

The Aesthetic form of Childhood Sweetheart: I Love You, None of Your Business

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Abstract

The "aesthetic fever" and "culture fever" in the 1980s contributed to a popular aesthetic culture centered on emotional expression and life. As one of the key online literature genres, the aesthetic characteristics of online romance novels are fundamentally different from those of traditional popular novels, reflecting the impact of online communication methods on literature. Taking *Childhood Sweetheart: I Love You, None of Your Business* written by Mo Jiao as an example, the paper analyzes the aesthetic form of online romance novels in the new era from specific and general perspectives, hoping to provide references for the future development of popular literature.

Keywords

Online Romance Novels; Aesthetic form; Painful Literature.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Domestic Literature Review

As popular literature enjoys a long history in China, online romance novels, which have been loved by the younger generation since their birth, are widely studied for their aesthetic forms. For example, starting from the "aesthetics fever" and "culture fever" in the 1980s, Pei Xuan has introduced the theoretical line from aesthetic sensibility to aesthetic ideology, and then to the subject transcendence from three perspectives, including the popular culture of emotional discourse and aesthetic ethics, the literary transformation of secularization and subject freedom, and the life aesthetics of subjects discourse and intellectual enlightenment. She also proposed how to continuously extend the aesthetic enlightenment to promote the subject gaining spiritual enrichment and living freedom in the post-modern period [3]; Zhan Xiumin and Du Xiaoye mainly outlined the entertaining characteristics of online romance novels and explained the influence and significance of the special communication method of the Internet on them [4]; Xu Guoyuan also illustrates the different aesthetic characteristics of popular literature compared with traditional literature, such as "highlighting sounds and colors", "promoting mundane things", "enjoying the moment" and "pursuing dynamics" [5]. However, most of the literature mentioned above has been elaborated on a theoretical and macro level, mainly consisting of analysis from the chronological and logical perspectives while lacking the process of case studies.

1.2. Foreign Literature Review

As Zhang Naiyu's latest research results show, "modern city," "mass media" and "civic consciousness" are the three basic elements closely related to modern Chinese citizens. However, the "modalization" of Chinese contemporary popular fiction, which is influenced and restricted by both mass media and commercialization in terms of narration and aesthetic expression, has become one of its prominent features. The reason why patterned popular novels (especially romance novels) are favored by readers is, first of all, that the author's writing is full of fun. According to Zhang, the pattern is an important means of expression, and

popular novels cannot be separated from formal structures, creation patterns, and standardized paradigms. [6] In addition, Li Zhongwen analyzed 14,212 readers of 10,000 e-books sold during the research to explore the current status of reading romance e-novels. Among them, 88.91% of the e-books were modern romance novels and general romance novels. In terms of the average number of books read per month, 90.42% of people read less than 10 e-books. Regarding the satisfaction with e-books, 99.11% showed overall satisfaction. Based on the analysis, the paper suggests that the romance novel market needs expansion and the genre of romance novels should be diversified. For this purpose, more competent writers need to be identified and cultivated. [7] The international research on popular literature and communication and online romance novels is mainly based on big data to make analysis, and there is still a lack of generalization of the aesthetic form and pure logic theory studies.

2. The Aesthetic form of the Online Romance Novel Childhood Sweetheart: I Love You, None of Your Business

2.1. Main Plots

In Jinhai, a virtual city, the four great families of Ye, Yin, Han and Yi enjoy very high status. They control all the properties of Jinhai, possess countless resources and strong power both at home and abroad, maintain good relations with celebrities in entertainment and education circles, and jointly finance the construction of the best school in Jinhai: Jinhai University. Almost all the children from upper-class families (including the four great families) study there. Yin Yiting, the heroine, lost her parents in a car accident at a young age and was adopted by Shen Xilin, the mother of Ye Yuli who seemed to keep bullying Yin Yiting, but actually protecting and loving her silently for ten years. When the two finally expressed their affection for each other, a number of accidents forced them to separate again. In the end, Zi Yin gave up, and pretended to have amnesia and got together with Ye Yuli. Wan Teng Feng, general manager of Fashion City, who loves Yin Yiting very much, arranges an unexpected wedding for them. It seems that the story has a perfect ending.

2.2. The Characteristics of Main Story Lines and the Underlying Philosophies

The most dominant features of the painful love literature, namely the so-called "letting it go" and "contributing to others' happiness", are shown in the novel. Almost all the couples in the novel went through that. Besides, almost every supporting character, who thought her loved one liked Yin Yiting, pleaded and even threatened him to be with her.

In the story, Yin Yiting asked Ye Yuli to express his love to Zi Yin, her best friend who also liked Ye very much, to make her happy; Ye Yuli, who had always been aggressive and decisive, chose to be with Zi Yin again to ease Yin Yiting's pain when he saw that Yin Yiting felt guilty and desperate after Zi Yin was raped and lost memories to save her; Wan Tengfeng, general manager of Fashion City, who almost lost his eyesight to save Yin Yiting, helped Ye Yuli get together with Yin Yiting after knowing she was married to him only out of gratitude and guilt and watched their wedding with a smile. All of them believe that if they love someone, they have to learn to let it go and contribute to his or her happiness. But according to the novel, each person who did so not only was hurt badly, but also made others feel immense pain. It makes people think, is "letting go" really a kind of love and responsibility? Can "letting go" really make the other person happy? Is it true that Yin Yiting just "lacked the courage to love and be loved"? In addition to love, the novel shows the entanglement that arises from family love. For example, Shen Xilin, the mother of Ye, tries her best to make Ye Yuli inherit the family business without noticing his feelings, because other family elders passed away a long time ago, leaving Shen to support the whole Ye family; Wan Tengfeng's relationship with his father Wan Weilun, a vile man who cheated Shen for Ye's family business and even tried to kill Yin. Wan Tengfeng could

not believe that or tell the truth, but only maintained the fragile father-son relationship. In contrast, the family atmosphere of the Han family, the least powerful of the four great families, was harmonious, as depicted in the second part of the novel. To a certain extent, it also shows that there is no necessary connection between power and happiness. In addition, power also reflects corruption in an ironic way. For instance, the four great families can decide at will whether students of Jinhai University stay or leave; the school leaders treat powerful families' children differently from ordinary students.

Finally, the novel fully reflects the changes in human nature caused by reality. For example, despite her poor family, Ying Qian, a key supporting character, was a beautiful and innocent girl who was in love with Jiang Wei, a man with no power and no influence. But in order to raise money for the medical expenses of her seriously ill father, she suffered from a lot of bullies and misunderstandings as she was harassed by the gangster Qiao Mu, and abandoned Jiang Wei, who had stolen and sold drugs for her, to get together with Wan Tengfeng, who initially liked her because she looked like his late ex-girlfriend Qian Ya. Later, due to Wan Weilun's framing and Wan Tengfeng's misunderstanding, she broke up with Wan Tengfeng again and at that time her father passed away. She completely lost hope, believing that it was Yin Yiting that took away everything from her and even tried to kill Yin. However, in the end, she allowed the blind Wan Tengfeng to stay at her home temporarily and told Yin Yiting everything. Unfortunately, she committed suicide due to guilt and the pressure of life. Ying Qian's change shows the real life of the underclass. She struggles between good and evil badly. Due to the double shock of losing her father and love, she took the wrong path, which is thought-provoking.

Yin Yiting's best friend Zi Yin shows another change of humanity. At first, she would always come forward to protect Yin Yiting, even in the end. But just because they liked the same boy, their relationship became very delicate. Initially, Yin Yiting facilitated Ye Yuli and Zi Yin to be together in order to keep Zi Yin from being sad. However, Zi Yin just pretended to be Ye Yuli's girlfriend considering Yin Yiting's feelings at the same time. But when she heard the conversation or argument between Yin Yiting and Ye Yuli about her a few times, she felt hurt and embarrassed, saying she would not get into their relationships. However, when she was raped by a gangster to rescue Yin Yiting, she pretended to have amnesia and faked madness to occupy Ye Yuli. Eventually, she saw Ye Yuli's sufferings and could not bear the inner torment, so she chose to tell the truth and moved abroad, eventually dying of childbirth. Zi Yin's change reflects the fragile and irreversible side of human nature. In fact, no one is willing to give up loved people and things to others. After suffering such pain, once they seize the opportunity, they want to truly satisfy their desires, which cannot make them really happy. But in reality, few people can escape such mental struggles and human nature.

Of course, the novel also shows the change from evil to good, which is rooted in emotions. Qiao Mu, as a gang leader, committed countless crimes including bullying Ying Qian, loan sharking, murdering and setting fires, but when he was instructed by Wan Weilun to kill Yin Yiting and her family doctor Qiao Jun, he accidentally learned that Qiao Jun was his real son. Even though Qiao Jun's mother betrayed him a long time ago, causing him infinite pains and forcing him to be a gangster, he still released the two without saying a word and told the truth. In addition, Qiao Mu's daughter Qiao Xi, after learning that she had a brother, helped Qiao Jun several times at critical moments and gave up her prejudices and hatred. Many supporting characters who bullied Yin Yiting with the misconception that their loved ones liked Yin, became friends with her after learning the truth. To sum up, the novel vividly shows that emotion is a double-edged sword, which can defeat all evils, but can also lead people to evil.

2.3. Writing Techniques and Aesthetic Features

A variety of writing techniques are used in the novel. The distinctive features are as follows.

Numerous but clear emotional lines. In the novel, not only the relationship between the hero and heroine is depicted in detail, but also the emotions between many characters with different backgrounds and identities. With such mixed relationships, the author manages to clearly and vividly portray the differences in the various types of affection and love in only 550,000 words. Sympathy, fulfillment, crush, rivalry, entanglement, and the relationship between emotion and fame are all shown, attracting readers' attention.

Excellent reversal and foreshadowing. There are many unexpected reversals in the novel, all of which are foreshadowed in the previous text, such as the wedding of Yin Yiting and Wan Tengfeng in the last chapter. Wan Feng accompanied Yin Yiting when she was helpless, and nearly lost his eyesight to save her (the color blindness he showed inadvertently at first, and the fact that he lied about being busy at work and always came home late when he was actually going to the hospital for treatment, indicated his blindness). Out of guilt and commitment, Yin Yiting decided to marry him. Manto Feng repeatedly told her before the wedding that he would make her happy. But surprisingly, the way he made Yin Yiting happy was to secretly change the groom to Ye Yuli, the one she loved. In addition, the names of the characters also foreshadowed their relationships. For instance, Yin Yiting shared the same surname with Yin Yiyu, student council president, and later it turned out that they were cousins; Ye Liyang, a famous star, mistook Yin Yiting for stealing her boyfriend Qiao Jun and made trouble with Yin. Her real name was Ye Yuqing, the half-sister of Ye Yuli, who always thought that it was Ye Yuli's mother Shen Xilin who stole her father, so she showed strong hatred for Ye Yuli. The word "night" and "leaf" share the same sound in Chinese, so their relationship is surprising, yet reasonable. Moreover, Yin Yiting kept dreaming of Ye Yuli leaving her after she was already with him, and this recurring dream eventually became a reality. Yin Yiting learned that the reason why the Ye family adopted her was that the car accident causing her to lose her parents was the fault of Ye's father; at the same time, she was forced to break up with Ye Yuli because of Zi Yin's memory loss. These unexpected plots increase the novel's readability and literary charm.

Philosophical and thought-provoking language. When Yin Yiting was afraid to admit her feelings to Ye Yuli, she said, "Because of the fear of loss, she firmly chose to give up the warmth of those uncertainties." Nevertheless, when the ten-year crush finally comes to a good ending, the author ends the novel with: "I think the reason that fate puts us through so many trials is to make us cherish the smallest happiness around us! I hope that everyone who believes in true love will be able to see the beauty of the rainbow after the storm." It shows the rich changes of a single person, or even a class of people's emotions, reflects human nature and conveys positive energy, making people believe in family, love and friendship. Even though the process is full of thorns, it is still full of light in the end.

Open ending. In the last chapter, when Yin Yiting and Ye Yuli were making promises to each other at the wedding, Jiang Wei surprisingly appeared with their child. The ending only suggests that "It must be considered clearly before deciding whether or not to continue with the wedding", but does not provide a clear result. In the epilogue, Ye Yuli and Yin Yiting successfully completed their marriage and raised Zi Yin's child, but that was a perfect ending that the author added to satisfy the readers' wishes. Readers are free to imagine the real follow-up development.

3. Conclusion

Based on the analysis above, it is clear that although popular literature has strong amusement and entertainment, it is still ideological in general. The external narration freedom and internal desire manifestation embodied in the novel also subvert the inherent value system of traditional literature, enriching the variety and connotation. As a part of popular literature, online romance novels have become a literary phenomenon that cannot be ignored. Although

abundant choices provide convenience for the public, they should still be positive. As in *I Love You, None of Your Business*, many philosophies and values can be discovered with careful consideration, which can improve the quality of the popular literature market. Hopefully, in the future, all the popular novels can show similar spirits.

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