Sisterhood in Lisa See’s Historical Novels

Qiu-Fang DONG

College of Liberal Arts, Jinan University, Guangzhou, P.R. China

Department of English Teaching and Research, Guangdong AIB Polytechnic College, Guangzhou, P.R. China

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Abstract. Four of Lisa See’s historical novels: *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan, Peony in Love, Shanghai Girls* and *China Dolls* are all centered on female friendship. By exploring the complexity of female friendship within specific historical and social contexts, Lisa reveals that under the oppression of patriarchal institution and racism, women can build up sisterhood to unite and fight for better living circumstances. Even if sisterhood is greatly affected by women’s differences in class, ethnicity, and politics, Lisa stresses the significance of sisterhood in emancipating women and promoting social progress. Her writing itself is an act of constructing global sisterhood. She intends to write for Chinese women and contribute to bettering their lives, and yet her identity as a first-world writer confines her. While acknowledging the positivity of her writing, we shall not neglect its limitation.

1. Introduction

Among contemporary Chinese American women writers, Lisa See is particularly fond of writing sisterhood. Sisterhood is a recurring theme in her work. Her four historical novels *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan, Peony in Love, Shanghai Girls* and *China Dolls* are all centered on sisterhood. Since 1995, Lisa has already published 11 books and is becoming world-renown. She is greatly welcomed by common readers and gaining increasing popularity in the academic circle. Based on her four historical novels, this paper will focus on the theme of sisterhood and discuss the following questions: how does Lisa write sisterhood? What is the significance of sisterhood for women’s survival? What factors affect sisterhood? How do we evaluate Lisa’s attempt to build a global sisterhood?

2. The Complexity of Sisterhood

As one of the key terms of the contemporary feminist movement, “sisterhood” has been quite controversial. The term became popular in the second wave of the feminist movement (from the 1960s to the 1970s), when the focus of the feminist movement shifted from the initial fight for political rights to the elimination of gender differences. At that time, western white feminists generally believed that because of the common oppression of the patriarchal institution, all women could establish sisterhood that transcended class, race, and culture, and women should be united to fight against patriarchy. But this belief is widely criticized. Bell Hooks believes that "common oppression" [1] is a false and corrupt platform, because it disguises and mystifies the nature of women's complex social realities. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak points out sharply that western elitist women’s seemingly genuine concerns for Chinese women are actually not only unhelpful, but harmful. [2] The post-modern feminists in the third wave of feminism believe that there is no universal sisterhood beyond class, color, and race. Therefore, as a battle slogan, sisterhood once lost the spiritual power to unite women. Some feminists even believe that women can not really unite, and sisterhood is only Utopia.

However, this does not mean that scholars and writers do not like the idea of uniting women. It is essential to bond women but it should be accomplished on the basis of recognizing women’s differences in race, class and culture. For example, although Bell Hooks disagrees with western
As a Chinese-American female writer, Lisa fully exploits the dual perspective of cross-culturalism to explore the complexity of sisterhood in specific historical and social contexts. Unity and mutual assistance can improve women's living circumstances and bring spiritual comfort. At the same time, because women vary in history, class, ethnicity and other backgrounds, their relationships are not always smooth and sound.

2.1 The Affinity of Sisterhood

Since human beings entered the patriarchal society, women have always been subordinate to men. In the West, since ancient Greece, men have gradually begun to dominate women. In China, in the feudal society, women had to follow Three Obediences and Four Virtues which not only controlled their bodies but imprisoned and domesticated their spirits. In the United States where racial discrimination is prevalent, women of ethnic minority are under the dual oppression of race and gender. If they continue to be divided, there is no way to seek change. Therefore, women need to unite and support each other.

Snow Flower and the Secret Fan is Lisa See’s first historical novel. It tells the lifelong relationship between two women who have been “laotong” (contracted sisterhood for life) since girlhood. The two protagonists, Lily and Snow Flower, lived in Yongzhou County of Hunan Province in Qing Dynasty. In their county, women had the custom of binding their feet and did not go to work in fields. Thus they were heavily dependent on men financially and had a lower status both within the family and society. Many women lived a tragic life after marriage, either beaten by their husbands or had to shoulder too much housework. They needed to find ways to relieve their pain and seek healing. Men had their own concerns and worries and they could not or simply unwilling to help women. So the local women had the custom of binding into sisterhood, which provided both realistic help and spiritual comfort to each other. Lily and Snowflake made a vow to become “laotong” at the age of seven, promising to be faithful and helpful for the rest of their lives. In girlhood, they hanged out together very often and their lives were brightened by this special bondage. Both of them had their feet bound at 7 and had to stay indoors most of the time. They often did needlework together and shared joys and sorrows. When they could not meet, the two girls exchanged words through Nu Shu—a language created by the local women only for the communication among women. Even marriage did not change their intimate relation. Lily was married into a wealthy family and had numerous rules to learn and to obey; and Snow Flower’s marriage was quite unhappy. She was born well and quite literate and yet, due to the downfall of her family, she was married to a butcher. Every day she had too much housework to do and besides that, she suffered from the abuse of her husband and her mother-in-law. She aborted for several times. Her life was full of trauma and her communication with Lily through Nu Shu became her only comfort. Ever since Sigmund Freud, western psychologists have realized the significance of narration for healing trauma. Narration can help the patients to transfer the traumatic experience from unconsciousness to consciousness. They get a chance to inquire and understand the causes and connotations of the event. In the process of narration, the victim can reconstruct the event from his or her own perspective and regain meanings and values. Snow Flower wrote to Lily constantly, telling her tragic life and seeking meanings through their friendship. Lily kept on writing back to offer her suggestions and shared her own problems. The communication helped them a lot in healing trauma.

Peony in Love is adapted from a true story and it depicts the sisterhood among three women living in Qing Dynasty. The three wives of Wu Ren: Chen Tong, Tan Ze and Qian Yi were all enchanted by Tang Xianzu’s The Peony Pavilion. They collaborated on a commentary of The Peony Pavilion, which is believed to be the first literary criticism published by women in Chinese history. Peony (later changed her name to Chen Tong) was the leading heroine in this novel. Through reading and commenting on The Peony Pavilion, she developed friendship with different women. First of all, the invisible sisterhood between Peony and Du Linliang led Peony to begin to
ponder on the fate of women. As the only child of her parents, Peony was cherished by her rich and intellectual parents. They gave her adequate education and allowed her to read widely. She was especially obsessed with *The Peony Pavilion* and regarded Du Liniang as a confidant. Liniang was willing to sacrifice her life for true love, which touched Peony deeply. She also longed for love and freedom, and scared by the coming arranged marriage. Feeling no escape from destiny, Peony indulged herself into reading Liniang’s story and commenting on it. She got anorexia and died five days before her wedding. After death, Peony became a wandering hungry ghost, still obsessed with love and unfulfilled dreams. She lingered around Wu Ren’s resident. Her story actually paralleled that of Liniang. Liniang set her the example of dying for love and Peony followed her path without any hesitation. In the afterworld, Peony met other "lovesick maidens" who also died because of the obsession with *The Peony Pavilion*, such as Shang Xiaoling, Yu Erniang, Jin Fengdian, etc. These girls showed sympathy towards each other and became companions. However, for Peony, it was the friendship with the “Banana Garden Five” (five talented literary women) that made her aware of the limitations of her vision. Along the journey with those daring and creative writers, Peony found that "they did not write about butterflies and flowers—those things they could see in their gardens. They wrote about literature, art, politics, and what they saw and did on the outside....They bravely explored deep emotions, even when they were grim: the loneliness of a fisherman on a lake, the melancholy of a mother separated from her daughter, the despair of a girl living on the street. They had formed a sisterhood of friendship and writing, and then they built an intellectual and emotional community of women throughout the country through reading." [8] The contact with “Banana Garden Five” made Peony realize female writing could go beyond romantic love. It could also touch upon serious social issues and exert some kind of influence on society. She longed to give out her own voice. Her contact with the other two wives: Tan Ze and Qian Yi made her dream come true. They helped write down what Peony wished to note and successfully completed the commentary of *The Peony Pavilion*. At first the commentary was published under the name of Wu Ren. Even if Peony loved Wu Ren, she felt “the anger, disappointment and disillusionment of a woman whose voice has been taken away from her.” [9] This demonstrates that Peony had realized women’s identity was even more valuable than romantic love between men and women. It was Qian Yi who helped Peony regain her authorship. Qian Yi was extremely sympathetic towards this sister. She volunteered to ask Wu and Peony to hold a "marriage" which made Peony return to her "rightful place in society, in my family, and in the cosmos." [10] Qian Yi was the leading force in the publication of the three wives’ Commentary. Without her efforts, the contemporary readers may never have the opportunity to read this great work.

In *Shanghai Girls* [11] and *Chinese Dolls* [12], Lisa switches between China and the United States, trying to show that under the war, patriarchy and ethnic oppression, women from different classes and nationalities can be united to seek for survival. *Shanghai Girls* mainly tells the life experiences of two sisters, May and Pearl, in the two cities of Shanghai and San Francisco. They were born wealthy, and led an easy life. At the beginning of the story, they cared nothing but fun and merriment. And yet their lives were changed by two factors. First, their father lost in gambling and married them to the sons of a Chinese American who promised to help pay their father’s debt. With Japanese invading Hangzhou and Shanghai, they had to flee for life in America. They met Japanese on the way. Pearl was raped and May saved her life. Lisa depicts the cruelty of Japanese vividly and reveals the excruciation women suffered from war. Before landing on America, May and Pearl were detained on the Angel Island for more than four months. Due to racial discrimination, all Chinese would be carefully interrogated before they were permitted to enter America. The accommodation on the Island was terrible and they were tortured spiritually every day. It was worse that May had been pregnant. Without the useful suggestions and practical help from Pearl and other Chinese women, May would not have been able to give birth to a healthy baby. Their following life in San Francisco was not as good as they expected. What awaited them ahead were endless work and hardship. Besides racial discrimination, they suffered more than Chinese men, because men dominated women in the Chinese community. The head of their family, Old Man Louie, father-in-law of May and Pearl, controlled everything in the household. The sisters
united and negotiated with the old man, eventually winning the right to go out to work and keep some of their income. Although the family was discriminated against by the white in buying a house, employment and education, Pearl and May worked hard with their mother-in-law to create a clean and warm home for everyone.

*China Dolls* wrote the complicated friendship between three Asian American girls: Grace and Helen of Chinese origin and Ruby of Japanese descendant. They were from quite different background and yet all cherished the dream of living a happy and dignified life in America. Grace was the daughter of a family who made their living by doing laundry. She was gifted at dancing and dreamed of becoming a star one day. At 17 she ran away from home because her father kept beating her. Helen’s family was rich and yet she was not valued in the big compound. She had her own tragic story. Even though still young, she had lost her husband and son back in China during the Second World War. Before meeting Grace and Ruby, she idled in Chinatown and felt no joy every day. Ruby had a merry and fun nature and she wanted nothing but fun in life. She was rebellious to her parents for they required her to be loyal to the Japanese Emperor, but Ruby identified herself as an American. She was unwilling to be a traditional Japanese woman and resolutely opposed to the idea of male superiority. So she left her family to pursue her own dream. By chance the three girls met in Chinatown of San Francisco and initiated their journey of dancing together. Despite their different background, the dual oppression of patriarchal system and racism made the three girls naturally attached to each other. But their friendship went through ups and downs. After the outbreak of the Pearl Harbor Incident, Ruby was betrayed by Helen and she was sent to the Relocation Center in the desert and lived as a prisoner for 14 months with other innocent Japanese-Americans. Finally she was released and she forgave Helen after leaning her misfortune.

In these two novels of *Shanghai Girls* and *China Dolls*, Lisa See reconstructs the image of the second-generation Asian American women. Asian American women were often portrayed as the stereotypes of either “Lotus” or “Dragon Lady” in the mainstream American culture. But neither the weak and passive "Lotus" nor the sexy and evil "Dragon Lady" can truly reflect the Chinese or Japanese women. As early as the end of 19th century, Edith Maude Eaton had been trying to give a fair portrayal of Chinese men and women. Lisa See is following her path. They are working together with the male Chinese-American writers to restore the real life of Chinese in the United States, thus breaking the stereotypes and deconstruct mainstream narratives against minorities.

### 2.2 The Dissonance of Sisterhood

In China, there are some works that focus on the discord and rivalry between women, like the well-known *Jin Ping Mei*, *Qi Qie Cheng Qun* and *Jin Suo Ji*. The excessive description of the negative side of female relations seems to emphasize the limitations and backwardness of women. The famous American activist on women rights, Phyllis Chesler, published a book in 2001 named *Women’s Inhumanity to Women*. In this book, she reveals the dark side of women's interactions with a large number of historical and cultural facts. In her novels, Lisa does not simply stress the positive side of sisterhood, and she also explores factors which may hinder women being united.

In *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*, Lisa See tries to reveal how the patriarchal institution disintegrates Lily and Snow Flower’s friendship. The reason why Lily and Snow Flower broke up was that Lily internalized the standards of patriarchy and used them to judge Snow Flower. In the novel, the relationship between the two sisters was influenced by two opposite forces: Nu Shu representing the equal and free communication, and foot-binding symbolizing the suppression and domestication of women by patriarchy. For the whole life Lily battled between her true nature and the person society required her to be. Lily had her feet bound at 7 and the pain was unbearable. Her female relatives told her she must endure it because she would be repaid. A pair of perfectly-bound feet would guarantee her a higher social standing, prove her perseverance, show her obedience to the world, and satisfy her husband’s desires for tiny feet. From foot-binding, Lily learned the most important lesson "that we must obey for our own good." [4] Foot binding is an invisible shackle on the female body. Lee Bartky Sandra [15] used Foucault's micro-power to analyze the shaping of women’s bodies by social norms. She believed that the patriarchal society did not impose standards
on women in a mandatory way, but through the internalization of power to make women automatically obey. Lily consciously followed the instructions of the female elders, and got a pair of perfect feet, which helped her marry into a wealthy family. Soon after her marriage, Lily gave birth to two sons which secured her position in her husband’s family. She carefully served her in-laws and husband, and finally became the powerful "Mrs. Lu" in the county. She herself benefited from the patriarchal standards and thus she began to work hard to maintain those standards. She encouraged Snow Flower and other women in the village to have more sons and be more obedient to their husband and in-laws. Although her intention was good, because she wanted to help her sisters not be dismissed by the husband for failing to give birth to sons, but objectively, her encouragement further consolidated the dominance of patriarchy. According to American psychologists David H. Buss and Joshua Duntley, “women sustain and help to reproduce patriarchy, by systematically choosing men with more resources and by favoring sons over daughters.” [16] Snow Flower was married into a family of low class. Every day she had to bear a lot of housework, and yet she was constantly beaten by her husband and abused by her mother-in-law. She kept writing to Lily, hoping to get spiritual comfort. Lily, who had won her position through obedience, tried to persuade Snow Flower to strictly follow the social rules imposed on women. She questioned Snow Flower why she would not work harder to please her husband and mother-in-law. But as for Snow Flower’s circumstances, no matter how hard she tried, her husband and mother-in-law were still mean and treated her badly. Snow Flower could not find comfort from Lily and she turned to three "sworn sisters" from her village for help. They offered sincere regards to her and made her life easier. Lily mistakenly thought that Snow Flower had deserted her. In a ceremony, Lily publicly accused the betrayal of Snow Flower and revealed some of Snow Flower’s secrets, making Snow Flower defamed. In some sense it is fair to say that Lily had become a part of the ruling patriarchy and she was using her newly-gained power to suppress her own sister. After Snow Flower died tragically, Lily realized her mistake and regretted every day for the rest of her life because she actually treasured her sisterhood with Snow Flower deeply. Lily mistakenly thought that Snow Flower had deserted her. In a ceremony, Lily publicly accused the betrayal of Snow Flower and revealed some of Snow Flower’s secrets, making Snow Flower defamed. In some sense it is fair to say that Lily had become a part of the ruling patriarchy and she was using her newly-gained power to suppress her own sister. After Snow Flower died tragically, Lily realized her mistake and regretted every day for the rest of her life because she actually treasured her sisterhood with Snow Flower deeply. Snow Flower is the victim of patriarchal society, and Lily is no exception. She once considered Snow Flower as her spiritual home, but in the end she personally killed the friendship between them.

Lisa See explores the complexity of female friendship in her novels. On the one hand, she emphasizes the significance of sisterhood for uniting women and fighting against racial and gender discrimination. On the other hand, she also discusses factors which lead women to separation. This demonstrates Lisa’s deep concerns for the interests of women.

3. The Paradox of Global Sisterhood

As a Chinese American female writer, Lisa has always been interested in telling stories of Chinese women in different historical contexts. Through writing, Lisa tries to build a global Chinese sisterhood beyond national boundaries. However, as a Chinese descendant who has only one-eighth of the bloodline, can Lisa really speak on behalf of Chinese women? How should we view her writing of global sisterhood? We can start with the analysis of the use of "Chinese elements" in her novels.

Lisa has repeatedly written on foot-binding in several novels. In Snow Flower and the Secret Fan, Lisa uses a chapter to describe how the elder women in Lily’s family bind Lily and her cousin’s feet. Lisa introduces in detail what preparations should be made before the binding, how to wrap the feet, and the standards of perfect feet. In order to fully expose the cruelty of foot-binding, Lisa makes Lily to describe the pain of foot-binding in the first person. She vividly portrays how Lily’s younger sister died from the infection in foot-binding. In Peony in Love, Lisa writes how Peony carefully tended his three-inch Golden-Lotus feet every day. The cruel foot-binding process in Snow Flower and the Secret Fan reappears in this novel. When Peony was 16 years old, she assisted her mother to bind her cousin’s feet. Even after becoming a ghost, she decided to help Qian Yi to bind feet to raise her social standing. Foot-binding has always been considered as a cruel and corrupt Chinese custom. It has been banned since early 20th century and completely abolished after 1949. But Lisa still deliberately chooses foot-binding as her writing material and repeatedly
elaborates it in several novels, which reflects her intention of catering to western readers. Because for many westerners, even if foot-binding is barbaric like a heretical cult, there are some mysteries in it and they are eager to learn more. [17]

It is true that in Peony in Love, Lisa See helps English readers learn about the Commentary of Wu Ren’s three wives, the first literary criticism by women in China. It sure promotes the achievements of Chinese women. However, in this novel, Lisa not only completely subverts the relationship of the three wives, but writes too much about the afterworld in Chinese culture, which turns a loving and harmonious historical event into a thrilling legend. In the preface of the Commentary on The Peony Pavilion by the three wives, Wu Ren explained how the book came into being. Chen Tong was Wu Ren’s fiancée. She was extremely fond of The Peony Pavilion, and made a lot of creative and brilliant commentaries on it. But unfortunately, she died days before her marriage. Wu Ren got her commentary from her wet nurse. Later Wu Ren married Tan Ze, who took a special liking for Chen Tong’s commentary. She not only recited it, but imitated it so well that people could hardly tell the differences. It was a pity that Tan Ze also died early. After more than a decade, Wu married Qian Yi. Although Qian Yi was not as learned as the first two wives, she was diligent and eager to learn. She loved the commentary of the two sisters. She not only compiled the commentary, added personal comments, but also sold her gold hair pin to raise funds to publish the commentary. The final published version is a joint effort of the three sisters and it expresses their thoughts on love and affection. Although the three sisters are of different ages and origins, their aesthetic tastes are strikingly similar. The sisterhood between them is crystallized by the publication of the commentary and remains in the annals of history forever. But in Peony in Love, the image and relationship of the three sisters were completely changed. Chen Tong (Peony) narrated the whole story. Lisa See explained in the epilogue of Peony in Love that why she wrote like this: “At first I thought I would tell each wife's story, one right after another, but I longed for one voice that would have the strength to carry the whole story. One morning I woke up and knew that the first wife had to come back as a ghost. Not only would I have a single voice to carry me through, but Peony’s experiences could parallel Liniang's in The Peony Pavilion.”[18] Therefore, the story is centered on Chen Tong and she controlled the fate of the other two wives. After Chen Tong’s death, she became a hungry ghost, lingering around the Wu family. Tan Ze was portrayed as a lazy, ignorant, and snobbish figure. She did not love Wu Ren and even was unwilling to share the room with Wu Ren. Chen Tong used the power of ghosts to control the body of Tan Ze to satisfy Wu Ren. Although Tan Ze did not like reading and writing, Chen Tong forced her to complete the commentary. The hard work exhausted Tan Ze and she died of overwork. Chen Tong felt regretful both for Tan Ze and for Wu Ren and she was determined to find another suitable wife for Wu Ren. Qian Yi was the daughter of a poor farmer and was quite clever. Chen Tong believed this little girl was good enough, and she decided to transform her to make her eligible for Wu Ren. She bound her feet, taught her to read and write, and finally married her to Wu Ren. All of this was accomplished successfully because Chen Tong was a ghost of strong power. Lisa’s story is full of imagination and fantasy, but it completely distorts the loving relations of the three sisters in history. It overemphasizes Chen Tong's dominant role: she loved Wu Ren, so she transformed Tan Ze and Qian Yi to cater for him; she wanted her commentary to be finished and published, so she made best use of Tan Ze and Qian Yi. The writer portrays Chen Tong as a selfish and powerful woman. In history, Tan Ze and Qian Yi wrote the commentary on The Peony Pavilion simply out of love for literature, but in Lisa’s novel, their writings were just the unfulfilled wish of Chen Tong.

In Peony in Love, Lisa introduces a lot of Chinese customs concerning illness and death, which are often irrelevant to the central theme of female writing. For example, when the three wives were ill, their families not only invited a real doctor to prescribe a variety of Chinese medicine, but also asked a Taoist to wield the sword to drive away the evil spirits and ghosts. The scene when Chen Tong died was most scaring and shocking. When she was still breathing, her family dressed her up and put her in the courtyard in a freezing winter night, just because they need follow the custom of never letting an unmarried daughter dying in the household. After Chen Tong’s death, she passed through the Weighing Bridge, the Bad Dogs Village and the Mirror of Retribution in the afterworld,
but unfortunately became a hungry ghost for losing her tablet. Lisa vividly describes how Peony had to fight for food during the Festival of Hungry Ghost, and how she got used to the new life in the afterworld. In the epilogue of her several novels, Lisa explains that many of her writing materials about China are dug out from books written by westerners because she herself cannot read Chinese. Many of the customs she includes in her novels are unknown even to Chinese. In one interview, Lisa mentioned that readers from different parts of the world wrote to her, telling her that they learned a lot about Chinese history and culture by reading her novels. However, readers should be aware that Lisa’s narration is a selective presentation. She may have chosen something exotic in Chinese culture to impress the readers. But it will be unwise to believe whatever she writes as typical and real.

From the above analysis, we can see that Lisa’s writing on sisterhood shows a contradiction. On the one hand, she is very much concerned with the fate of Chinese women. She tries to expose the gender, ethnicity and class oppression they are subjected to, calls for social change, and promotes women’s liberation. On the other hand, when writing the Chinese story, she cannot avoid the perspective of a first-world writer. She overemphasizes the patriarchal oppression, and constantly inserts mysterious and backward Chinese elements which are often irrelevant to the central theme. The reason why such a contradiction exists lies in the fact that Lisa is a Chinese descendant growing up in America. Although Lisa has only one-eighth of Chinese bloodline, she identifies herself as a Chinese. She is concerned with the gender and racial problems within the Chinese-American community. She uses her writing as a kind of weapon to tackle those problems. So in Shanghai Girls and China Dolls, she gives a real portrayal of the dual marginal status of Asian American women. However, in many parts of the Liu Hulan trilogy, Snow Flower and the Secret Fan and Peony in Love, Lisa intentionally chooses exotic and backward materials to appeal to western readers. She may have the good intention of deconstructing the western stereotypes of Asian American women, but in her writing, she constructs a new type of stereotype, unconsciously falling into the trap of the binary opposition that she originally hopes to break.

4. Conclusion

Lisa explores issues on gender, race and class by writing on sisterhood in different historical contexts. Her emphasis on sisterhood is actually a kind of “strategic essentialism” advocated by Spivak. [19] On the basis of acknowledging the differences, she hopes to integrate women to fight for changes. As Bell Hooks states: “We do not need to eradicate difference to feel solidarity. We do not need to share common oppression to fight equally to end oppression. We do not need anti-male sentiments to bond us together. So great is the wealth of experience, culture, and ideas we have to share with one another. We can be sisters united by shared interests and beliefs, united in our appreciation for diversity, united in our struggle to end sexist oppression, united in political solidarity.” [20] At present, racial and gender problems are far from being solved on a global scale. By writing on sisterhood, Lisa is making her own contributions on calling people to respect differences, get united and promote women’s liberation.

Notes

1) Three Obediences and Four Virtues are believed to be the Confucian ethics imposed upon women living in the feudal society of China. Three Obediences mean that a woman should be obedient to her father before marriage, to her husband after marriage, and to her son after her husband’s death. Four Virtues mean that a woman should have the virtues of morality, proper speech, modest manner, and diligent work.

2) “Dragon Lady” and “Lotus” are both characters played by Anna May Wong, the first Chinese actress in Hollywood, in the movies of “Daughter of the Dragon, Paramount (1931) and “The Death of the Sea” (The Toll of the Sea, Metro, 1922). "Dragon Lady" is sexy and yet cruel, and "Lotus" is weak and passive, waiting for the redemption of white men. The images of these two Chinese
women were once deeply rooted in the mainstream society of the United States, satisfying the various

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