

The Prostitute's Body in Diasporic Space: Sexualized China and Chineseness in Yu Dafu's *Sinking* and Yan Geling's *The Lost Daughter of Happiness*

Haizhi Wu

Abstract—Sexualization brings together the interdependent experiences of prostitution and diaspora, establishing a masculine structure where a female's body mediates the hegemony and sexuality of men from different races. Between eroticism and homesickness, writers of the Chinese diaspora develop sensual approaches to reflect on the diasporic experience and sexual frustration. Noticeably, Yu Dafu in *Sinking* and Yan Geling in *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* both take an interest in sexual encounters between an immature teen client and an erotically powerful prostitute in Japan or America, both countries considered colonizers in Chinese history. Both are utilizing the metaphor of body-space interplay to hint at the out-of-text transnational interactions, two writers, however, present distinct understandings of their bond with history and memory of the semi-colonial, semi-feudal China. Examining prostitutes' bodies in multi-layer diasporic spaces, the central analysis of this paper works on the sexual, colonial, and historical representations of this bodily symbol and the prostitution's engagement in negotiating with diaspora and "Chineseness".

Keywords—Chineseness, Diasporic spaces, Prostitutes's bodies, Sexualization.

I. INTRODUCTION

SEXUALIZATION in literary imagination of the overseas Chinese represents how the power of sex as an international agent performs in the process of conceptualizing Chinese identity outside mainland China.

From the foreign erotic flesh in an interracial sexual relationship to the home-like brothels in Chinatown, writers of the Chinese diaspora suggest an unorthodox, sensual approach to re-evaluate what national/ethnic identity signifies and which country is the true homeland in the age of immigration and globalization. Drawing connections between both the diasporic experience and prostitution, Yu Dafu (郁達夫, 1896-1945) and Yan Geling (嚴歌苓, 1958-), first- and fifth-generation Chinese diaspora writers respectively, conjure different responses to the themes of sexualized China and Chineseness.

Yu Dafu's novella *Sinking* (沉淪, 1922) and Yan Geling's novel *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* (扶桑, 1995), two Chinese diasporic narrations written over half a century apart, have drawn substantial scholarly attention. Critics mainly focus on the ways interracial sexual relationships bring together diasporic space and the prostitute's body in the novels. Both of the writers discuss sexual encounters between an immature teen

client and an erotically powerful prostitute in China's late feudal and imperial era. Therefore, it is worth comparing how Yu Dafu and Yan Geling represent their nuanced diasporic experience by utilizing similar bodily metaphors. *Sinking* is one of the earliest diasporic writings of Chinese students in Japan between the 1910s and 1920s and, in Levan's words, is often taken as Yu Dafu's self-narration that "constructed dichotomy between irony and autobiography" [14]. In Chapters 7 and 8, an unnamed Chinese student, disconnected from his fellow Chinese and suffering from voyeurism and paranoia, passes out drunk in a Japanese brothel before he is about to lose his virginity. Kong acutely reads his "libidinous crisis" from this sexual misadventure as a transformation of "powerful racial sensitivities and nationalist emotions" [12]. In his view, being sexually weak is equivalent to the frustration of being treated as a second-class citizen in Japan. In *The Lost Daughter of Happiness*, similarly, Yan Geling places a Chinese prostitute, Fusang, in the late 19th-century America, a symbolic *West* distant from China. In an unnamed female historian's imagination, Fusang is entrapped, exploited, and trafficked by her fellow Chinese panderers. Meanwhile, she appeals to an American teen client, Chris, who projects his "oedipal infatuation" and "racial fantasy" onto Fusang's erotic yet maternal portrayal [11]. More than an oriental stereotype, Fusang is a complicated figure whose embrace of her suffering baffles her American client because she takes delight in prostitution and challenges the American messianic fantasy. In any case, writing about sex involving members of the Chinese diaspora and non-Chinese individuals in brothels as an immoral site extends the spatial perception of the diaspora.

In both cases, one can enquire on the kind of China or Chineseness the diasporic writers envisage through this sexualization based on body-space interplay. This paper examines the prostitute's bodies in multi-layer diasporic spaces such as brothels, foreign lands, and feudal remnants. The central argument analyses the negotiation and re-imagination of China and "Chineseness" by focusing on the sexual, colonial, and historical implications of using a body as a symbol and comparing sexualization in different diasporic backgrounds.

II. PROSTITUTES AND DIASPORA: A SEXUAL SYMBOL IN A CHINESE CONTEXT

Before a critical, comparative reading of the two novels, this

Haizhi Wu is with the Centre for Multidisciplinary and Intercultural Inquiry, University College London (UCL), UK (e-mail: haizhi.wu.21@ucl.ac.uk)

paper begins by elucidating and qualifying two key concepts: the prostitute and diaspora. First, as Zamperini clarifies in *Lost Bodies: Prostitution and Masculinity in Chinese Fiction*, the term “prostitute” derives from the Latin verb *prostitutio* (to stand in public) and morphs into a general idea of “any woman who engages in sex work” [20]. In this case, this paper includes both streetwalkers and courtesans as sex workers of different statuses. Second, the term diaspora originates from the Greek verb *diaspeirō* (to disperse) and has been widely used to refer to Jews living outside Israel and members of any ethnicity living away from their country. Following Paul Gilroy’s elaboration in a wider context, this essay takes it as an “international” term that registers the space of “a relational network, characteristically produced by forced dispersal and reluctant scattering” [9]. Apart from the immigrants in foreign lands, this definition of diaspora includes overseas Chinese students experiencing trauma from perceptions of their cultural identity since the Westernization Movement from the 1860s to 1890s. By basing this definition in literary representations, one may see that sexual experience in prostitution functions similarly to diasporic experience due to a similar metaphorical logic of representing China and Chineseness.

The negative feeling of being Chinese in a foreign territory resembles that of being a prostitute or client. The distance between the home country and the foreign one hampers the Chinese diasporas from reconnecting with their long-lost motherland. In the early 20th century, for example, once fleeing the war-torn, colonized China, their patriotism and nostalgia in the foreign country turned into an ignominious love affair, repressed and unacknowledged. To explain this psychological and national crisis, Ang uses a metaphor of a living tree with its new branches developing from the solid core of the tree trunk and feeding itself from its root to show “the ultimate existential dependence of the periphery on the center, the diaspora on the homeland” [1]. The centrality of China, in a cultural sense, results in the diaspora’s homelessness and generates their empathy with the sex workers and customers. It is more of an expression of self-pity because they, as Chinese diasporas emigres, are all too familiar with this prostitute-like experience of exile and denial.

Eroticism in foreign prostitution largely stems from the exoticism in diasporas’ intercultural experiences. Since Chinese prostitutes’ bodies register the masculine anxieties about patriarchal desire, ethnic identities, and racial superiority [20], prostitution becomes a fictional performance wherein sex emblemizes the interaction of identities, nations, and races. In other words, the sexual interactions in prostitution provide a similar border-crossing structure to that in diasporic narratives. Thus, diasporic writers address this transnational sexual relationship to represent Chineseness in hybridization and globalization based on the fictional model of prostitution in a foreign country. In their writings, as Shelly Chan argues, Chineseness is no longer “uniform everywhere, unchanging, and Sinocentric” because gender, class, and ethnicity are also potentially influential factors [5].

All in all, diaspora and prostitution are mutually referential and interlinked in their symbolic representation of China and

Chineseness. Based on the two concepts’ definitions and similarities, this paper compares the interactions between the prostitute’s body and diasporic space in two narratives set in different historical backgrounds and foreign countries remote from China.

III. SEX WITH CHINESE: A FEMALE BODY LOCATING MALE-GAZED BROTHELS

Writing about prostitution in diasporic narratives begins with presenting a female body or narrating a sexual relationship with a Chinese prostitute in an exotic brothel. Fundamentally, Mieke Bal defines “narrative space” as a concept “sandwiched between that of focalization and that of place” [2]. This narrative prototype suggests a dynamic interaction among the male focalizer, the focalized female body, and the environment. From this point, similar to what Zamperini concludes in her reading of Chinese courtesan novels, it is tempting to argue that visiting brothels or the prostitute’s body “equates with a fascinating journey into the Chinese male mind and erotic imagery” that fixes on the moment of heterosexual male desire [20]. Nevertheless, this analysis is flawed by the very problematic premise Zamperini observes in all-male writings: a decent woman in pre-modern eras typically had no grounds to visit brothels as a man did. Such a belief neglects at least two aspects: that prostitutes are capable of telling their stories, and that female authors can write a prostitute’s story. In two novels, while Yu Dafu, a male writer, places an invisible narrator following the hero, Yan Geling, a female writer, lets a female historian narrate the story of prostitution via historical data. Comparing how the client protagonists view the prostitute’s bodies on behalf of the implied authors, this paper first examines how the teen clients’ immature masculinity affect their perceptions of sex and erotic bodies in the environment of brothels.

For the Chinese student in *Sinking*, his perception of the brothel-prostitute relationship indicates how he reflects upon the position of masculinity. After he wanders from the hilltop to the eastern bank and ends up visiting a Japanese brothel, the Chinese student perceives the location and space first and the prostitute’s body later. This detail seems to inform that the prostitute body is a constituent part of this obscene, secluded environment that alienates him as an intruder. Outside the brothel, the contrast between his mature understanding that “a place like this cannot be without prostitutes” and his childish reaction of “preparing to declare war on these young waitresses” at the gate enhances the insinuation of his age-inappropriate sexuality. Inside the brothel, the protagonist further senses the danger of his sexual secrets being exposed to seduction in the public domain [18]. The place he is seated, by the sea, enables him to eavesdrop on the next-door Japanese client’s flirting and evokes nostalgia for China across the sea. Perceiving the Japanese prostitute’s flirting as a humiliation to him and his Chinese identity, he suddenly finds himself on the boundary between peeping and being peeped, the Chinese and the non-Chinese. Based on this dichotomy inside the brothel, seeing the seascape through the window symbolizes his extended perception of the vast gulf between “the isolated self

and the absent motherland” [6]. Thus, both the locations of the brothel and the sitting position of the client indicate a heterogeneous space accommodating guests of different ages and nationalities and affects how the prostitute’s body is observed and imagined. Given this spatial structure, perceiving the semi-private, semi-public space of the brothels is associated with focalizing the half-naked, half-dressed body of the Japanese waitress, a suspected prostitute. For the sexually inhibited protagonist, in symbolic terms, the prostitute’s body is not merely a projection of libido. It is sublimated into “an individual entity with a degree of coherence and intelligibility” [8], which may help this Chinese teenager comprehend his male identity and places of belonging in an alien land. However, while he reads the prostitute’s enticing body as a sexual invitation in the way of how he interprets the brothel, he also resists any further physical contact except for peeking at the waitress’s clothing:

He wanted to look closely at her and confide in her all his troubles. But in reality, he didn’t even dare look her in the eye, much less talk to her. And so, like a mute, all he did was look furtively at her delicate, white hands resting upon her knees and that portion of a pink petticoat not covered by her kimono. [19]

After this description, the act of cursing his own habitual voyeurism symptoms (“a beast, a sneaky dog, and a despicable coward” [19]) shows how the protagonist tries in vain to prove his masculinity through prostitution as the sexual puberty rite in this male world. For another example, where Yu Dafu implies the protagonist’s loss of virginity, the character wakes up late in the afternoon with “a red satin quilt scented with a strange perfume” and finds himself in the same brothel but in a different room [19]. Associating the teenager’s ambivalent sexual relationship with his changing location in the brothel creates an irony, suggesting that his impotence is not merely a sexual disorder but a spiritual paralysis. He is incapable of professing his masculinity in proper sex and can never be the true man he imagined.

For the American teen client Chris in *The Lost Daughter of Happiness*, what the brothel-prostitute relationship means to him is also related to his comprehension of masculinity. From age fourteen to sixteen, Chris “[charges] through one identical Chinese brothel door after another in search of that one-of-a-kind whore [18]” and also adheres to the same sequence of observation: the brothels first, the prostitute later. As a white child client, a sample derived from historical data and preserving his male family tradition of keeping an Asian mistress, he unusually shows an “invasive curiosity”, not for the brothel, but for the prostitute herself in his first visit to Fusang’s brothel. Despite several mysterious oriental furnishings, such as an “embroidered cushion” and “a bamboo bed above hung a pink bed curtain” [18], the whole environment appears just gaudy to him. So far, how Chris perceives this private/public and Chinese/non-Chinese dichotomy in the brothel’s spatial structure is similar to that of the protagonist in *Sinking* in the Japanese brothels. Like a younger, American version of Yu Dafu’s protagonist, Chris experiences how his growing sexuality and his sexual encounters forcefully transform him

from a boy to a man. For him, prostitution is no longer a sex game but sex consumption. However, watching the Chinese prostitute Fusang’s body changes how he, as a typical client, perceives and visits the brothels. In the presence of Fusang’s body that brings “a new and different temptation” [13], Chris fails to flirt with or smile at Fusang, as he did with other Chinese prostitutes. Instead, he reacts like Yu Dafu’s protagonist, but for a different reason:

Chris had never seen such a thing. Her pursed lips and lowered lashes lent her face all the gentleness of a mother. Her translucent silk blouse shimmered with every breath she blew. The candlelight accentuated the shapes and movements of the body underneath. [17]

As Chris reads Fusang as a stand-in mother or maternal power, he also sees the public space of brothels as a private sphere untouched by distorted masculinity. To Chris’ mind, the maternal disposition from Fusang’s erotic body symbols render this ordinary brothel a place of femininity salvaged from the siege of the male gaze and patriarchal terror. Another example of how Chris is shocked by one of Fusang’s sexual encounters also speaks to this point: “Her body was taking in a man ... She wasn’t resisting as he had expected, but accommodating herself completely to the man. The way the beach accommodates the tide” [17]. The imagery of “the beach accommodating the tide” deconstructs the antagonism between the prostitute’s eroticism and the client’s sexuality. Unlike the suffering that Chris, a teen client, would have imagined Fusang’s bodily experience, her body of openness glares with harmony and comfort that somehow alleviate the violence precipitated by the client, who uses her to vent lust. The prostitute’s body, in the client’s perspective, marks itself as an independent element that is not part of the brothel’s environment and can remedy the masculinity crisis.

In short, the ways in which the teenage clients perceive the space of brothels and focalize the prostitute’s body tells how they understand their masculinity and the position of the Chinese in a sexual relationship of prostitution. In *Sinking*, how the Chinese teenage client connects the Japanese prostitute’s body with the Japanese brothel’s lewd environment shows his inability to profess his masculinity through sex and voyeurism in prostitution. For Chris in *The Lost Daughter of Happiness*, however, this American teenage john separates the Chinese prostitute Fusang from the Chinatown brothel and sees her body as a feminine cure for his problematic masculinity.

IV. A PROSTITUTED CHINA: A COLONIZED BODY LINKING HOMELAND WITH ALIEN LAND

Locating the Chinese individual in foreign prostitution not only makes the prostitute’s body a sexual symbol for the masculine image but also provides a distant perspective to understand unstable connections between the diasporic self and colonized China. In this vein, a fictional China survives and transforms in the writings of collective trauma in foreign lands, especially in the post-invasion era after the First and Second Opium Wars in the 1840s and 1850s and the Sino-Japanese War in the late 1890s. The writing of a suffering China somehow parallels what Hsia names and denounces as the “obsession of

China” in modern Chinese literature. In Hsia’s view, such obsession not only stems from the alarm from “internal turmoil and foreign aggression,” but also represents how “negative connotations of obsessive patriotism” victimize national imaginaries [10]. At this point, the ways those mainland writers, obsessive with Chinese sufferings, portray China as a victim are consistent with the ways diasporic Chinese writers conceive and resemble colonization in China to transnational prostitution. In this part, comparing how Yu Dafu and Yan Geling interpret China into different prostituted or colonial imageries, this essay describes how the colonized prostitutes’ bodies in Japan and America bond the traumatic memory of diasporas with that of motherland China.

In *Sinking*, as the Chinese teen client blames his sexual shame and disavowal on the Japanese prostitute’s eroticism, he directly relates his chastity with the patriotic duty for semi-colonial China. For example, believing that he is “bullied” by the Japanese prostitute and client, he imagines Japan as the “faithless waitress” and China as a far-off, “true-hearted girl” to underline his misery of being deserted and dislocated [19]. In his delusional revenge on Japan on behalf of China, he claims that he “shall [care] nothing about women” and “let [his] country be [his] love” [19]. That seems to suggest that he, as a male client, is in danger of being treacherous and bodily colonized if he engages in an illicit erotic affair with a Japanese woman. As Lee critically evaluates, his dilemma of “desiring her as a woman and fearing/resenting her as a Japanese” represents painful moments of how national weakness symbolically castrates male masculinity [13]. In this case of colonial ideology invading the diaspora’s patriarchal imagination, the protagonist creates an idealized China as a scapegoating gesture to transfer his distress caused by foreign hostility and inferiority.

For another example, the time point Yu Dafu sets between the First (甲午戰爭, 1894-95) and Second Sino-Japanese War (中日戰爭, 1931-45) is historically meaningful because it enhances the connection between the diasporas’ sufferings with semi-colonial China. The former ended in a tremendous Chinese defeat and the shameful signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, which aggravated aversion towards colonialization and instigated waves of students arriving in Japan to learn and copy its successful modernization on a nation-state basis. The war, defeat, and treaty planted the seed for the second war, after which the semi-colonial, semi-feudal China came into being in modern history right before China declared the War of Resistance Against Japan (中國抗日戰爭). Seeing the narrative of sexual crisis as a reflection of historical shame and threat, the diaspora protagonist frames his perception of the strained China-Japan relation within a spectrum between fidelity and betrayal. As it turns out, there is no significant difference between resenting Japan as a heartless prostitute or pursuing China as a true-hearted lover because the two are essentially sexually tantalizing yet unreachable. Likewise, for these diasporic Chinese in Japan who are “homeless, misplaced, and solitary subject” [16], their motherland’s trauma from foreign colonization and national

weakness follows them to the foreign land. In their self-pity, national suffering defines their diasporic identity and escaping from their suffering country and countrymen makes them feel like an alien in either Japan or China.

In comparison to Yu Dafu’s use of the Japanese prostitute’s body for his Chinese protagonist’s reflection upon the personal crisis of being degraded and colonized, Yan Geling takes a radical step by directly imprinting the violence of colonization on the Chinese prostitute’s body. Unlike Yu Dafu’s hero, who is both the performer and spokesman in his confessional story, Yan Geling’s heroine Fusang is an opaque and ignorant figure whose body and voice are interpreted and imagined by the boy client Chris and the unnamed female historian. The writer then creates a narrative structure where a diasporic Chinese woman imagines how an American teen client watches a Chinese prostitute. Thus, in Bernard’s words, Yan Geling targets the implied “interlocutors” of the western colonizer who are more “physically present in one’s daily life than the colonizer himself” [4]. In this narrative perspective, Fusang’s body as a symbol of China is subjected to tripartite suffering from colonial violence along with the crazes of Chinese immigration and Chinese exclusion in America. First, Fusang is kidnapped and trafficked from China to America in her twenties. By this, as the female historian adds after this detail, her origin of misery reveals a cruel yet silenced tradition of trafficking Chinese female slaves throughout the 19th century: “For all their docility, they brought in hundreds upon thousands of slave girls. They were gentle with their girls—every last one of them headed for death, throwing countless corpses into the sea with perfect equanimity” [18]. Second, dragged by a gang of men despite the efforts of Chris and of Christian missionaries, she is hurled back to brothels and prostitution like a girl slave. As Jin interprets the Chinese’s flagrant abduction while Americans bear witness, imprisoning Fusang “within the social and domestic structure of Chinatown” symbolizes how the prostitute’s body becomes a central, racialized object amidst western imperialism and male despotic power [11]. Third, at the climax of the Chinese exclusion in America, Fusang in Chinatown is gang-raped during the riots. It is worth mentioning that Chris, who longs for Fusang’s rescue, also participates in this collective violence and loses a button bitten off by Fusang. As “the rapists [return] to their respectable lives” [18], Chris is painfully aware that his act of rape as the colonizer’s violence upon Fusang forever changes his colonial identity. Therefore, he would devote his life to “atone for the gang rape” and announces his love to “all those narrow-minded, prejudiced faces, white and yellow alike” [18]. Throughout this sex-slave narrative by the American boy client and the diasporic Chinese daughter, the colonization manifest in manipulating Fusang’s body becomes visible as Chris gradually comprehends and gets involved in it. Historically, this narrative may also hint at Chris’ metaphorical connection with American imperialism manifested in the invasion of China as a part of the 1900 Eight-Nation Alliance (八國聯軍之役), considering how America carves up China’s territory and interferes with its governance. Hence, although the slave-girl image does not make sense to an American teen client, it carries profound historical meaning to

the Chinese narrator and Chinese immigrants like her. For the female historian narrating the story, a slave girl selling her body to make a living is in line with the way she trades her colonial memory of China for an oblivious identity in America (an expurgated excerpt):

What does it mean, anyway, to sell yourself? People think you sold yourself. But what about all those women around me? Times have changed ... Some sell themselves for a residence permit in China or a green card in the U.S. Are there any women out there who *aren't* selling themselves?

Aren't I? How many times have I lain unwillingly beneath a man, like a pile of merchandise? [18]

Exploring the diaspora's sacrifice of body and value since a century ago, the female narrator rediscovers her source of pain via the sisterhood based on the transnational and historical suffering. At this moment, when trauma and pain are potent media connecting foreign and home countries, Yan Geling does not simply make Fusang await rescue by a foreigner or a Chinese. Instead, she writes Fusang's and the diaspora's suffering for transnational empathy, much more than Yu Dafu's self-pity. Instead of recovering "a preexisting China lost to her fifth-generation immigrant narrator", as McWilliams argues, Yan Geling re-examines the diasporic narrator's relation with China by "[revealing] China and the United States as spaces that are inseparable yet distinct" [17]. In this sense, as sex in prostitution does not differentiate which body is the subject or object, the experiences of colonization either outside or within China to Yan Geling are equally valuable to represent modern China from a similar nostalgic perspective.

Yu Dafu and Yan Geling present distinct understandings about how Chinese Diasporas are connected with their semi-colonial Chinese identity and history. In the Japanese brothel, the Chinese teen client, the protagonist, sublimates his sexuality and shame towards the Japanese prostitute's erotic body into a sense of betrayal to his beloved China suffering from Japan's defeats and colonization. By this diasporic experience, he finds himself connected with his homeland via sufferings, alienation and homelessness. In Chinatown, Chris witnesses how Fusang's body undergoes tripartite violence from being kidnapped, enslaved and raped. Thus, Fusang's body becomes a national metaphor for China's quasi-colonial history and for diasporas' transnational trauma that binds together women of various cultural backgrounds.

V. HYBRID CHINESENESS: A MYTHICAL BODY EMBODYING MODERNITY IN FEUDALISM

Being placed in the brothels at the shadowy corner of Chinese feudal history often masks the modernity of a prostitute's body when it engages in the male client's defied or demonized sexual experience. According to Bell's feminist investigation on the modernized prostitute's body, she deciphers the heterosexual dichotomy of how the modern discourse of female sexuality defines "deviant female sexuality" by prostitution and whores and "normal female sexuality" by reproduction and wives [3]. Thus, the prostitute becomes the absolute *other* within the otherized woman; this binary opposition also applies to the modernist Chinese

representation of prostitution as remnants of the feudal ages. From the showgirls in late-Qing courtesan fiction to exotic street girls in Chinatown brothels, prostitution bears the masculine fantasy of romance and polygamy displaced from the feudal tradition. This feudal tradition varies from the nobility to the general populace, from mainland residents to overseas diaspora. The thread running through the history and categories of sex is the neglected presence of a prostitute's body or bodily experience that registers the modern myth of female sexuality. Based on how transnational prostitution represents a different aspect of masculinity and colonization, both *Sinking* and *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* present a mythical reading of the prostitute's body that undermines the feudal structure of the brothels in diasporic spaces. In the final part, this paper probes into the prostitutes' bodies as symbols of hybridity that mark the transition from feudalism to modernity in a globalized context.

In *Sinking*, the Japanese prostitute is imagined to take on dual mythical roles in the Chinese teen client's feudal fantasy. Due to Japan's similar cultural root of sex to China's one, the protagonist compares the prostitute-client relation in Japan to that between "wit and beauty" (才子佳人) in traditional Chinese romances. For example, he is steep in an illusory, poetic version of China and his Chinese poet identity by versing away his long day in the foreign land. The literary transference of Qinglou (青楼), high-class brothels in ancient China, in Japanese prostitution underlines stereotypes over sex or eroticism intertwining with poetic composition for the emotional outpouring. However, as Levan points out, in this classical Chinese role-playing, the narration starts by mocking this stereotype "through the protagonist's self-berating thoughts as the scene in the rather shabby brothel develops" [15]. The scene in which he is deeply mesmerized by the prostitute's body and sexuality but disguises his feelings by his inclination of lyrical composition tells the hypocrisy of this Chinese feudal literary tradition. As the waitress praises him as a poet, his posing as a sublime man of talent becomes an expression of his Chinese feudal pride that temporarily strips him from the obscenity of prostitution and eroticism because he imagines himself courting an educated lady. Unfortunately, as the Japanese prostitute grows indifferent to him, the protagonist's drunken recitation and poetry that represents the feudal heritage and nostalgia eventually fail him. According to Denton's view, the sexual privacy of Yu Dafu's diasporic protagonist who clings to his traditional self is exposed by the profound "traumatic experience of modernity" exclusive to Chinese intellectuals yet universal in global literary modernism [7]. At the centre of this anxiety produced by sex and diasporic experience lies the duality of the prostitute, a modern version of the Roman mythological deity Janus, whose two faces symbolize the sacred/profane duality in humanity. As the Chinese client intends to exert his masculine superiority, the prostitute is demeaned as lewd flesh, incomprehensible and inarticulate. When he wants to recover his Chinese heritage and become a poet, the prostitute is expected to listen, appreciate, and even play a part in this oriental fantasy. Due to such contradictions, therefore, it is not the student client's perception

of the prostitute's body, but his failure of it, that mirrors how modernization intrudes and destabilizes this masculine dichotomy in Chinese traditions and thus represents the painful process of modernization.

In *The Lost Daughter of Happiness*, the Chinese prostitute's mythical image is also connected with the constructions and reconstructions of feudal imaginations. The shabby brothel in America is not merely a vessel for displaced feudal elements of masculine dreams and romances like the one in *Sinking*, but also a discourse structure where polygamy-like prostitution seems to alleviate clients from the burdens of marriage. Representing the alien Chineseness amidst the melting-pot environment in America, Fusang, named after a mythical giant mulberry tree growing outside China and marked by suffering and perseverance, is indeed a vehicle to perform modernization. In the teen client's eye, Chinese prostitute Fusang becomes a rescuer or object to be rescued for males who are single or in a problematic marriage, and that also explains why Yan Geling bases Fusang's maidenly body image on mythical imaginations. For one thing, Fusang is a twenty-year-old prostitute who is incredibly healthy and never infected by venereal diseases in prostitution. For another, she "[has] no skills, no seductive charms, not a trace of lust in [her] eye," yet she can make any man lying with her feel as if it were his "wedding night" [18]. As a gifted prostitute and a perfect bride, Fusang magically lives up to the conflicting wishes of the client and thus "[rejuvenates] the image of Chinese immigrant women as more than passive objects of oppression" [17]. In Chris's case, Yan Geling approaches a detailed understanding of how a prostitute's mythical body brings about the modernization of this feudal-like space. At the moments that present modernity, there are two critical events both based on the rescuer-rescued dichotomy. First, Fusang's exotic body evokes twelve-year-old Chris' chivalry to rescue her from her feudal-like, oriental confinements and lead her to the developed, modernized west:

In his dream, he is much taller, brandishing a long sword. A knight of courage and passion. An Oriental princess imprisoned in a dark cell waits for him to rescue her ... Trapped in degradation, the girl plays her tearful bamboo flute and waits for him. The boy is disconsolate; the image in his daydream—the golden female body, party covered with long tresses, is you. [18]

Chris fantasizes about rescuing Fusang's Chinese body from the shackles of feudalism represented by the brothels which the Chinese clients visit, which is at odds with the very feudal-like scene and spirit displaced from western chivalric literature. At this stage, Chris recklessly assumes with bravado that Fusang, who represents the mysterious side of Chinese females, urgently needs western male saviours from her Chinese oppressor. Thus, he soon finds out that the more he tries to play the part of a progressive rescuer for his chosen prostitute, the more he finds himself in need of being rescued by her from his prejudice of Chinese and prostitutes. For him, coming of age is equivalent to modernizing his mind from his delusional medieval fantasy.

This childhood fantasy then leads to the second critical point when the seventy-five-year-old Chris, on his deathbed, looks

back at an entire life of countering anti-Chinese exclusion and devoting true love to Fusang. At this point, given how Chris realizes the relation between rescuing Fusang and embracing modernity, Yan Geling creates a modern fairy tale with a cheerful ending that protects Fusang from feudal dominance and Chris from violating the moral duty of marriage. This is different from the ending of *Sinking*, where Yu Dafu finishes with the tragic suicide of the Chinese student. However, both writers allude to the positive side of the prostitute's eroticism that constructs the modernization of China. As a Chinese slave girl with a humble origin inspires a civilized, white teen client, Chris then renounces his childish misconceptions, enters maturity, and acquires wisdom and empathy. In this way, the prostitute also engages herself in an important historical moment for America that develops from a feudal, prejudiced past to a modern, inclusive future. Ultimately, the modernization of Chineseness in the heterogeneous space of America not only brings the Chinese diaspora's hybrid identity into play but also liberates the literary representation of diasporic Chineseness from the pure-blood anxiety via the sexual medium of hybridity.

Overall, Yu Dafu and Yan Geling use these mythical bodily metaphors in diasporic space to embody modernity masked in the feudal environment of brothels and challenge the feudalism those feudal remnants represent. For the Chinese student in *Sinking*, as the Japanese prostitute fails to perform the dual identities of a well-educated beauty and a sex worker as he expects, he fails to realize his feudal fantasy in Chinese romances and goes through a painful process of modernization. Likewise, in *The Lost Daughter of Happiness*, Fusang, as a legendary Chinese slave girl, does not simply cater to Chris's medieval feudal dream of being an object awaiting his rescue. Instead, Fusang's maternal and erotic power liberates Chris from his American prejudices and "modernize" him from an ignorant boy to a man of tolerance and wisdom. Both of the writers utilize the hybridity of traditions and modernity, staging a performance of modernization for Chineseness.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper examined the sexual metaphors of the prostitute's body in the diasporic space in a brothel, foreign land, and feudal remnants. It discussed how the sexualized representation of China and Chineseness in different diasporic backgrounds and perspectives reconstructs the Chinese diaspora's bond with the semi-colonial, semi-feudal Chinese history and identity. Sexualization in diasporic Chinese literature is an anti-essentialist approach to associate the experience of prostitution and diaspora, two interlinked key elements, to broaden the boundary of imagining overseas China and Chinese identity. In this case, Yu Dafu's *Sinking* and Yan Geling's *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* are worth comparing, because both writers concern themselves with sexual encounters between an immature teen client and an erotically powerful Chinese prostitute in Japan or America, both countries considered as colonizers in Chinese history. In *Sinking*, perceiving the Japanese prostitute's body as a constituent part of a Japanese brothel, the unnamed Chinese student client fears

for his masculinity and innocence being threatened and polluted by this lewd environment. While this paranoid client deems the sex with a Japanese prostitute as a betrayal to his colonized China, he fails to fulfil his feudal fantasy of courting a well-educated woman and versing a renowned poet. Through this sexual frustration, this Chinese teen client fails to grow into the masculine man he imagines. For the American client Chris in *The Lost Daughter of Happiness*, on the contrary, Chinese prostitute Fusang is a mythical figure characterized by sensuality and deity, which distinguishes her body from other sex workers' ones and from the grimy environment of Chinatown brothels. For Chris, Fusang's body can cure his masculine crisis, withstand the violence from colonization and transform him from a boy to a man. Using these body metaphors in diasporic space, Yu Dafu and Yan Geling associate the diaspora's suffering with that in China's semi-colonial history and shows how modernity in the form of the prostitute's body in a feudal place of a brothel manifests itself in hybrid Chineseness as a sign of modernization.

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