

Metaphor of Disease and Its Psychopathological Analysis in Eileen Chang's Novels

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Abstract. In modern Chinese novels, disease is a common theme, and different works also show different flavors. This paper mainly studies the metaphors behind the characters' diseases and the characters' morbid psychology in Eileen Chang's three representative works *Flowers Wither*, *Golden Lock* and *Red Rose and White Roses*. Through the research, the author can find that Eileen Chang's disease writing is related to her personal loveless family life experience, her love for tragic aesthetics and the aesthetic tendency of morbid things, and the popularity of medical treatment in society at that time. At the same time, this paper analyzes the cruel living situation of women revealed in the female diseases in his works. Whether it is arranged marriage or new-style marriage, women have lost the right to choice and autonomy in marriage, so the unhappiness of their marriage life is also the main reason for the disease. Finally, through the analysis of specific characters' diseases, the article shows the pathological psychological state of the characters' hearts under the disease in detail, and analyzes the relationship between them. Through the study, the author can find that the disease in Eileen Chang's works is not only as simple as the disease itself, but also shows a social style and the pathological state and psychology of the characters living in it.

1 Introduction

In modern Chinese literature, morbid psychology and disease metaphor are the themes that many writers love to write. Such as the morbid body of urban women and the morbid psychology behind them described in the works of Mushiyang of the new sensation school, Ms. Shafei's disease and the metaphor behind it described by Ding Ling [1,2].

Eileen Chang is a modern Chinese woman writer with unique charm. The characters in her works not only show the characteristics of the times, but also show readers the inner world of the characters because of its unique and delicate psychological description techniques. This paper selects Eileen Chang's *Flowers Wither*, *The Golden Lock* and *Red Rose and White Rose* as examples to analyze the sick characters' psychology and disease metaphor. These three works are not only the representative works of Eileen Chang, in which the author has spent a lot of pen and ink to describe the internal psychological and disease characteristics of the characters. Eileen Chang can use this to analyze the disease metaphor and the sick psychology of the characters in Eileen Chang's works.

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This paper will explore the disease metaphor in these three works and how it reflects the sick psychology of the characters, and further reveal the social and cultural roots behind this sick psychology. Through an in-depth analysis of the disease description in the works, this paper will show how Eileen Chang used the theme of disease to deepen the characterization of the inner world of the characters and criticize the social style at that time.

At present, academic circles mainly analyze the metaphor of disease in Eileen Chang's novels from its romantic deconstruction and the deconstruction of lung disease. It is mainly believed that Eileen Chang has dispelled the metaphorical meaning of morbid beauty, abnormal beauty and romance of special diseases such as lung disease for thousands of years, and showed the devastation of disease on the human body and the real ugly side [3,4]. This paper attempts to analyze the metaphor of female disease and disease as psychological externalization, in order to better understand the characters and their psychological characteristics in Eileen Chang's works.

2 Experience the influence of Eileen Chang's personal experience and social medical environment on her disease writing

2.1 Impact of Personal Experience

2.1.1 Home environment

"Since I was a child, I have lived in the shadow of my family, and what I saw and heard were all sick people and sick things [5]." Eileen Chang has been living in a family of survivors since childhood. Her parents divorced and her father remarried. Both her father and stepmother smoked opium, and both treated her badly. Even Eileen Chang was infected with severe dysentery, she was ill for half a year and almost died. However, the father neither sent for a doctor for his daughter nor filled her with medicine. Then she went to her mother. Her mother followed the new ideas of the West, but her poor life also made Eileen Chang, who had been used to the life of the rich since childhood, suffer. She also said that she was a "money worshipper": "I like money, because I haven't suffered much from it - although I've experienced some, it's really nothing compared with others who have suffered - I don't know the disadvantages of money, but only the benefits of money [6]." The world is also a materialistic world without emotion [7].

Eileen Chang grew up in a family of old and young with no love. Such a family separated from the changes of the outside world makes her impression of home closed and separated, which can not give her a tender family and make her inner world loveless and morbid. Both father and stepmother smoked opium. Such a family environment made young Eileen Chang feel depressed and lonely. The experience of turning to her mother also made Eileen Chang more aware of the importance of money. So many of her characters are alienated, indifferent, and even a little morbid, and have extreme pursuit of money. The feelings between people are indifferent and only depend on the dependence of interest relations. For example, in the novel *Flowers Wither*, he describes a family of survivors, in which the family affection is indifferent, and it is all about interests and calculations, even between the biological mother and daughter. Zheng Chuanchang, the protagonist, is depressed and gloomy. This can also reflect the lack of affection in Eileen Chang's native family.

2.1.2 Personal aesthetic tendency

Eileen Chang is very fond of classical literature such as *A Dream of Red Mansions*. At the same time, the tragic aesthetics in Eileen Chang's novels inherited the tragic implication of *The Dream of Red Mansions*. There are few happy endings for men and women in his works, and most of them end in tragedy, forming his desolate style [8]. The women in her works are often depressed and sick, and the protagonist of her works, Zheng Chuanchang, is also called "modern Lindaiyu" by her. This reflects her pursuit of tragic aesthetics.

At the same time, Eileen Chang's works also follow the novel style of the mandarin duck and butterfly school. Most of the works of the Mandarin butterfly school are based on "the pathological phenomenon in urban society. But its focus is not to attract people's attention to treatment, but to focus on the news, anecdote, legend and interest of the subject matter, so as to appeal to the appreciation interest of citizen readers" [8]. Most of the characters in Eileen Chang's works are morbid, and most of them are psychosomatic.

2.2 Social change and medical level

Shanghai and Hong Kong during the period of the Republic of China described in Eileen Chang's novels are in a period of social change and frequent wars. This makes people's psychology and physiology in a sub-health state. At the same time, during this period, western medicine was gradually introduced into China, which collided and integrated with traditional Chinese medicine. As a result, many people's awareness of health has gradually increased, and their awareness of disease is more comprehensive. Therefore, in Eileen Chang's novels, she can often write such plots as illness and seeking medical treatment. In the novel, there are many diseases, such as neuropathy, eroticism, mental disability, physical disability, typhoid fever, tuberculosis, bone tuberculosis, heart disease, insomnia, pneumonia, dysentery, constipation, fever, asthma, etc. What is written more is still lung disease, and there are many places where the specific conditions are not clearly specified [9].

3 The metaphor of female disease in Eileen Chang's novels -- the cruel living situation

3.1 Marital fate

In a patriarchal society, the oppressive angle of the marriage system has a profound impact on women's health. The shackles and oppression of the old feudal family made women lose their autonomy after marriage and forced them to obey their husbands. Even the so-called new marriage is actually just a change in form, and women are still deprived of the right to make their own choices. Under this social structure, women are regarded as accessories of the family, and their marriage fate is completely controlled by their parents or husbands, lacking autonomy and choice.

In the educational concept of her family, the only occupation for women is to be a "female marriage clerk" [10]. Moreover, she is also ignorant of love. When her parents choose the "right" partner for her, she can only force herself to fall in love, and she cannot choose anything else.

Meng Yanli in *Red and White Roses* and Cao Qiqiao in *The Golden Lock* are both victims of this arranged marriage system [11,12]. The arranged marriage arranged by their parents makes them lose the opportunity of free choice, which is not a two-way love choice, and the married life is full of depression and pain. They are forced to follow the traditional "three obediences and four virtues", obey everything their husbands do, and even cannot demand

their own happiness. Marriage is no longer an emotional connection, but a passively accepted fate, which makes them feel empty, desperate and helpless.

3.2 Pathological Psychology

This marriage oppression not only affects women's mental health, but also may lead to physical health problems. Throughout Eileen Chang's urban novels, anxiety and depression are the main reasons for the psychological and physiological lesions of her characters. The mental tension caused by long-term anxiety and depression often makes the characters' psychology out of order or even distorted and abnormal, which is sometimes manifested through the characters' subconscious abnormal behavior.

For example, Cao Qiqiao, who entered the rich family as a jasper in the story of *The Golden Lock*, had an abnormal marriage with a lack of eroticism and bad interpersonal relationships whose personality was belittled, which accelerated her unbalanced psychopathy. She was afraid that the anxiety of others coveting her property would lead her to madness. Finally, she forced her healthy daughter-in-law to death with "a madman's prudence and wit"; The long-term depressed oriole in white rose and red rose has constipation; Chuan Chang, who got a common cold in *Flowers Wither*, sold her beautiful and healthy young body into a disgusting "cold and white spider" in the anxiety of eager to recover quickly, and finally died of bone tuberculosis [13].

Zhang Ailing also expressed her criticism and satire on the feudal traditional marriage system by describing such a tragedy of traditional marriage. It is calling for women to have more choices and autonomy in marriage. Only in such a healthy state of marriage can women be truly happy.

4 Disease as the externalization of the pathological psychological state of the characters in her novels

4.1 Red Rose and White Rose

4.1.1 Constipation of Meng Yanli

In *Red Rose and White Rose*, Meng Yanli and Tong Zhenbao's marriage is the product of arranged marriage [8]. She knew that her husband did not love her and even looked down on her. But there was nothing she could do or change. She may be just a tool for her husband to carry on the family line. She had no friends and lost her independent thoughts.

So in such a depressed and empty life day after day, Meng Yanli suffered from constipation. In the book, it is described as follows: "The Oriole got constipation and sat in the bathroom for several hours every day - only then could she do nothing, talk and think in a righteous manner; the rest of the time she didn't talk and think, but she was always a little uneasy. She walked around without landing. Only in the white bathroom did she settle down and have roots [11]." Meng Yanli's constipation symbolizes her empty and boring life but still makes her anxious. She can't stand such an empty life, but she can't think of a way to change it. Meng Yanli's constipation symbolizes her empty and pale heart and dull and boring real life. This physiological symptom reflects her psychological depression and dissatisfaction. Her life is lack of emotional release and spiritual comfort. This inner tangle and pain are concretely expressed through physical diseases.

There is also a paragraph in the article describing that "Zhenbao took the Oriole to see a doctor and bought medicine for her according to the advertisement in the newspaper. Later,

she felt that she was not very enthusiastic, as if she was willing to keep this disease with self-respect [11]." so can see that it was not so much that she suffered from constipation as that she needed constipation. She needed such an excuse and time to escape the emptiness and anxiety of life.

Reader can see that Meng Yanli's constipation here is a manifestation of the pathological externalization of her inner world.

4.1.2 Tong Zhenbao suffers from high moral pressure

Tongzhenbao wanted to be a good man in the secular sense, but he could not suppress his desire to have an affair with his friend's wife. So when the matter was about to be exposed, he became nervous and anxious. His ID and superego were fighting. On the one hand, he could not control his desire, on the other hand, he could not accept the fragmentation of his image in the eyes of outsiders. In such a psychological state, he was ill.

The article describes this as "he walked on the road, walked many roads, went to a small hotel to drink, ordered two kinds of dishes, and felt a stomachache when he came out. He called a rickshaw and planned to take a walk in Tubao's dormitory. However, in the car, his stomach seemed to be more painful. Zhenbao's self-control was lax, and he could not bear a little pain on his body. He was in a panic. He was afraid of cholera, and ordered the coachman to take him to a nearby hospital [11]."

Tong Zhenbao wants to be a "good man" under the traditional secular vision, but he can't control his desire, so the superficial Zhenbao is constantly struggling with another "Zhenbao" filled with desire in his heart. Reason requires him to be the master of the right world, but sensibility induces him to pursue the happiness that satisfies his instinct. He is wandering between good people and real people, struggling between tradition and modernity. It was such a psychological contradiction that made him ill. His illness is also the manifestation of his internal extreme contradictions and psychological externalization.

4.2 Flowers Wither

In *Flowers Wither*, Chang Zheng Chuan, who lives in a loveless family, is the most neglected child in the family [10]. Finally, at the first sight of light, all her sisters got married, and finally it was her turn. Unfortunately, she suffered from tuberculosis. At the beginning, her fiance was willing to wait for her, but after seeing her condition gradually worsen, her fiance also found another new person to give up her. So she gradually despair, her tuberculosis has gradually become bone tuberculosis. This is not only her physical disease, but also the external expression of her repressed love and hopeless love. Her illness exacerbated her constant self denial and mental bondage, reflecting her deep despair and loneliness. Her parents did not love her, and even did not want to buy medicine for her private money. Her fiance gave her up, and her life was gradually declining. Just like her confession in the book, "from childhood, the children who are not loved by the family have always had a feeling of smallness. Chang Chuan originally felt that she was insignificant, but since she was ill, she has been thinking about herself all day, and her self-concept has gradually expanded. Her huge self and this rotten and beautiful world are tied back to back. You fall on me, I fall on you, and sink [6]."Chuan Chang's status of being unpopular at home, and the resulting self abasement and inferiority complex. But the experience of illness strengthened her loneliness and self pity, and she gradually felt her death. The erosion of tuberculosis in her life is like the consumption of her soul by the emotional and psychological pressure she bears.

4.3 *The Golden Lock*

Cao Qiqiao's dependence on opium. Cao Qiqiao's dependence on opium in *The Golden Lock* is not only physical, but also psychological [12]. It is the externalization of her desire for love but not love, her excessive desire for money, and her desire to control and envy her children.

Cao Qiqiao went from being a smart and lovely girl to being sold to her husband who was ill. In her weak husband, she could not satisfy women's erotic and sexual desires, and the constraints of the feudal family made him feel depressed and helpless. She could not get the love he wanted, so this desire turned to her abnormal desire to control money and her children. These inner distortions and perversions were amplified through her opium dependence. Her physical illness and psychological illness affect each other, and together constitute her tragic life.

5 Conclusion

Eileen Chang is an important female writer in the Chinese literary world. She is good at speculating and describing people's delicate psychological activities, while paying attention to the difficult living environment of women at that time. These characteristics are particularly prominent in her disease writing.

This paper summarizes the indifference and lovelessness of Eileen Chang's original family, her personal aesthetic tendency towards tragedy and morbid aesthetics, and the progress of the social medical environment at that time, and finds out the causes of her disease writing. At the same time, through the specific example of female patients, because women's anxiety and pain in marriage are the main reasons for their illness, it can be seen that Eileen Chang metaphors the oppression of marriage on women through disease. Finally, in Eileen Chang's novels, disease is not only the physical pain of the characters, but also a deeper reflection of their inner morbid and distorted. These pathological psychology are vividly portrayed through the externalization of the disease, which enables readers to have a deeper understanding of the inner world of the characters. Through the detailed analysis of the specific characters in the four novels, this paper illustrates the application of disease as the externalization of morbid psychology.

Therefore, through the research, this paper found that Eileen Chang's disease writing was closely related to her personal experience, aesthetic tendency, social environment and medical level at that time. At the same time, his description of female diseases also metaphors the social cruelty to women in marriage at that time, and analyzes the disease as the externalization of the pathological psychological state of the characters in his novels.

This paper probes into the deep metaphor hidden under Eileen Chang's description of disease, and puts forward a new idea of research from the perspective of externalization of pathological psychology. However, there are still some defects in the research of this paper, which is due to the lack of psychological knowledge, so the analysis of pathological psychology is not professional and in-depth. It is hoped that through continuous study and research, this article can be continuously improved in the future.

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