

Confucian Ethical Dilemma in the Narrative of "Chasing Wives" Crematorium from the Perspective of Self-destructive Redemption Model

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ABSTRACT

"Chaser Crematorium" as a typical narrative pattern of online sadomasochistic love stories, transforms female trauma into emotional consumption symbols through a closed-loop structure of "sadism - remorse - reconciliation". This paper takes such texts as the subject of analysis to explore the profound ethical paradoxes implied in them: on the one hand, it creates dramatic conflicts by exaggerating extreme plots such as domestic violence and abortion, while on the other hand, it disregards the real harm of violence with romanticized strokes and distorts the "patience" and "sacrifice" in Confucian ethics into tools of emotional manipulation; On the other hand, the "counterattack" of the female character is always attached to the forgiveness of the man's charity and is eventually forced to return to the family role, reflecting the deep contradiction between the Confucian family-centered values and the demands of modern individualism.

KEYWORDS

Chasing wives crematorium; Confucian ethics; Self-destructive redemption; Ethical dilemmas

1 Introduction

The rapid development of online literature has given rise to a variety of text types, among which the typical old sadistic text "The Crematorium" has drawn widespread public attention with its fixed narrative structure of "sadistic - remorseful - reconciliation" and the significant gender power imbalance presented within it - male dominance and female deempowerment. Why do these texts continue to resonate strongly with readers? The underlying cultural motivations are worth exploring. This paper argues that the model of the "chouwife crematorium" did not emerge out of thin air, and its structure conceals the cultural imprint of Confucian ethics. However, in the specific context of online literature, these traditional elements have not been fully inherited. Instead, they have undergone distortion and reorganization, presenting a subversive transformation that has led them down a path that was never imagined. This creative transformation is the key to its narrative charm and blockbuster code.

To delve deeper into this phenomenon, this study focuses on the high-scoring work "I See the Moon Still" on the popular novel platform Tomato Novels as a typical case, aiming to explore through a close reading of the text the following questions: How are the core concepts of Confucian ethics deconstructed and re-integrated into this narrative model? What kind of attitude and logic does this transformation process reflect towards traditional cultural resources in online literature? What emotional expectations of contemporary readers, especially female readers, are reflected in the text that is ultimately presented?

The significance of this study lies in providing a new perspective on the underlying logic of sadomasochism at the theoretical level and revealing its complex relevance to traditional culture; From a practical perspective, dissecting the underlying gender power structure and ethical distortion in the text helps to reflect on its potential impact on readers' social cognition.

2 The "Chaser Crematorium" sadistic plot

2.1 Basic background setting

The "chasing wife crematorium" style text typically presupposes a stereotyped structural background: the male protagonist, as a "domineering CEO" who controls overwhelming social resources, forms an imbalance with the female protagonist, who is forced into a dependent state after experiencing a sharp decline in class status (such as family decline, family bankruptcy, critical illness of a close relative, etc.). The male protagonist intervenes when the female protagonist is in distress, and they enter into a contract of financial aid in exchange for a formal marriage. No matter how the form of the contract changes (such as the man 'proposing' or the woman 'begging'), it is essentially an unequal trade of gender power, marking the woman's transfer of physical and mental autonomy. Marriage is transformed into a "new age indenture", and the preconceived tone of female objectification provides the narrative logic premise for the male protagonist's physical and mental control and the female protagonist's loss of subjectivity.

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2.2 Operating rules of the "Chasing Wife Crematorium" model

The core plot of "Chasing Wife at the Crematorium" begins with the male lead inflicting physical and mental harm (violence or causing her to have a miscarriage) on the female lead due to a misunderstanding, which leads her to leave resolutely. The man's sudden realization after the truth is revealed drives him to make amends, that is, to "chase his wife". This process ("crematorium") is often accompanied by the protagonist's symbolic self-punishment (such as kneeling, going bankrupt), which leads to a superficial decline in his socioeconomic status. This status change is presupposed by the narrative rhythm as a necessary gesture to send a signal of reconciliation to the heroine, suggesting that her "downcast" state matches the wounded heroine. In essence, it is still a continuation of the unequal power relationship. Ultimately, after the male protagonist fulfills the preconceived "atonement" of the plot, the female protagonist generally chooses to forgive and forget the trauma, achieving a "perfect" reconciliation. This forced happy ending, by dissolving the traumatic memory of the female subject and rationalizing the violent behavior, constitutes the paradoxical narrative closed-loop logic of this type of text.

2.3 Self-destructive redemption patterns

In "I See the Moon Still", the male lead Qi Zhanzhi carried out a series of systematic physical and mental controls and torture on the female lead Guan Hua. Qi Zhanzhi repeatedly forced her to have sex against her will, completely deprived her of personal interests and space for self-expression, forced her to wear a white dress, imitate the behavior of her late sister Guan Min, and even precisely regulated her facial expressions (such as consistent smile curves) in an attempt to portray her as a substitute for Guan Min. What's more, because Guan Hua used the special nickname "A Zhan", Qi sent her to a dog training ground for "taming". Under the instructions of the dog trainer, Guan Hua was deprived of basic survival needs (only a small amount of water was provided for the first three days and food supply was cut off), causing her physical functions to be on the verge of collapse, with only animal instinctive reactions (such as swallowing reflex) remaining. To further strengthen her obedience, Qi Zhanzhi imprisoned Guan Hua in an ice cellar and subjected her to further torture. When Guan Hua's body was extremely weak, Qi Zhanzhi threatened her with the relics of her grandfather and forced her to fight the fierce dogs. This series of escalating physical and mental abuse completely destroyed Guan Hua's mental world. The text gives hints at the beginning that since the death of her sister Guan Min, Guan Hua's subjectivity has gradually begun to dissolve; Qi Zhanzhi's atrocities directly led to the collapse of her mental structure, presenting her as an almost hollow trauma bearer. With the help of friends, Guan Hua was diagnosed with major depressive disorder, and her condition worsened under continuous stimulation and developed schizophrenia^[1], becoming a victim of trauma.

3 Distortion of confucian ethics

3.1 The golden rule

The Golden Rule is one of the important concepts in Confucianism, and its core idea is "Do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you." This idea emphasizes that in our daily interactions, we should put ourselves in others' shoes, and such conduct can help us build a more harmonious society. This idea is distorted into a kind of moral blackmail in the torturous plot of "the crematorium of chasing wives". The heroine has to forgive the heroine in the plot, and if she doesn't, she will be labeled as inhuman and intolerant. This narrative pattern often causes intense controversy, where the heroine, after experiencing significant physical and mental trauma, is often forced to accept moral discipline in the name of the well-being of her children or to maintain the integrity of her family, and thus forgives the perpetrator. If she refuses to compromise, she will be stigmatized as "narrow-minded" and other groundless things. The deep pain endured by the heroine is systematically ignored in the pursuit of a happy ending, and her individual will is essentially reduced to an instrumental existence that advances the plot and fulfills the narrative of male redemption, ultimately falling into a double spiritual dilemma^[2].

3.2 The idea of chastity

The concept of chastity emphasizes the sexual devotion of women. Cheng Yi of the Song Dynasty proposed that "starving to death is a minor matter, but losing one's integrity is a major matter," and Zhu Xi further expounded it, gradually reinforcing the concept of chastity. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, influenced by the Neo-Confucianism of Cheng and Zhu, the concept of chastity reached its peak. The government vigorously commended chaste women, established chastity arches, and punished women who broke their chastity, often at the cost of their lives. From this, it can be seen that the concept of chastity imposes a great restraint on women's freedom, and in this sadistic narrative pattern, the traditional concept of chastity is brought up again and more stringent standards are imposed. The male protagonist, due to misunderstanding, inflicts violence on the female protagonist (such as disfigurement, causing her abortion, or forcibly removing organs to save others), resulting in irreversible physical trauma to her. However, this trauma is distorted

into a symbol of "impurity" in the male-dominated discourse system of the upper class, and through discipline it is internalized as the heroine's deep self-doubt, thereby undermining her psychological defense^[3]. At this point, the so-called "redemption" bestowed by the male protagonist, in the eyes of the traumatized female protagonist, is distorted into an acceptance and tolerance of her "flawed" body. In essence, this "redemption" has been distorted into a cruel ritual for the heroine to "wash away her stigma", with the abuser skillfully replaced by the "benefactor" who saves the heroine from the "moral dilemma". The absurd transformation of the role starkly exposes the heavy shackles imposed by the concept of chastity on the female body and mind, which not only deprives the female of her sovereignty over her own body, but also allows the male "redemption" to re-possess the female's damaged body. Ultimately, the ownership of the female body is completely ceded to the abuser in a conspiracy of violence and "forgiveness".

3.3 The idea of managing the family

The idea of managing the family, from the Book of Rites: The Great Learning, refers to the purpose of governing the family and making it harmonious and orderly through self-improvement and moral cultivation. As an important part of Confucian ethics, "managing the family" emphasizes family harmony and collaboration among members, forming a key bridge from self-cultivation to governing the country and pacifying the world. However, the so-called "complete family" constructed in the novel runs counter to this idea, and its realization often depends on the unilateral compromise made by the heroine as a mother, passively reaching a formal reconciliation with the perpetrator. Such texts often reinforce the heroine's obsession with a complete family: because of her poor family background and the loss of her closest relatives, she places her emotional attachment on her children, seeing them as the only bond to form a new family. When the absent male protagonist forcefully intervenes as a father, an illusory "perfect family" seems within reach. In this situation, the heroine's forgiveness of past hurts is presented as a "natural" choice, and she takes on the traditional duties of a good wife and mother. The narrative logic dissolves female subjectivity under the weight of family responsibilities, revealing the predicament of Confucian family ethics in the modern gender context. What is even more alarming is that this "harmony" is sustained only by women's self-sacrifice, while other members enjoy the fruits of their compromise peacefully. This fragile balance will eventually collapse, confirming that the family model of one-way giving cannot support the true ideal of "family harmony".

4 The collision of traditional and modern ideas

With the deepening of discussions on gender issues, there has been a significant shift in public acceptance of such texts. Early readers' comments mostly focused on the narrative of the male protagonist's "pursuit of his wife" awakening, while expectations for the female protagonist were concentrated on forbearance and forgiveness; When the protagonist shows remorse over a thousand miles, readers often interpret it as "earth-moving" affection and find emotional release through the plot of the perpetrator being punished. However, there is a fundamental change in the direction of the current commentary. Readers generally advocate for the heroine to be self-reliant and rebuild her life, and there is a significant increase in acceptance of the narrative arrangement of a new life after leaving the perpetrator. Female subjectivity is increasingly prominent, with a focus on the core returning to the heroine's own growth trajectory, demanding that the perpetrator bear the substantial cost rather than empty repentance, and supporting the heroine to completely break away from it to achieve self-restart.

This collective aesthetic shift profoundly reflects the reshaping of public perception by feminist thought. The awakening of female power gives contemporary women more subjective confidence: they reject the uniform template, can be both strong and flexible, break free from the shackles of external discipline, and pursue^[4] self-identity as the ultimate value. This spiritual unbinding is manifested both in the embrace of diverse aesthetics and in the rejection of moral coercion, with the core always being a self-cherished philosophy of life.

It is necessary to elaborate further that this narrative pattern itself has structural flaws. The perpetrator's violent acts are inherently unforgivable, but the text rationalizes them through romanticized rhetoric such as "distorted outpouring of unrequited love." When the narrative sugar-coating of "love" is stripped away, what is exposed is the never-disappearing gender oppression: the male and female protagonists are often in a huge socioeconomic position, and this inherent imbalance of power is destined that so-called reconciliation is still a continuation of the oppressive structure. Ultimately, women are forced to give up physical and volitional dominance in a deempowered state, and their complaints are buried in the closed loop of patriarchal narrative. The pattern is a unilateral abuse by the perpetrator to satisfy their violent pleasure and control.

5 Factors contributing to the generation of viral passwords

The popularity of the age-old sadomasochism phenomenon has given rise to a vast industrial chain (radio dramas, physical books, character background music, etc.), and capital and platforms keenly capture its traffic value and solidify

"somasochism" and "chasing wives" as replicable consumption symbols through algorithmic recommendations, tag-enhanced attributes, etc. Under this logic, women's pain and trauma are highly commercialized, and plots like "abortion" and "domestic violence" are repeatedly presented, which actually weakens or even dissolves the seriousness of female trauma and turns it into a traffic code for hit works. At the same time, the proliferation of homogenized content not only weakens society's realistic concern for the situation of women, but also leads to violent appropriation and truncation of Confucian ethical resources (such as the extreme distortion of hierarchy, courtesy, and family responsibility), intensifying the crisis of modernization transformation of traditional morality.

However, there are still significant gaps in the in-depth interpretation and analysis of this phenomenon in existing research:

(1) The complex motives and ethical dilemmas of the author community have not been fully interpreted: Authors, driven by platform incentive policies, are both bearers of market pressure and reader expectations and shapers of text ethics. The preference for male characters (the carrier of the fantasy of the elite), the logic of the suffering of female characters, and the choice of using "female competition" to enhance narrative tension together constitute the key factors contributing to the female crisis and ethical distortion, and the inner creative psychology and ethical sense of responsibility need to be explored in depth.

(2) The platform algorithm and capital logic rewrite the profit-making mechanism of ethics and morality needs to be systematically revealed: There is a lack of in-depth critical analysis of how algorithms systematically favor and precisely generalize "sadistic" patterns that contain specific distortive elements such as extreme male chauvinism and trauma desensitization, and how capital forces creators to compromise through traffic rewards.

This study aims to fill the gaps and reveal how authorial ethics, platform algorithmic logic, and capital manipulation work in synergy with the distortion of Confucian ethics and the production of the female crisis in somasochism.

6 Conclusion

The core of the "chasing wife crematorium" model lies in the instrumentalization distortion of Confucian ethics. Traditional ethical and moral resources, such as the order of hierarchy, male superiority and female inferiority, and forgiveness, have been radicalized and truncated, providing an inherent logical justification for the male protagonist to exert physical and mental violence, exercise absolute control, and ultimately obtain compulsory "forgiveness". This narrative logic is not a true adherence to ethics, but rather it is distorted into a script serving the consolidation of the patriarchal structure, giving the oppressive sexual relationship a superficial justification. The prevalence and proliferation of this pattern have deeply exposed the conspiracy of capital logic and platform mechanisms for gender power.

Capital highly commoditizes women's suffering and forces a large amount of homogeneous and extreme content to be produced through traffic rewards. Platform algorithms (system push, tag weighting) promote and solidify "sadistic" templates containing distorted ethical elements, leading to desensitization and normalization^[5] of classic traumatic plots such as "domestic violence" and "abortion". Under the combined effect of the two, women's real traumatic experiences are downgraded to mass-replicable consumer symbols, not only weakening society's real concern for women's predicaments, but also deeply alienating and distorting the core of traditional culture.

To break through such cultural and ethical dilemmas, we need multiple parties to act together:

(1) Platforms must strengthen their ethical responsibility and refuse to promote content related to violence and gender oppression; Improve the review mechanism for works and grade or restrict extremely distorted works.

(2) Creators need to strengthen their ethical awareness, be vigilant against their unconscious gender bias and violent appropriation of cultural resources, take on narrative ethical responsibility, abandon the use of female suffering as a plot driver, and explore an equal and healthy paradigm of intimate relationships.

(3) Readers should enhance their personal reading literacy, constantly cultivate the ability to identify the unreasonable existence in stereotyped narrative patterns, reject romanticizing and distorting violent acts, and promote the continuous optimization of the online literature creation ecosystem through rational consumption.

(4) Promote the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional cultural resources, critically inherit and develop resources such as Confucian ethics, discard the dross (patriarchy), carry forward the essence (benevolence, forbearing, etc.), and contribute to the construction of equal and benign modern ethics.

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