

The Analysis to *Falling Free*

小议张粲芳之《解脱》

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[Abstract] *Falling Free* is a novel written by Chinese American writer Diana Chang who described a woman's choosing of her identity in the very work which is typical of Chinese American literature

[Key words] Diana Chang; Identity; Chinese American

1 Introduction to the author

Diana Chang was born in 1934. She is a Chinese American novelist and poet best known for her novel *The Frontiers of Love*, one of the earliest novels by an Asian American woman. Dianna Chang is considered to be the first Chinese-American (born in the States) to publish a novel in the States. Chang's mother is an Eurasian while her father is a Chinese who she describe as a typical Chinese who was born and grew up in China. This multicultural background can often find their way in Chang's works as one of the most important theme.

2 Summary

Kiki is an elderly Chinese American woman, her husband Ying left her and went back to China, the country he thought as his native land, leaving Kiki in pain. Alone in the house, Kiki busies herself thinking of the latter part of her life: since her daughter Mimi died and her son-in-law remarried, she and Ying brought up their grandson Winston mostly, however, when Winston grew up, Ying got good reason and left her for China forever. Timothy was Ying's colleague, he fell in love with Kiki and used to ask for her love, however, on one hand, thinking that Timothy is armorous, on the other, being aware of her family responsibility, Kiki kept on declining Timothy. When Kiki collects those elapsing memories, she wants to make out where her true love and cultural identity lies in, at last, she thinks it over and makes sense that her Chinese cultural identity is closely connected with Ying who see himself as a typical Chinese instead of American. Now that Ying has left for China, her connection with Chinese identity also weakens and she can pursue everything she wants to have to satisfy her real heart. So she falls free decides to accept Timothy's love.

3 Key words of the story

Identity: Kiki has Chinese breed and American thoughts, her husband knows clearly that he belongs to China, so he goes back to China before his death, however, Kiki is different, she is fond of American way of living, but Chinese thoughts come into her mind from time to time, making her confused. She even had the thoughts that she belonged nowhere, so she often gets confused and lost. After her husband's leaving, she falls reminiscent of the past and comes to realize that she belongs to everywhere.

Love: Kiki's love is closely related with her cultural identity, her husband is Chinese American, her grandson Chinese American Eurasian, and Timothy is typical of American. Kiki loves those people indeed, but she finds nowhere her true cultural identity. To her husband, she is American, while to Timothy, she is Chinese. When she gives her loves for those people, she is eager to have their love, too. However, those she loves grow up in different environments and have different understanding about love. Kiki wants to have the Chinese way of love, i.e., "love once, deeply and faithfully." But it is hard for her to have this kind of love in the multicultural environment of the U.S. Therefore, she failed to find her true love as did her true cultural identity.

4 The meaning of the title

Before her husband left for China, Kiki hung between her Chinese identity and American identity. She was troubled by this dilemma and thought that she belonged nowhere. In fact, subconsciously she did many things in Chinese way, but she knew little about Chinese and refused to learn more. After Ying's leaving, painful as Kiki is, she finds her peace and spends lots of time exploring the past. She thinks a lot about Chinese and Timothy's love which she has been ignoring. This time she acquires a thorough understanding of everything that puzzled her, what was once so hard turns out to be easy for her. She comes to know that she belongs everywhere and decides to accept Timothy's love. She falls free eventually.

5 Genre

In my opinion, the genre of this literary text lies between novel and prose. The author constructs her story in the way of "stream of consciousness". This moment she describes what's going on while next moment she is in reminiscence of the past time. Nevertheless, wherever she goes, she aims to show her true thoughts and explore the relationship between Chinese American's cultural identity and their love.

6 Conflict

The conflicts occur where Kiki is confused about her identity and love. Kiki wants to be a real American, but the invisible Chinese cultural identity has great influence on her; she wants to accept Timothy's love, but Timothy cannot "love once, deeply and faithfully."—the way of love that Chinese are taught to know. Kiki loves people around her in this Chinese way and hope that she could have the same love as she does. However, it is almost impossible for her wish to be realized in the melting stove of the U.S. Kiki loves her daughter Mimi very much and saw the latter as her past age. But Mimi is of only American mind, she married a European breed guy and died in her young age, making Kiki suffered a lot; Kiki loves her husband, but her husband prefers China and leaves her forever; Kiki loves her grandson, but her grandson is totally American and seldom went to see her, making her angry; Kiki also loves Timothy, but she does not love Timothy's attitude toward love, i.e., in changeable and amorous. All in all, the people around her all know their cultural identity clearly and pursue their love in the way of their cultural identity. However, Kiki used to be in a confused mind. Her confusion about her true identity causes her confusion about true love.

7 Conclusion

The transitional period is always one filled with contradiction and choices. The heroine Kiki is the very one who lives in such a period. By reading this novel, in a narrow sense, we come to know Kiki's personal confusion about her identity and love; in a broader sense, we can have a deep understanding of Chinese American society of the transitional period as a whole.

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