people’s awakening and helping them see the dark reality of society clearly” (Su 144). Significantly, while satirizing, reflecting and criticizing the reality, (black) humor in fact puts forward its appeal for the social transformation. As is argued in Su Hui’s book, “black humor is concerned about how to face the dilemma of existence. When black humor painfully laughs at institutions, values and traditions, it provides due advice on reforming, bettering, or changing the painful reality” (224-225).

Second, the consoling function of humor. This function already comes into its own even in the period of colonial literature. Under those bleak living conditions, “people need humor to conquer the predicaments and they often laugh at hardships and misfortunes, and even exaggerate those miserable events until they are laughable. In laughter, people feel their suffering is reduced, and their fear of danger subsides”(Su 166-167). This function is more valuable to African Americans. To them humor is kind of “surviving strategy and has the function of psychological consolation” (Su

143). This is because that under the situation of racial discrimination, black people are bullied and persecuted in the white dominated world, and their “protest can not change the reality”. They need outlets to release their feelings of powerlessness. However, “the only way to make them enjoy the pleasure obtained through fighting the oppression is humor, and humor has this defensive function to help black people get some psychological comfort in their troublesome reality” (Su 144).

In a general sense, “the absurd reality in modern society produces a strong sense of depression, anguish, and outrage in people’s hearts. The overwhelming mightiness of the object and the disproportionate weakness of the subject pushes the tragedy to the extreme. The weak subject can neither defeat the powerful object with its bravery, nor demolish the perversion and absurdity of the object. It can only maintain a peace of mind with the help of aesthetic attitude of comedy, and release its pain by an irrational mentality” (Su 331-332). This surely is a classic elaboration of the consoling function of humor.

Third, (black) humor represents a detached attitude towards life. This can also be exhibited in Mark Twain’s (black) humor. To him, “humor is the means to shake off and transcend the absurd reality, and it represents a detached attitude towards the absurd and horrible world” (Su 180) The Jewish humor also expresses this detachment. The Jewish humorists “write the serious and tragic theme in a humorous way with the technique of irony, infiltrating life with the spirit of tragedy but transcending it with the spirit of comedy” (Su 162). This attitude of detachment enables people to keep a critical distance from reality and see its absurdity more clearly. To André Breton, “humor is a means for an individual not to be limited and restricted by living environment and society. Humor makes it possible for an individual to transcend the trivial reality” (Su 240).

This function can also be demonstrated by the customary strategy used by (black) humor: irony. As Professor Su clearly declares, “irony is the narrative strategy commonly adopted by contemporary black humorists and endows black humor with more aesthetic quality” (298). And at the same time, “irony makes the aesthetic subject obtain a spiritual transcendence”(313). D.C. Muecke also defines transcendence as one of irony’s basic features and points out that the universal psychology of irony is a condescending detachment and a kind of lightness. This lightness “may be but is not necessarily an inability to feel the terrible seriousness of life; it may be a refusal to be overwhelmed by it, and assertion of the spiritual power of man over existence” (36).

Surely this paper can in no sense exhaust the monograph’s merits and values. The above elaboration can only shed a little light on a very limited part of the many contributions made by Su Hui’s book to (black) humor study. The book does have more interesting and brilliant points for us to perceive and enjoy.

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# **A Book as a Cross-cultural Landscape: A Review of *Kenneth Rexroth and Chinese Culture***

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**Abstract** Inspired by the poetic views of Ezra Pound and the opinions about the methods coping with Chinese and Western theories which is proposed by Mr. Zhang Longxi, Professor Zheng Yanhong takes a specific view both on the whole and detailed levels and puts Rexroth's poems into Chinese cultural context to investigate the poetic elements which exist deep in the historical, cultural, intellectual and psychological contexts. Finally the author achieves a unique understanding of Kenneth Rexroth's poetry and restores its value. The significance of this work lies not only in the uniqueness of its topic but also in the universality which is concluded by analyzing the texts and their surrounding elements from multiple perspectives. More significantly, to some extent it has broken through the academic constraints of popular notion of 'theories first'. With the spirit of Pu Xue, a Chinese traditional textual criticism school, this book promotes a kind of return to the research of the nature of literature from the pure application of non-literature theories. In such a way it achieves the goal of bringing together the west and the east culturally and innovatively.

**Key words** Zheng Yanhong; Kenneth Rexroth and Chinese Culture; academic value

In recent years, Chinese scholars have shifted their focuses from the macroscopic level to the microscopic level of case study on American poets and their translations. Fruitful accomplishments have been achieved in the fields concerning such big names as Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams, Gary Snyder, Allen Ginsberg, etc. It is another surprise that *Kenneth Rexroth and Chinese culture* written by Professor Zheng Yanhong has been published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press in 2012. On this work of such a high quality this paper will comment from the following four aspects: research topics, research perspectives, research interests and research methods.

## 1. A Wise and Discerning Choice of the Research Topics

Kenneth Rexroth (1905-1982) may be an unfamiliar name to Chinese readers, but his Chinese name Wang Honggong is well known in China. As a celebrated poet in America he was as gorgeous as Ezra Pound in many respects, and he wrote poems, art comments and translated verses. He was completely an organizer and leader in the world of letters. Rexroth was one of the main leaders of the San Francisco Renaissance, labeled as the “father of the Beats.” He was also a mentor and inspiration to the Beats, including Gary Snyder, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and others. He loved Chinese culture and was considered as the most outstanding poet of those who introduced and promoted Chinese culture in American poetry circles. He translated and published four books of Chinese poetry collections: *100 Poems from the Chinese* (1956), *Li Ch'ing-chao, Complete Poems* (1979), *The Orchid Boat: Women Poets of China* (1972), *Love and the Turning Year : 100 More Poems from the Chinese* (1970). The last two books of those were translated with the collaboration of Chinese scholars Zhong Ling. He also wrote many essays on Chinese culture, such as *Sung Culture, Science and Civilization in China, The Tao of Painting, The Chinese Classic Novel in Translation, Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, Tu Fu: Poems, Ssu-ma Ch'ien, Records of the Grand Historian of China*. Besides translating and introducing Chinese culture, he adopted poetic elements in Buddhist and Taoist works for his own poetic creation, and by imitating some poetic skills of ancient Chinese poems he had become one of the most prominent poets who were good at absorbing foreign cultures. On this point he was highly evaluated internationally by scholars. One's literary status is not always and necessarily relevant to his academic status. It may be the case that the one who is very celebrated in the world of letters is obscure instead in the academic circles. For example, during the time from 1920s to 1940s, Eliot and Yeats' work had long been the topics in auditoriums of universities and Pound had been rarely mentioned. But nowadays as an undoubtedly important field in academic world the research on Pound is always in full swing. By the same token Rexroth now is facing the embarrassment as Pound has been treated in his obscure years, and his deserved status has not been recognized completely. Donald Gutierrez has concluded that : firstly, as early as in 1927, he moved to San Francisco ,long away from the celebrities' greenhouse, the cultural center of New York ; secondly, although he is very active in the social and cultural circles on the west coast, he always kept his distance from those important figures in the academic centers on the east coast , and as an opinionated man, he seldom echoed the mainstream literary criticism ; thirdly, his independent personality cost him the lose of some academic allies(Gutierrez 142). Besides those, professor Zheng Yanhong believes that his political views have played a main role for his long

obscurity. As a radical anarchist, he often participated in activities of the Communist Party of the United States. His political opinions caused him to be unwelcome to the society and thus his academic status was affected adversely. So Rexroth's poetry has never become a popular topic in academic circles, he has long been ignored in poetry circles in America and the research concerning him and his poetry remains empty in many respects.

It's a wise and discerning choice that Professor Zheng takes *Rexroth*'s poetry as the research object. The author abandons the cliché of some western scholars and expands Rexroth's poetry landscape from the perspective of traditional Chinese culture and poetics, meanwhile a kind of system and integrity of research are realized practically and prospectively for a poetic survey deep into textual details and on a large scale. Therefore, this book, which centers on the research of Kenneth Rexroth, has an important and innovative significance to the Sino-US academic fields. Besides its wise and discerning choice of the research topics we can learn much more from the other respects.

## 2. A Comprehensive Research and Mutual Proof with Interdisciplinary Views

Mencius said, "Is it right to recite one's poems and reading his books without comprehending his life? We should date back to the times he lived in and then be friends with him." Mencius means that it is not enough to understand one's works by reciting his poems and reading his books; furthermore, we should have a better understanding of his time, which is to recall the history and be friends with the ancients. The great scholar Chen Yinque also considered that people who undertake academic research should take a comprehensive and sympathetic attitude toward the research object. He said,

As for the remarks of the ancients, we shall not make comments unless we have stood in ancients' boots and grasped the textual meaning, because the works written by the ancients mostly have something to speak of. If the context and the background where he is from have not been fully understood, then no comment shall be made. (陈寅恪 179)

His great works, "*Biography of Liu Rushi*" and "*a Paper Commenting on Poetry of Baijuyi*" are written in the way of mutual and textual proof between history and poetry to integrate cultural, economic, social and psychological analyses so as to prove the authenticity of literature and history. Coincidentally, Fredric Jameson, a contemporary American neo-Marxist, puts forward the rationale of a comprehensive study which also requires people to grasp the relationship and integrity of things. He believes that:

Everything is so dependent on other things that one should integrate the life and experience perceived by people as a whole in the analysis of specific works, and that all the relevant events, all the partial facts and elements, should be grasped as a general part of the whole process. (弗雷德里克·詹姆逊 282)

Jameson bases his “comprehensive study” on “dialectical criticism”, which does not predetermine the result and scope, or judge aesthetics by the mono-value and mono-structure. The research perspective of this book is deeply rooted in classical academic tradition, about which the author expounds that:

Withstanding the test of time, this kind of research which combines the abstract theoretical speculations, detailed texts, social backgrounds of history and personal experiences of the author, is comparatively according with the laws of the literary movement. (郑燕虹 11)

The topic of this book is “Kenneth Rexroth and Chinese culture”. There are varieties of definitions of “culture” which arouses lots of hot debates. This book adopts the view of Raymond Williams, a British literature critic, who believes that culture is related with people’s overall lifestyle and is the whole forms of thoughts and customs, and is closely connected with people’s impeccable ideals. Chinese culture has a great influence on Rexroth’s views on poetry, life and ideal. The book comprehensively and systematically investigates the relationship between Rexroth and Chinese culture. In his childhood, Rexroth often went to a theater in Chicago with his mother to watch Guangdong drama. The colorful costumes and touching vocals of the actors attracted him deeply. The author keenly points out that although the experience of watching Chinese drama in his childhood had sown the seeds of love for Chinese culture in his heart, his relish in Chinese culture derives not merely from his childish interests, but mainly it is the result of his deep research into Chinese culture and his innovative concepts formed in the practices of exploring into the Chinese poetry art. This book has a profound revelation on Rexroth’s motive of love for Chinese culture. By analyzing Rexroth’s translation and views on poetry and cultural criticism, the main chapters of this book are focused on the research of relationship between him and Taoism and Buddhism and on the influence brought by Chinese classical poetry on his writing. These research perspectives are not for service of narrating individually, but are closely linked with backgrounds of the poet’s times, his personal experiences, and the whole tides of poetic movement to analyze specific texts with theoretical thinking. Meanwhile, the book does not adopt the western theories mechanically, or put some of

the concepts and methods as a panacea into any textual analysis, and the author insists that:

(She)has no intention of applying a certain foreign literary theory throughout the study; yet, the very kind of related concept, scope, research perspective and methods of analysis provided by the foreign literary theories (such as theories of “new Criticism”, “historicism,” “impact studies”, “cultural misreading” etc.) undoubtedly have some functions as reference and guidance. (11)

As Rexroth’s views on poetry are discussed in the first chapter, the author by making a comparison of the translation theories among Pound, Dryden, and Qian Zhongshu, unscrambles Rexroth’s views--- “translation of poetry is a consistent course of action”, “the standard of success of poetry translation is assimilation”, “poetry translation can inspire the poets”. The author’s analysis on Rexroth in this way is not for a simple analogy with some celebrities’ viewpoints, but for a deep dissection into his translation theories and translation works and for an indication of its referential value to the contemporary poetry translation. There is a controversy on whether Rexroth’s translations of classical Chinese poetry are faithful to the original. Some regard his translation as unfaithful, whereas some classify his translation as a “creative translation” or “innovative translation.” For example, in Professor Zhong Ling’s opinion, Pound and Rexroth’s translations are ‘innovative translation’. She says:

Translation of Chinese poetry by Pound, Wei Li, Binner, Rexroth which I call ‘innovative translations’ is different from those for academic research, all of which are translated by scholars who base their translations on the principle of fidelity to the original text.( 钟玲 41)

On the basis of a comprehensive study and an objective and dialectical analysis of Rexroth’s translations, Professor Zheng puts forward her own idea:

It is not enough to simply summarize Rexroth’s translations as ‘innovative translation’, for his translations from Chinese poetry to English are in a complicated situation, and worth a further study. Firstly, he has translated a large quantity of Chinese poetry into English, which involves lots of poets and influences a group of young poets. Secondly, his translation practice can be divided into two periods: in the early phase, during which his main works are *100 Poems from the Chinese, Love and the Turning Year: 100 More Poems from the Chinese*, he translated Chinese poetry by consulting other people’s translations;

in the later stage, he completed the translation of *The Orchid Boat: Women Poets of China*, and *Li Ching-chao, Complete Poems* in collaboration with Zhong Ling. From a faithful view of translation, the later two kinds of works are apparently better, because they are highly scrutinized for the accuracy with advice of a Chinese scholar. (郑燕虹 30)

So she classifies Rexroth's translations into three categories:

We call the translation of a poem comparatively faithful, if the majority of the verses are paraphrasing translation and a few are parody translation; the "less faithful" translation is that in which there are both paraphrasing translation and parody translation, and the former takes the main proportion, if the latter takes more proportion, then it is called 'unfaithful'. (31)

The book then analyzes the three categories by exemplifying *Rexroth's* translation of Dufu's poems.

### 3. A Total Immersion in Poetics and Details

When talking about his way of reading, Zeng Guofan once said, "a good reader should treat the book as water, and his heart as flower, paddy, fish and washing of feet. Then it is easy to understand the word 'immersion'." Zeng proposes one should be infatuated with reading, and investigate deeply. The Modern British and American poet Ezra Pound also emphasizes in his literary theory that we should grasp the details for a deeper understanding. He said, "Obviously, if we really want to know something, we need to know exactly a lot of relevant details." (叶维廉 9) Pound as a poet proposed a method of distinguishing details from the view of evaluating poems, and he emphasized that researchers should be immersed in the poetic conception and meaning of the poetry. His opinion coincides with Zeng's view on reading. Professor Zheng accomplishes her work with so many years of efforts and explorations that she calls herself just a little ant working patiently and carefully. We can see that her way of pursuing scholarship has embodied the spirit of traditional intellectuals. Eight years ago, when she was studying for a Ph.D. at Sun Yat-sen University, Kenneth Rexroth had been her main research subject. First, she collected relevant material in China, and asked her friends to search information in America. During her Ph.D. study, she was invited to be an assistant scholar and work on the study of Rexroth's translations in the translation department of Chinese University of Hong Kong. Then she got to know Professor Zhong Ling who is an expert on Rexroth too, works at Hong Kong Baptist University, has interviewed Rexroth quite a few times and translated two collections

of Chinese poems with him. When studying in the U.S. the author of this book has ever interviewed Professor Zhong twice, sought advice from her by email, and received much first-hand information sent by Professor Zhong. By comprehensively analyzing the material, the author makes a deep exploration into the process of Rexroth's creation, the relationships among his works, and the mutual relevancy between Rexroth and other poets. Then she explores all of Rexroth's translation of Chinese poems, makes a detailed analysis and classifies all the poems translated by Rexroth, and also she explores some of the process of translating detailedly and thoroughly. For example, in the '100 Poems from the Chinese', Rexroth selected 13 poems of Mei Yaochen, six of which are mourning poems for his deceased wife, which are imbued with sincere emotions and are Rexroth's favorite. Professor Zheng firmly believes that the reason why Rexroth chooses these poems is related with his own life experiences. Rexroth's wife, Andrée Rexroth, who was extremely intelligent, and good at painting, had so much in common with Rexroth that they lived a happy life after their marriage. Unfortunately, Andrée died in her prime, at 38, for which he felt so grieved that he wrote several poems to lament her. It's no wonder that Mei Yaochen's mourning poems aroused an echo in his mind, so when he translated Mei Yaochen's poems, he melt his own emotions and experiences into the translation. By citing examples and making compares between interpretations of the translation and his original creation, the author comes to a conclusion: human emotions have something in common; Rexroth's inspiration of translation is from the exploration for a resonance of the emotions between the translator and the author. In the chapter of Rexroth's Emotional Appeal of Chinese Culture, the author firstly makes a survey on many important writers' impressions on china since the 19th century: although Emerson respects Confucius, he harbors some contempt and resentment for Chinese; in poet Sylvia Plath's works, images relative to Chinese people and things are often negative; while Pound, Buck, Snyder, Rexroth take a quite positive attitude toward Chinese culture, and they borrowed Chinese poetic ideas and cultural elements to remedy the corrupt parts of western culture and innovate the modern literature. Part of the valuable significance of this book lies not in a simple assurance of Rexroth's love of Chinese culture, but in this conclusion:

His keen passion towards Chinese culture does not only come from his interests formed in his childhood, but mainly it is the result of his deep research into Chinese culture and his innovative concepts formed in the process of exploring into the Chinese poetry art.“ This conclusion is drawn by the author from the investigation of the facts that Rexroth had perused *outlaws of the marsh*, *The Red Mansion*, *The Golden Lotus*, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, and some other

artistic works of poetry and paintings in the period of Song dynasty. (郑燕虹 223)

#### 4. An Exploration into a Specific Topic in Great Textual Details

The esthetician Benedetto Croce thought that:

Language activity is not the manifestation of thought and logic, but a kind of fantasy, which is displayed vividly, and passionately in forms of images. Therefore, it mingles with the poetry activity, and they are mutually synonym. What is mentioned here means the real and pure language which is the nature of language. And even when the language is used as a tool for thought and logic, and used as symbols of some views, it should still maintain its nature.” (贝尼季托·克罗奇 41)

Therefore, there is an inner link between language and poetic spirit (that is the nature of poetry language), but in the academic field, poetry usually is taken as an objective linguistic material, so it is hard to completely explain the intrinsic link between language and poetic spirit. Professor Zheng starts her research in a unique way which is based on the analysis of the text. She has been exploring the language material for the core of the poetic spirit and depicted the historic narration of the poetic images and conceptions of Chinese classical literary theories. In such a poetic context she analyzes the different poetic conceptions displayed in Rexroth's poetry; also, by analyzing Rexroth's texts, she reveals his assimilation and application of the techniques of Chinese poetry, and excavates the Taoism implied in them; with her poetic perception, she catches the profound implication of Rexroth's poetry which originates from the poet's understanding and appreciation of 'Kong', studies the characteristics of his assimilation of the language form of Zen classics, which the poet applies in his creation, and reveals religious experience and Zen implication in meditation which are abounds in his poetry. This kind of academic effect of such a way of research can be described as what Wai-lim Yip puts, "(this way of research) is centered on the aesthetic considerations", and "causes the images of poetry to reappear" so that the researchers can take part in the creation and enjoy the writer's delight and the consequence of interpretation will not be so dominant to overshadow the poetry's original meaning (叶维廉 9). It is well known that Chinese classical poets and scholars take Zen and Taoism as theoretical sources for a deep survey of the poetic experiences which constantly depend on the subjective understanding of the unity of nature and human. The differences between Chinese poetics and western

logical methods have led to a helpless silence for Chinese scholars in the international academic field. This kind of situation is true at home.

To some extent the history of Chinese literature criticisms in 20th century is the history for all kinds of schools of western criticisms to performing by turn in China and Chinese cultural circles.” (曹顺庆 96-100)

Against such a backdrop professor Zheng Yanhong has been groping for a new way which is undoubtedly pioneering and innovative. It's significance lies not only in establishing the cultural identity of Chinese poetics, but also in the efforts of digging out some of the universality of Chinese poetics and applying it to the analysis of the discourse of Western literature, and finally reaching a mutual understanding culturally and internationally. Essentially, this is a confidence-based dialogue about culture and poetics. This kind of confidence is solid because of its authentic origins and rich theoretical foundations. In the introduction the author quoted Mr. Zhang Longxi's words:

We can not apply the western theories mechanically, but we should reduce all the theories to the basic and original theoretical issues and depend on many respects such as language, expression, understanding and interpretation to investigate the methods for expressing and solving problems both in views of china and the west.” (张隆溪 41)

In the book the author always insists such a position of an equally dialogue. For examples, while discussing the term, “emotional fit” which is proposed according to Rexroth's translation, the author believes that Rexroth's so-called “assimilation” quite coincidentally reaches the same end of interpretation as the “ideal perfection” proposed by professor Qian Zhongshu. And she quotes material from “Seven Essays” by Mr. Qian for a comparative analysis. She also investigates the nature of poetry translation and finds that the significance of translation is mainly focused on the inspiration it brings for writing. Thus the systematic research of Chinese poetic elements in Rexroth's poems is developed accordingly. In another example, the relationship of those double concepts in a series of Chinese poetic terms such as “heart and object”, “sense and image”, “emotion and nature” is systematically analyzed and an ultimate purport is achieved as what the great scholar Wang Guowei had put:

Nature is a word which can be provided with a richer connotation related to all kinds of true feelings beyond the literal meaning of natural scenes. So the poetry

imbued with both natural scenes and true feelings can be called works of high quality. Otherwise it can't count as excellent poetry.” (周錫山 26)

Taking such points of view as a theoretical context, the author expounds the relationship between emotion and nature in the poems and translations of Rexroth. Her interpretation with a textual comparison is categorized into the following three ways: to veil emotion for a better visibility of natural images, to express emotion with natural images, to express emotion through natural images.

As important theses concerning cultural development of China in this century, the inheritance of ancient culture and the communication with foreign culture are seldom discussed synthetically and valuably in forms of case study. This book, exploring into a specific topic in great textual details has to some degree solved the problem as how to understand and absorb the western cultures on the basis of inheritance of Chinese culture. Thus there appears a kind of new academic landscape which differs greatly from some current ones which purely advocate the adoption of western theories. In many quotations the author uses as the basis of argumentation we can figure out that she has inherited the classic experiences, perspectives and academic methods such as the way of using mutual and multiple evidences with interdisciplinary views of poetics, philosophy, and history. Basically this is a valid way to incorporate the western culture and refine the Chinese culture.

## 5. Summary

Professor Zheng puts the daily life and academic experiences of Rexroth into analysis of textual details for a deeper understanding of his poetry and translations. She takes some key concepts of Taoism and Zen as the referential theories as well. Thus a whole new synthesized perspective is emerging for the mutual understanding of the world literatures. And finally a new poetic value is achieved by promoting an academic universality which is concluded by analyzing the texts and their surrounding elements from multiple perspectives. When talking about the influence of Rexroth's works the author writes:

His artistic accomplishment is a unique and individual poetic kingdom where there are devotions of special poetic forms, precious experiences of writing and landscapes of poetry with incorporated elements of Sino-US cultures. (郑燕虹 249)

By the same token, this book on Rexroth's poetry is also a unique kingdom which abound beautiful landscapes of academic innovations inspired by the ideas of ancients

and contemporaries.

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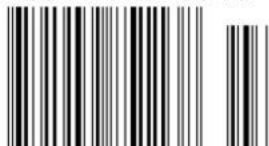
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