

Female Romance in Ancient and Modern Chinese Society

Chih-Hui Fang

Department of Foreign
Languages and Literature, Asia University

Xiang-Ning Zhang

Ming Dao High School

Abstract

Everyone's already wearing a mask in any case; it's just that the mask's an invisible one, unless you're already out, but then out people wear the out mask.¹

Just as we designate homosexuals as a special group stigmatized through being in the "closet," lesbians in Taiwan nowadays have been and are, in the same way, frequently oppressed by conventional society. People attempt to police homosexuality through the law, education, health, etc. For example, the law does not allow homosexual marriage, or to allow homosexuals to adopt children. In addition, the media's reports provide a false image of homosexuality.

In this article, I will not only provide an overview of lesbian history in Taiwan, but will also address the issue of "identities" in different eras. The first section will focus primarily on the history of homosexuality in ancient Chinese culture, in particular male prostitution, male concubines, the vogue of "Xiang Gong" (相公) and so on which prove the lack of lesbianism in ancient Chinese history. I will also examine homosexual material in some literary texts. The second section will discuss queer discourses and the development of Taiwanese lesbianism from 1990s to 2000, which is the crucial era in Taiwanese lesbian movements. Through an analysis of the past and present, we

¹ Fran Martin, "Surface Tensions: Reading Productions of Tongzhi in Contemporary Taiwan," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 6:1 (2000): 65.

may understand more fully the lesbian situation, and thus look to the future of lesbian in Taiwan.

Keywords: Female Romance, Lesbianism, Ancient Chinese Society, Male Homosexuality, Taiwan

中國古代與現代社會下的女性情誼

房智慧

亞洲大學大學應用外語系

張湘寧

明道高中

摘要

Fran Martin 曾經提到：「每個人在不同的場合都已經戴著一個面具了，只是這個面具是隱形的。除非你已經出櫃了，但雖已出櫃，仍戴著出櫃的面具。」「同性戀」這個詞其實在古代的中國社會並不存在，直至二十世紀這詞彙才從西方介紹引進，但這並不表示同性戀行為在古代的中國是不存在著。

即使在現代台灣社會中，女同志還是遭受到傳統思想的種種壓迫，女女之間的感情糾結則是透過另一種的方式存在著，那就是女性情誼。本文章將討論以男同性戀為中心的中國古代社會裡，女同志始終是沒有聲音，不被重視的一群人。第二部分將主要探討中國社會下的女性情誼現象，其實是中國傳統社會下女同性戀的另一種含蓄感情的表達方式，並回顧西方 17 至 20 世紀的女性情誼歷史。

關鍵字：女性情誼、女同志、古代中國社會、男同志、台灣

I. Lesbians as an Invisible Group In Ancient Chinese Society

“Homosexuality” was defined in western society in the early 20th century. This approach was subsequently adapted by Taiwanese homosexual movements today. Because of the introduction of this western paradigm, people in Taiwan have begun to think about issues of sexuality, women’s status and racial problems. But before the introduction of the term “homosexuality,” what were the attitudes towards homosexual behavior or sexuality both in ancient Chinese society? Was there any homosexual behavior at that period of time? If so, what are the differences between Chinese and Western notions of homosexuality?

According to Judith Butler, sex represents the biological sex (male/female), and gender represents construction (masculine/feminine).² Both sex and gender are included within the notion of sexuality which implies not only the biological and social terms but also the various interactions between individual and the community.³ The definition of homosexuality, particularly in Chinese culture, cannot be limited merely to sexual experience; instead, based on the historical account, it must address a broader field which includes intimate friendships between heterosexual and homosexual women. The intimate friendship of same-sex love has a significant role in Chinese homosexual history. For instance, Bret Hinsch, in *Passion of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China*, maintains that, as opposed to the essentialism of the western theoretical approach, ancient Chinese cultures regarded homosexual behavior as a sort of social interaction and power relation⁴ - ruler/being-ruled and either/or. He also defines Chinese homosexuality using David Greenberg’s division of four

² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge Press, 1990).

³ There are various explanations and translations of sexuality in Taiwan. For instance, Da-chun Yiang, in *Foucault*, translates this word as “Xing Yu” (sexual desire). Xiao-hong Chang, in *Queer Desire: Gender and Sexuality*, translates it as “Xing Yu Qu Xiang” (the choice of sexual desire). “Xing Gan” (sexy) and “Xing Zhuang Tai” (sexual situation) are also used in other books.

⁴ Bret Hinsch, *Passion of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China* (LA: University of California Press, 1990) 7-8.

categories: trans-generational homosexuality; trans-gender homosexuality; class-structured homosexuality; and egalitarian homosexuality. Trans-generational homosexuality refers to the sexual roles differentiated by age and social status which means the elder partner usually takes the active role, and the younger one the passive role. Trans-gender homosexuality refers to sexual relationships which employ the formal categories of masculinity and femininity.

Trans-gender homosexuality often occurred in ancient Chinese society amongst eunuchs who served the powerful emperors, male actors who played female roles, and some men who preferred female identity. Class-structured homosexuality occurred in most periods of Chinese history. Based on the division of different social class, the wealthy people could purchase sexual services from other men of lower status. Favoritism exemplified the custom of lower-status men accepting material support from those of higher status. As for egalitarian homosexuality, the formations of active/passive roles and social status do not exist. Egalitarian homosexuality is frequent among adolescents, as well as in societies with strict segregation with reference to age and gender. Trans-generational and class-structured homosexuality can be adapted in the “shu sheng” (intellectual 書生) and “shu tong” (page boy 書僮)⁵ relationship, or Xiang Gong (相公). As for trans-gender homosexuality, “huan guan” (宦官)(eunuch)⁶ and “male actor” were included in this category, representing the power relation with the upper class and the king.

At many points in ancient China, homosexuality was widely accepted and even “modified social conventions and spurred artistic creation.”⁷ Because homosexual behavior was seldom condemned by the Chinese society, many Chinese men, especially in the upper classes, experienced both heterosexuality and homosexuality during their lives.⁸

⁵ The term *shu sheng* refers to “intellectual,” and *shu tong* means “page boy.” In ancient China, upper and middle class families would employ a servant boy for their male students while attending a private school. The page boy took care of everything in their master’s daily life.

⁶ Eunuch.

⁷ Hinsch, *Passion of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China* 4.

⁸ Hinsch 2.

As early western travelers explored China, they were shocked by the open custom and deep roots of homosexual behavior within Chinese culture:

When western travelers first described Chinese society to their fellow Europeans they lavished ecstatic praise on many aspects of Chinese culture, including efficient government administration, awe-inspiring public works, and the opulent and sophisticated life-styles of the upper classes. Early European commentators even added Chinese moral values to their idealistic panegyric. But one aspect of Chinese society received strident condemnation and scorn from these first adventurers: homosexuality. For them, the popularity of “the abominable vice of sodomy” was an unforgivable flaw in an otherwise admirable society.⁹

For instance, a Jesuit missionary, Matteo Ricci, wrote that Beijing streets are filled with “boys got up like prostitutes. And there are people who buy these boys and teach them to play music, sing and dance. And then, gallantly dressed and made up with rouge like women these miserable men are initiated into this terrible vice.”¹⁰ Friar Gaspar de Cruz portrayed China as a new Sodom.¹¹

Unlike Western society, which considers male homosexuality and lesbianism as related, the ancient Chinese regarded homosexuality as solely a male domain. There are few documentary sources concerning lesbian friendships because Chinese literature was largely written by men and concerned only with men. However, male homosexuality in ancient China emphasized more one man’s tendencies and preferences towards another man. This was to do with social power, not sexuality. If an emperor had sexual or emotional bonds with other men, he would call them his “favorites” (*Chong* 寵), a political term rather than a sexual one.

In the Zhou dynasty (1122-256 B.C.), male homosexuality largely

⁹ Hinsch 1.

¹⁰ Jonathan D. Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (New York: Penguin Books 1984) 220.

¹¹ Hinsch 2.

existed in the upper classes. At that period of time, marriage was the bonding of two lineage groups rather than the romantic union of two individuals. After the marriage, it was quite common for a husband to look for romantic love and satisfying sex. A married man, in this kinship-structured society, did not encounter contradictions between heterosexual marriage and homosexual romance. One of the earliest poetic anthologies in Chinese history, *The Classic of Odes (Shi Jing)*, often refers in ambiguous terms to male homosexual love. For instance, Zhao Yi, among the literati in Qin dynasty, indicates that the term *mei ren*¹² (a beautiful person), frequently used in poetic anthologies, actually refers to a handsome man.

There is a *mei ren*,
Clear, bright, and handsome.
Unexpectedly we meet,
Fitting my desire...

How splendid he was!
Yes, he met me between the hills of Nao.
Our chariots side by side we chased two boars.
He bowed to me and said I was very nimble.

How strong he was!
Yes, he met me on the road at Nao.
Side by side we chased two stags.
He bowed to me and said "well done."

How magnificent he was!
Yes, he met me on the south slopes of Nao.
Side by side we chased two wolves.
He bowed to me and said "that was good."¹³

In another poem, an intimate comradeship is expressed between two virile warriors:

¹² *Mei ren* meant the beauty of two sexes. But many scholars have read *Mei Ren* as praise in the pursuit of heterosexual romantic love.

¹³ *The Book of Songs*, ed. Joseph Allen, trans. Arthur Waley (New York: Pub Group West Press, 1996) 292.

How can you say that you have no clothes?
 I will share mine with you;
 The king raises his army, we put in order our
 Dagger axes and *mao* lances;
 I will have the same enemies as you...

How can you say that you have no clothes?
 I will share my skirts with you;
 The king raises his army;
 We put in order our mail-coats and sharp weapons;
 Together with you I will march.¹⁴

The above lyric depicts the mutual admiration of two athletic noblemen. Many poems in the collection illustrate men admiring their peers openly. This loving atmosphere between two men is common in the Zhou dynasty.

Following the Zhou dynasty, the Han dynasty's (206 B.C. to A.D.220) conception of sexuality did not alter enormously. Many historical documents record the Han emperors' bisexuality. In addition to their wives, these emperors would have male concubines (*Ning Xing*). Some male concubines would become the emperors' favorites, receiving huge rewards and enjoying great privileges. The more love the emperor expressed for the concubine, the greater the concubine's political influence.

The Tang dynasty, founded A.D. 618, was prosperous for homosexuality. Its culture fused native Chinese and Western arts and customs. This mingling of cultures meant a profoundly sophisticated society. A new term, *Ji Jian*, emerged to describe homosexuality. Like Western sources which aligned with bestiality, *Ji Jian* linked animal and anal sexuality. *Ji* means chicken. According to Qing scholar Yuan Mei, *Ji* originally implied a female prostitute and a man being like a woman. The latter refers to male passive homosexuality. *Jian*, in Chinese character, is composed of three featured women seated together. It not only means private but also implies secretiveness and illicitness. Some medical and legal authorities make reference to *Ji Jian* (anal

¹⁴ Hinsch 17-18.

intercourse). For example, *The Washing Away of Wrongs (Xi Yuan Lu)*, the world's oldest work on forensic medicine, has detailed observations on anal rape. It stated that, "Examine the anus in question for broadness and looseness. A lack of tightness and constriction is the condition resulting from sodomy over an extended period... Examine the opening of the alimentary canal. If the inside is red and swollen, there has been successful sodomy."¹⁵

In A.D.1264, the Muslim Mongols invaded China and established the Yuan dynasty which lasted 88 years. Prior to the conquest of China, adultery and homosexuality resulted in the death penalty according to the Mongolian law code *Great Yassa*. The prohibition of homosexuality reveals that homosexual behavior was illegal in Muslim doctrine. Despite their strict control of China, they did have much influence on the Chinese custom of male homosexuality. After the Yuan dynasty, the Ming dynasty extended homosexual life into a wider range of regions and classes. The cut sleeves and half-eaten peaches were viewed as a vogue not only in northern areas but also in the southeast of China. Having male lovers was very popular in the provinces of Fujian and Guangdong. A form of ceremonial marriage validated homosexual relationships between men. Two men would vow before God, the older referred to as adoptive older brother (*Qixiong* 契兄) and the younger as adoptive younger brother (*Qidi* 契弟). *Qi* means "a written contract or agreement,"¹⁶ implying two men in contract, intimate friendship, and adoption. The ceremony was complex:

They sacrifice a carp, a rooster, and a duck. They then exchange their exact times of birth, smear each other's mouths with the blood of the victims, and swear eternal loyalty to each other. The ceremony concludes with feasting on the sacrificial victims. Afterwards they address each other as older brother (*xiong*) and younger brother (*di*).¹⁷

¹⁵ Hinsch, 92-93. The quotation is originally from Tzou Sung. *The Washing Away of Wrongs: Forensic Medicine in Thirteenth-Century China*, trans. Brian E. Mcknight (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies Press, 1981).

¹⁶ Hinsch, 131.

¹⁷ Hinsch, 131-32.

With the ambiguous components and terminology in the ritual, the Fujianese custom of male marriage demonstrates the prosperity of male homosexuality.

In the Ming dynasty, open sexual expression and erotic literature blossomed. It was not until the Qing dynasty (1644-1912) that the tradition of male bonding came to an end. The Qing dynasty strictly regulated male homosexuality that had already rooted the foundations of Chinese society for centuries. Since then, homosexual rape has been increasingly regulated by a variety of laws, condemning it as a crime and as an ethical degeneracy.¹⁸ There are various punishments of homosexual rape under the law. Examining from Ming's chaos, the Qing formulated various codes that opposed all forms of crimes in relation to sexuality as a way of strengthening the traditional Confucian ideology.

In the past, same-sex desire was ambiguously referenced to lesbianism that was never criticized or condemned. Zhou Hau-shan notes that the characteristic of traditional Chinese society was based on the clan relationship rather than individualism. When a child was born, he/she had to circle around ethical relationship, and "family" became the most significant one. Everyone had his/her own status – father versus son, emperor versus servant, brother versus sister, mother versus daughter, etc. Same-sex love was allowed if not against the responsibility of reproduction. The Chinese culture consisted of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, none of which regarded sex as shameful, nor did they think homosexual behavior was a crime of perversion. Unlike western conceptions which punished homosexuals

¹⁸ Several Western moralists referred to Chinese homosexual rape as ethical degeneracy. John Barrow (1764-1848) records his outrage about the homosexual conditions flourishing amongst Chinese officers:

The commission of this detestable and unnatural act is attended with so little sense of shame, or feelings of delicacy, that many of the first officers of the state seemed to make no hesitation in publicly avowing it. Each of these officers is constantly attended by his pipe-bearer, who is generally a handsome boy, from fourteen to eighteen years of age, and is always well dressed.

John Barrow, *Travels in China* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies 1804) 100-02.

by putting them to death, homosexuals in men in the ancient Chinese dynasties had more freedom without restrictive regulations from the law.¹⁹

However, there are few documentary sources concerning lesbian friendships because Chinese literature was largely written by men and concerned only with men. However, it does not mean that the lesbian behavior did not exist but lurked in the shadow of Chinese society. Male homosexuality in ancient China mainly focused on man's tendencies and preferences towards another man. This was to do with social power, not sexuality. If an emperor had sexual or emotional bonds with other men, he would call them his "favorites" (*Chong* 寵), a political term rather than a sexual one.

II. Male Homosexuality in Ancient Chinese Literary Texts

It is through genres such as poetry, opera, novel, prose, and mythology that the subject of male homosexual desire is revealed. Chinese literature depicting homosexuality, according to Mao Feng, is the most ancient in world literary history.²⁰ From the Shang and Zhou Dynasties, it persists for nearly three thousand years up until late Qing Dynasty. However, male homosexual love was frequently depicted and considered as normal in ancient Chinese literature rather than females. The content of the text usually describes two kinds of story - two men who love each other, either willingly or through exploitation. The former has been praised as a sacred sentiment, while the latter is more ambiguous.

Historically, many anecdotes portray famous people with homosexual desires, and some cases occur in the relationship between emperor and eunuch. *Ning Hsing Lieh Chuan* and *Huan Kuan Lieh Chuan* are two history books written in biographical style, concerned with emperors' love for their eunuchs. However, these two books merely describe homosexual desire in certain groups.

It is not until the emergence of folk literature that the description

¹⁹ *Chinese Tongzhi Conference* (1998) 54.

²⁰ Mao Feng, "The Cut Sleeve: Homosexual Love in *Hung Lou Meng* and *Pin Hua Bao Jian*," *Lien Ho Wen Hsueh*, 13: 4 (1997) 50.

of homosexual life amongst common people emerges. According to Kuo Li Cheng, before the Han Dynasty, homosexuality was popular amongst the aristocracy, and it was not until the Wei Chin period that it had a more public space in society.²¹ For instance, Tao Ku's *Ching Yi Lu* in the Sung Dynasty and Hsu Ke's *Ching Pei Lei Chao* in the Qing Dynasty portray the custom of male prostitutes in southern China. In some novels of the last three hundred years, *Chin Pin Mei*, *Pin Hua Bao Jian*, and *Hung Lou Meng*²², homosexual behavior is tolerated. Books with anecdotes, manuscripts, and erotic pictures were handed down to assist the analysis of male homosexual subjectivity and sexual experience amongst monks, intellectuals, teachers, and students. As for erotic pictures, *Mi His Tu Kao* and *Chung Kuo Ku Tai Fang Nei Kao*, written by Kao Lo Pei, give a thorough review of pornographic pictures. These pictures include two women with a man or same-sex people embracing naked. They also include a trans-generational homosexuality with old men and children (paedophilia in western term).

However, homosexual behavior may not have been punished severely in ancient Chinese society, but it was censured to some degree.²³ Vivien W. Ng, in her research on rape law in the Qing Dynasty, discovered that homosexual behavior was restrained in comparison with the normal sexual role.²⁴ The sodomy law in 1740 punished anal sex between two men more severely than women's loss

²¹ Wu, *From The Queer Space to Educational Space* 170.

²² *Hung Lou Meng*, written by Tsao Hsueh Chin (1715-1763), contains homosexual scenes in some chapters. Tsao Hsueh Chin was born to an illustrious and influential family. After the conflict concerning the feudal system occurred, his family's property was expropriated by the emperor. Comprehending the perspective of real society, as well as the feudal system, Tsao Hsueh Chin tried to indicate his resistance towards the feudal system through positioning Chia Pao Yu, one of the protagonists in *Hong Lou Meng (Dream of the Red Chamber)*, with heterosexual and homosexual desires. Homosexual love in the book also contains issues of political and class problems. The book has one hundred and twenty chapters. The first eighty chapters are written by Tsao Hsueh Chin; the other forty chapters were authored by other people.

²³ Yung Mei Tsai and Chiang Chi Fang, "Male Homosexuality in Chinese History," *Social View of Sexuality* (Taipei: Chu Liu Press, 1987) 233-251.

²⁴ Vivien W. Ng., "Ideology and Sexuality: Rape Laws in Qing China," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 46:1(1987, February) 57-69.

of chastity. Homophobia was more intense in the Qing Dynasty.

Paradoxically, Chinese culture has sustained a more tolerant and forgiving attitude towards homosexual behavior. Hence, what is the suitable definition of homosexuality in ancient Chinese culture? How, and in what way, is the notion of homosexuality enacted within Chinese society? The definition of homosexuality in Chinese culture represents a broad field, fusing both sentimental love and sexual intercourse. Because of the lack of the term “homosexual” or “homosexuality” in ancient China, the behavior of men-loving-men is actually incompatible with the notion of homosexuality in the modern era: “‘homosexuality’ refers to a variety of notions of sex, love, and sexual fondness. Due to its abundant meanings, ‘homosexuality’ in the history cannot only be limited in one absolute category- either ‘love’ or ‘sex’ relationship.”²⁵ This implies that the subject of sexual intercourse does not appear explicitly in Chinese literature, rather taking a more implicit and indirect form.²⁶ The element of sentiment plays a significant part in Chinese homosexuality as a result of the patriarchy which limits the legitimacy of homosexual behavior. The power relation, furthermore, is disguised beneath same-sex love.

III. Female Romance as an Another Form of Lesbianism in Chinese Society

The traditional role of a woman in a family setting has been that of someone who shall always stay at home and do the childbearing and domestic work. Such constraints not only let women lose their self-

²⁵ Wu, *From The Queer Space to Educational Space* 176.

²⁶ For instance, *Chan Kuo Tse* illustrates the love story between two emperors, An Ling Chun and Lung Yang Chun:

Sh jih fan hua tzu, An Ling Yu Lung Yang, Yao Yao Tao Li Hua, Cho Cho Yu Huei Kuang... Yuan Wei Shuang Fei Niao, Pi Yi Kung Hsiang Hsiang, Tan Ching Chu Ming Shih, Yung Shih Pu Hsiang Wang.

(Before they were two emperors, An Ling Chun and Lung Yang Chun had wished they were two birds, flying in the sky together. The vow led them cherish the memory of each other eternally.)

A spiritual intimacy between men usually occurs in the relationship between two students, a master and slave, intellectuals, or kings.

cognition but lead them to be limited by both the family and society. Just as Simone de Beauvoir's assertion in *The Second Sex*²⁷, "One is not born a woman, one becomes one." Women are not born, they are what they are because society molds them so. Beauvoir describes the way in which a woman is born, and exists physically as a woman, but it is not the physical state that conducts women's destiny as a woman. It is rather that a woman is constructed as a "woman" and the passive acceptance of the roles that are assigned to them by society. Creating friendship among women is of vital importance to women's lives. Since the eighteenth century, issues concerning independence and individuality in women have been fully developed. Friendships allow men and women to have the opportunity to develop their relationships according to their sexual preference.

Romantic friendship²⁸ describes a relationship in which two women spend most of their time together and share most aspects of their lives with each other. Women's roles should not be limited by society. Women's friendships should be assumed to be as important as kinship ties. For instance, the account between Ruth and Naomi who were related by marriage in the Old Testament illustrates the strength of female kinship²⁹. The term "romantic friendship" emerged in the eighteenth century, to signify a relationship that is noble and virtuous in every way and an effusion of spirits. The great Greek female poet

²⁷ Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. New York: Knopf, 1953.

²⁸ In Japan, the term *Yuri* (百合) was originated from Bungaku Itō, editor of *Barazoku*, in 1976. It is a magazine geared primarily towards gay men in reference to female readers in the title of a column of letters called *Yurizoku no heya*. In 2009, the term *Yuri* is used in Japan to mean the depiction of attraction between women (whether sexual or romantic; explicit or implied) and was then gradually known as the construction of Girls' Love. *Yuri* focuses either on the sexual or the emotional aspects of the relationship in women, or both, the latter of which sometimes being called *shōjo-ai* by the west. For instance, in North America, *Yuri* has initially been used to describe non-sexual relationships between women. Therefore, not only the western but the eastern cultures esteem women's romantic friendships as another form of lesbianism.

²⁹ Faderman, Lillian. *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*. London: The Women's Press, 1985.

Sappho (630B.C) was one of the first to concretize the idea of female romance; many of her poems speak of infatuations and love for females, her poetry centers on passion and love for various personages and all genders.³⁰ Not much of Sappho's³¹ poetry remains, but that which does reflects the topics she wrote about women's daily lives, their relationships, and rituals. She focused on the beauty of women and proclaimed her love for girls.

Another well know example of female romance was represented in the Greek mythology, the story of Iphis and Isis.³² The Roman poet Ovid wrote about transformation in *his Metamorphoses*, the story is about a girl who falls in love with another girl, yet she is ruled by the sexual norms of the time, so she prayed to Juno to allow her to marry her beloved.³³ Does Iphis adopting the characteristics of a boy, remain a girl married to a girl? The important message is the transcendence of the soul over the body. This myth just concretizes the idea of female romance.

As women, we face the problems of subordination in many

³⁰ Her poetry centers on passion and love for various personages and all genders, the word lesbian derives from the name of the island of her birth, Lesbos, while her name is also the origin of the word sapphic; neither word was applied to female homosexuality until the nineteenth century.

³¹ Sappho was an ancient Greek poet, born on the island of Lesbos.

³² The Roman poet Ovid, wrote about transformations in his *Metamorphoses*. Ovid, and William Caxton. *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*. New York: G. Braziller, in association with Magdalene College, Cambridge, 1968. pp.666-797.

³³ Iphis was the daughter of Telethusa and Ligdus, from Crete. Ligdus had already threatened to kill his pregnant wife's child if it wasn't a boy. Telethusa despaired, but was visited in the middle of the night by the Egyptian goddess Isis, attended by Anubis and Apis, who assured her that all would be well. When Telethusa gave birth to Iphis, she concealed her daughter's sex from her husband and raised her daughter as a boy. Having reached the age of adolescence, Iphis fell deeply in love with another girl, Ianthe, and prayed to Juno to allow her to marry her beloved. When nothing happened, her mother Telethusa brought her to the temple of Isis and prayed to the goddess to help her daughter. Isis responded by transforming Iphis into a man. The male Iphis married Ianthe and the two lived happily ever after. Their marriage was presided over by Juno, Venus, and Hymenaios, the god of marriage.

aspects of our lives. Friendship among women is more delicate than political thought and these new relationships of companionship happen in many places. These networks of female friends will support us all intellectually and spiritually. Through female friendships, we can promote our own excellence, and preserve our own little corner of the world in which women can think and feel.

i. Female Romance from Seventeenth Century to Twentieth Century in the West

Medieval monastic writings often portray women as a danger, and as the object of inferior emotions such as the carnal desire of men.³⁴ Suspicion is also cast upon groups of women living together in convents, especially as the nuns adopt Aethelred's notions of spiritual friendship, a companionship of souls, which sanctions particular intimate friendships. The writings of women mystics and saints, such as Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), express the passionate love of the souls of their sisters. There are common terms to describe love relationships between women, especially in the eighteenth century, such as "the love of kindred spirit,"³⁵ "sentimental friends," "effusion of the spirit" and the "romantic friendship."

Lord Michel Eyquem de Montaigne's (1533-1592) essay "Of Friendship"³⁶ mentions that love between men can cause them to "mix and blend in each other with so complete a mixing that they efface and never again find the seam that join them." Montaigne concludes that such love is mystical and magical. Aristotle says in his *Nicomachean Ethics* that "friendship is based on love for both the person and the character of the friend, on a desire to love rather than to be loved, and on intimacy."³⁷ Unlike modern attitudes toward friendship, a friend is

³⁴ Faderman, Lillian. *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*. London: The Women's Press, 1985. pp.65-66.

³⁵ Taylor, William R, and Christopher Lasch. "Two "Kindred Spirits": Sorority and Family in New England, 1839-1846." *New England Quarterly*. 36.1 (1963) 23-41.p.23.

³⁶ Montaigne, Michel. (*of*) *Friendship*. Hoboken, N.J: BiblioBytes, 1990. Internet resource.

³⁷ Aristotle. W D. Ross, J L. Ackrill, and J O. Urmson. *The Nicomachean Ethics*.

“another self,” a “mirror” in whom we can observe our own souls³⁸. Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43BC) says, “A friend is a second self” and “true friendships are eternal.”³⁹ Friendship, is depicted by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), as “the union of two persons through equal mutual love and respect” and is indeed “the most intimate union of love with respect.”⁴⁰

Renaissance writers usually avoided all discussions of genital aspects in same-sex love, instead they encouraged platonic love which emphasizes the importance of the soul over the body.⁴¹ Henrietta Maria Bowdler (1750–1830) says that “Platonic love is a union of souls, a marriage of hearts, a harmony of designed affection, which being entered into by mutual consent, grows up into the purest kindness and most endearing love...”⁴² Two male friends in Renaissance literature are often described as sharing “one bed, one house, one table, and one purse.”⁴³

While the Restoration rage for pederasty apparently put an end to this unselfconscious view of appropriate behavior between male friends, there are fewer depictions of female friendships because few women wrote for publications during this period. Although these romantic friendships between women are invisible during the Renaissance, they exist in the form of emotional attachments. For female friends it continued thus during the next hundred years. By the eighteenth century,

Oxford:Oxford University Press, 1998. Book 9, Chapter 3. p.312.

³⁸ Aristotle. (ca. 325 BCE) *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Terence Irwin. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1985. Print. Book 9, Chapter 12.

³⁹ Chapter VII, IX, and XX II in Cicero’s *Essay on Friendship and Old Age*, trans. Cyrus R. Edmunds (New York: Translation Publishing Co., 1922). part III.

⁴⁰ Kant, Immanuel. (ca. 1780) *Lectures on Ethics*. Translated by Louis Infield. New York: Harper and Row, 1963.

----- (1797) *The Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated by Mary Gregor. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

⁴¹ Faderman, Lillian. *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*. London: The Women's Press, 1985.p. 65-66.

⁴² Bowdler, Henrietta M. *Essay on the Proper Employment of Time, Talents, Fortune, &c*. London, 1836. p.36.

⁴³ Painter, William. “*Place of Pleasure*”, Ed. Joseph Jacobs (1566; reprinted London, 1890), Vol. II. p.104.

an increasing number of letters and diaries as well as poetry and fictions written by women, literary evidences of intense friendships or romantic friendships between women, became abundant.

It is evident that romantic friendships between women still existed in the seventeenth century as well. For instance, Katherine Philips (1631-1664), known as “the Matchless Orinda,”⁴⁴ is the first English female poet to achieve a considerable reputation in her own time.⁴⁵ Her representations of female friendship are intense, even passionate. She always insists on the platonic nature and characterizes such relationships as the “meeting of souls,” as in these lines from *To My Excellent Lucasia, On Our Friendship*:

For as a watch by art is wound
To motion, such was mine;
But never had Orinda found
A soul till she found thine;
Which now inspires, cures, and supplies,
And guides my darkened breast;
For thou art all that I can prize,
My joy, my life, my rest. (9-16)⁴⁶

Katherine Philips’s representation of female friendships shows that a physical union is not part of this form of love; instead there is a spiritual union. Her poem “*To my Excellent Lucasia*” illustrates this kind of

⁴⁴ Philips, Katherine, Patrick Thomas, G Greer, and R Little. *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: The Matchless Orinda*. Stump Cross, England: Stump Cross Books, 1990.

⁴⁵ Katherine Philips seems to have started to write poetry soon after she got married, and she was “discovered” by the poet Henry Vaughan (1621-1695), who was a Welsh physician and metaphysical poet. He praised the work of “The Matchless Orinda” in his *Olor Iscanus*. Vaughan subsequently published a memorial poem Katharine had written for the poet and playwright William Cartwright (1611-1643). It was at this time that Katherine Philips began to use “Orinda” as a pen-name, and wrote poetry principally of a personal nature to Mary Aubrey, her “Rosania.” After Mary’s marriage Katharine’s chief poetic “correspondent” became Anne Owen, or “Lucasia.”

⁴⁶ Philips, Katherine, Patrick Thomas, G Greer, and R Little. *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: The Matchless Orinda*. Stump Cross, England: Stump Cross Books, 1990. Poetry X.

spiritual love. Her poetry shows that love is deeper and more meaningful than the physical. Katherine Philips finds herself in her friends; their friendships are not only her source of emotional and spiritual comfort, their friendships are her essential support. When Katherine Philips's poem was published, it allowed the public to see the extent to which some women took comfort in each other, in her friends she finds her true love; in her husband she finds a friend.

In the seventeenth century, women experienced the ideas of Platonism, which refers to the soul rather than the physical body, for it is considered that the perfect friendship is superior to sexual love. Nowadays, Katherine Philips's poetry may be regarded as "lesbianism," however; it is viewed as the expression of female friendship and romance in seventeenth century.

Thomas Heywood (1570-1641) portrays the love between women as; "tends to the grace and honor of the sex." His viewpoint of female romance indicates that some men see it not as unworthy but thoughtful and even transcendent. But not all men in the seventeenth century take romantic friendship as seriously as Thomas Heywood. Many men may have regarded romantic friendships between women as an analog to their own male romantic friendship. It would not have troubled them, nor would they have seen anything "abnormal" in it. Because Platonism assures them that what they love is the soul, therefore it is irrelevant to one's physical sex. The viewpoints of romantic friendship in Renaissance and seventeenth century are then adopted in the eighteenth century.

Yet sexologist seems to suggest that there is generally no more appropriate term to describe romantic friendship than of lesbianism. It becomes clear that those women's relationships have been limited to sexologist's area of expression. Havelock Ellis (1859 –1939) is among the first to offer modern definitions of the term "lesbian" which is used in a medical dictionary as an adjective to describe same-sex love since 1890. "Lesbian" describes a relationship in which two women's strongest emotions and affections are directed toward each other and is a kind of erotic relationship between two women. Ellis's book *Sexual Inversion*⁴⁷ (1896) also is the first English medical textbook on

⁴⁷ Ellis, Havelock, John A. Symonds, and Ivan Crozier. *Sexual Inversion: A Critical*

homosexuality.

Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing's (1840-1902) *Sexual Psychopath*, is about sexual pleasures and practices of women, even about women's clitoral orgasm and jouissance. He presents four categories of cerebral neuroses in *Sexual Psychopath* – paradoxia, anesthesia, hyperesthesia, and paraesthesia. "Paradoxia" refers to sexual desire at the wrong time of life; "anesthesia" refers to insufficient sexual desire; "hyperesthesia" refers to excessive sexual desire; and "paraesthesia" refers to sexual desire for the wrong goal such as homosexuality, sexual fetishism, sadism, masochism, and paedophilia. Richard von Krafft-Ebing believes that reproduction is the purpose of sexual desire, and any form of recreational sexual intercourse is a perversion of the sex drive. Krafft-Ebing concludes that homosexuals suffer a degree of sexual perversion, because such copulation contradicts the purpose of reproduction.

Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis define some categories of female same-sex attraction, approaching it as a form of insanity.⁴⁸ Krafft-Ebing, who considers lesbianism a neurological disease⁴⁹, and Havelock Ellis, who is influenced by Krafft-Ebing's writings disagree that sexual inversion is generally a lifelong condition. Ellis believes that many women who profess their love for other women change their feelings about romantic relationships after they have experienced marriage and "practical life." However, Ellis concedes that there are "true inverters" that will spend their lives pursuing erotic relationships with women. "Invert" describes the opposite gender roles that are attracted to same-sex. The works of Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis are widely read, and helped to create public consciousness of female homosexuality.

Female romantic friendship is an intimate relationship grounded in common values and virtues and marked by equal and reciprocal love, respect, concern, and pleasure. In contrast, Freud offered a definition of romantic friendship, which is a relationship of two women's strongest

Edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

⁴⁸ Faderman, Lillian. *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*. London: The Women's Press, 1985. pp.145-190.

⁴⁹ Krafft-Ebing, R. *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Stuttg, 1886.

emotions and affections that are directed toward each other. Sexual contact may be a part of the relationship to a greater or less degree. I consider the essential question is not whether women have overt sexual expression and can therefore be defined as heterosexual or homosexual. According to historical precedents, romantic friendships amongst female are common in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' western countries.⁵⁰ They live in emotional proximity to each other, but the biological intimacies lessen in their lives. The intensity of love and intimacy bound together. They think of pure and spiritual love as a motive for romantic friendship, and hypostatize romantic friendship as the means of salvation⁵¹, liberating from family and social constraints. Female romantic friendships are considered common and remarkable during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the Western cultures. An abundance of manuscripts also suggests that the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries contain excellent models of female romantic friendships.⁵² During that time; western society permitted women to form a variety of close emotional relationships with other women.

Havelock Ellis, Krafft-Ebing and Sigmund Freud analyze "homosexual" in medical terms, Sexologists maintain that women afflicted with love for other women are abnormal and Freud's disciples encourage them to get medical help. However, it is not until the 1970s that the term "lesbianism" begins to be defined. Some feminist critics have dismissed the work of Sigmund Freud as sexist, because of his view that women are mutilated and must learn to accept their lack of a penis. On the other hand, feminist theorists have argued that psychoanalytic theory is vital to the feminist project and must, like other theoretical traditions, be adapted by women to free it from vestiges of sexism. Feminists sense that every time Freud writes "penis," the word should be replaced with "power." Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) criticizes Freud and his *Psychoanalysis* in *The Second Sex*. She

⁵⁰ Faderman, Lillian. *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*. London: The Women's Press, 1985. pp.65-66.

⁵¹ Langford, Wendy. *Revolutions of the Heart: Gender, Power, and the Delusions of Love*. London: Routledge, 1999. pp.1-22.

⁵² *ibid.*, pp.56-60.

considers that Freud never showed much concern for the destiny of woman, it is clear that he simply adapts his account from that of the destiny of man, with slight modifications.⁵³ She mentions that “it is not nature that defined woman, and it is she who defined herself by dealing with nature on her own account in her emotional life.”⁵⁴ She also argues that the prestige of the penis is explained by the sovereignty of the father, and Freud’s confession is ignorant regarding the origin of male supremacy.⁵⁵

Betty Friedan (1921-2006) criticizes Freud’s view of his Victorian women in *The Feminine Mystique*.⁵⁶ She notes that Freud sees women as childlike and destined to be housewives. She asserts that, “I believed that all reforming action in law and education would break down in front of the fact that, long before the age at which a man could earn a position in society, nature had determined woman’s destiny through beauty, charm, and sweetness. Law and custom had much to give women that have been withheld from them, but the position of women will surely be what it is, in youth an adore darling and in mature years a loved wife.”⁵⁷ Friedan also points out that Freud’s unproven concept of “penis envy” has been used to label women who want careers as neurotic, and that the popularity of Freud’s work and ideas elevate the “*feminine mystique*” of female fulfillment in housewifery into a “scientific religion” that most women are not educate enough to criticize.⁵⁸

Freud’s concept of penis envy is also attacked by Kate Millett (1934), whose *Sexual Politics* accused Freud of confusion and oversights.⁵⁹ Shulamith Firestone⁶⁰ (1945) argues in *The Dialectic of*

⁵³ Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. New York: Knopf, 1953. p.59.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p.38.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p.59.

⁵⁶ *The Feminine Mystique* sparked a national debate about women’s roles and in time was recognized as one of the central works of the modern women's movement.

⁵⁷ Fox, Margalit (February 5, 2006). “Betty Friedan, Who Ignited Cause in 'Feminine Mystique,' Dies at 85”. *The New York Times*. Retrieved March 31, 2010. Davis, Flora (1991). *Moving the Mountain: The Women's Movement in America since 1960*. New York: Simon & Schuster. pp.50-53.

⁵⁸ Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1963.pp.8-9.

⁵⁹ Kate Millett is an American lesbian feminist writer and activist. A seminal influence

Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution, that Freud is a “poet” who produces metaphors rather than literal truths. In her view, Freud, like feminists, recognizes sexuality as the crucial problem of modern life, but ignores the social context and fails to question society itself. Firestone interprets Freudian “metaphors” in terms of the literal facts of power within the family.⁶¹ Fortunately, the American Psychiatric Association’s resolution finally removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders in 1973. They have eliminated the definition of lesbian from the medical categories and redefined it. The major difference between lesbian and romantic friendship has much less to do with overt sexual expression. But whether these relationships have a genital component or not, the novels, poetry, and diaries correspondence of these periods consistently show romantic friends sharing their souls with each other and speaking a language that is in no way different from the language of heterosexual love.

“*Écriture féminine*,”⁶² refers to “women’s writing,” and is also the best way in promoting female romance. The female body and female difference in language and text, is a strain of feminist theory that originated in France in early 1970s with such as Hélène Cixous, Monique Wittig, Luce Irigaray, Chantal Chawaf, Julia Kristeva and an American feminist, Elaine Showalter. Hélène Cixous is the first coined *écriture féminine* in her essay, “The Laugh of the Medusa” (1975), where she asserts “Woman must write herself, must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies”⁶³ because their sexual pleasure

on second-wave feminism, Millet is best known for her 1970 book *Sexual Politics*.

⁶⁰ She was a central figure in the early development of radical feminism, having been a founding member of the New York Radical Women, Redstockings, and New York Radical Feminists.

⁶¹ Firestone, Shulamith. *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*. New York: Morrow, 1970. pp.18-20.

⁶² *Écriture féminine* places experience before language, and privileges non-linear, cyclical writing that evades “the discourse that regulates the phallogocentric system.” See Cixous, Hélène. “*The Laugh of the Medusa*.” *New French Feminisms*. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds. New York: Schocken, 1981. p.253.

⁶³ Cixous, Hélène. “*The Laugh of the Medusa*.” *New French Feminisms*.” Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds. New York: Schocken, 1981. p.253.

has been repressed and denied expression. Elaine Showalter also defines this movement as “the inscription of the feminine body and female difference in language and text.”⁶⁴ Because language is not a neutral medium, it can be said to function as an instrument of patriarchal expression. As Peter Barry writes, “the female writer is seen as suffering the handicap of having to use a medium (prose writing) which is essentially a male instrument fashioned for male purposes”.⁶⁵

Cixous’s viewpoint also goes on to emphasize that women, historically limited to being sexual objects for men (virgins or prostitutes, wives or mothers), have been prevented from expressing their sexuality in itself or for themselves. If they can speak about it in the new languages it calls for, they will establish a point of view (a site of difference) from which phallogocentric concepts and controls can be seen through and taken apart, not only in theory, but also in practice.⁶⁶ Although it is impossible for twentieth century women to return to sexual innocence, women no longer need to end their same-sex love relationships by marriage.⁶⁷ Romantic friendship is more common in

⁶⁴ Showalter, Elaine. “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness.” *The New Feminist Criticism: essays on women, literature, and theory*. Elaine Showalter, ed. London: Virago, 1986. p.249.

⁶⁵ Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. New York: Manchester UP, 2002. p.126.

⁶⁶ Ecriture féminine thus exists as an antithesis of masculine writing or as a means of escape for women. However, the phallogocentric argument has been criticized by W. A. Borody as misrepresenting the history of philosophies of “indeterminateness” in Western culture. Borody claims that the “black and white” view that the masculine is equivalent of determinateness and the feminine and indeterminateness contains a degree of cultural and historical validity, but not when it is deployed to self-replicate a form of gender-othering it originally sought to overcome. See Wayne A. Borody (1998) pp.3-5. “Figuring the Phallogocentric Argument with Respect to the Classical Greek Philosophical Tradition.” *Nebula: A Netzine of the Arts and Science*, Vol. 13 (pp. 1-27). In the words of Rosemarie Tong, “Cixous challenged women to write themselves out of the world men constructed for women. She urged women to put themselves-the unthinkable/unthought-into words.” See Tong, Rosemarie Putnam. *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*. New York: Westview, 2008. p.276.

⁶⁷ Faderman, Lillian. *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*. London: The Women's Press, 1985. pp.157-190.

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than in the twentieth century. The lack of the overt sexual expression in these romantic friendships cannot account for the seriousness or the intensity of the women's passions toward each other.

Even in the eighteenth century, medical manuals which deal with sexual problems generally did not categorize both lesbianism and the ambivalence of romantic friendship; however romantic friendships became a popular theme in literary works. These showed how women perceived these relationships and what ideals they visualized for love between women. Those ideals generally could not be realized during their lives because most women did not live economically independent. Sarah Scott (1720-1795) was one of the fortunate women who was able to live her ideal romantic friendship with her lover. *A Description of Millenium Hall*⁶⁸ (1762) is the most complete fictional blueprint for conducting a romantic friendship.⁶⁹

Sarah Scott frequently expresses her love for Lady Barbara Montagu, and she cites the refusal of her husband to have Barbara in the house as a reason for the couple's estrangement. At the same time, Sarah Scott's novels avoid any consideration of heterosexual eroticism in any form. Sarah and Barbara live and work together until Lady Barbara's death. Women's passionate friendships do not always last too long, because a husband has the sole legal right of choosing a domicile or the people around his wife, and he has the right to decide where to live, so that the wife may never see her romantic friend again. But although these fictional romantic friends are willing to sacrifice everything for each other, even their lives, marriage to a man is frequently regarded as essential. Women are supposed to choose marriage as current financial support, so they are able to bring considerable amounts of money to have a happy and generous living after divorce or the death of her husband. They are totally self-sufficient. They devote their lives to aesthetic pursuit and enjoyment.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Scott, Sarah, and Gary Kelly. *A Description of Millenium Hall*. Peterborough, Ont: Broadview Press, 1995.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*,

⁷⁰ When Sarah Scott's mother died in 1746, she visited Bath with her sister, Elizabeth Ribinson. There she meets her future companion, Lady Barbara Montagu. Sarah and

Margaret Fuller (1810 –1850) is a feminist who saw same-sex love as far superior to heterosexuality. She writes in one of her journals in the 1840's, "It is so true that a woman may be in love with a woman."⁷¹ According to her illustrations, it is purely intellectual and spiritual, unprofaned by any mixture of lower instincts, undisturbed by any need of consulting temporal interests."⁷² Up until the early nineteenth century, female romantic friendships are considered common and unremarkable in the West, and are distinguished from the social taboos of— a homosexual relationship. There's a term being used in nineteenth century to describe a long term monogamous relationship between two unmarried women - a Boston Marriage.⁷³

Although affectionate and enduring relationship between women have existed throughout history, women's romantic friendship with each other has historically been viewed as less important than men's relationships, and this devaluation has been reflected, up until recently, by the invisibility of the study of women's friendships in the research

George Lewis Scott were married in 1751. Before living with her sister, Elizabeth, treated her as a servant and this was why she was willing to have an unsuitable marriage. Sarah and Barbara became such inseparable friends that Barbara accompanies Sarah on her honeymoon with George Lewis Scott, (it was usual for a bride to be accompanied by a friend in the eighteenth century) and lived with them during most of their married life. Sarah and Mr. Scott got divorced in 1752. When she is no longer with her husband, she became her father's burden, but her father left her no money at all, Furthermore, he forbade Elizabeth and Sarah's brother, Mathew Scott, from relieving Sarah's poverty. Hence George Lewis Scott agreed to pay Sarah a settlement of a hundred pounds per year. After Sarah left her husband she went to Bath, where Lady "Bab" (Lady Barbara Montagu) owned a house. Then in 1754 Sarah and Barbara pooled their finances and brought a house together in Bath Easton. There they began a charity project for poor girls, which became the foundation of the "Millenium Hall Story."

⁷¹ Fuller, Margaret, and Catherine C. Mitchell. *Margaret Fuller's New York Journalism: A Biographical Essay and Key Writings*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995.

⁷² Faderman, Lillian. *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*. London: The Women's Press, 1985. p.160.

⁷³ Rothblum, Esther D, and Kathleen A. Brehony. *Boston Marriages: Romantic but Asexual Relationships Among Contemporary Lesbians*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993.

literature (O'Connor, 1992)⁷⁴. Throughout much of the nineteenth century, women were still subordinate to their fathers, and even their future husbands, they internalized the only value they were permitted to have, and developed what has been called “the Cult of True Womanhood.” - The spiritual life, purity, and sentiment, grew more and more important during that period of time. During that time, people did not treat female romantic friendships as abnormal because they were common enough to be a norm.

Several theories have proposed that relationships may be particularly important in women's lives.⁷⁵ Such as Sigmund Freud's (1856-1939) “Libidinal Theory”⁷⁶ which has discussed same-sex love relationships almost exclusively within the context of individual psychosexual development or, to be more explicit, psychopathology.⁷⁷ Object Relation Theory posits that relationships are more central to women's sense of self than to men's.⁷⁸ Seeing same-sex romantic

⁷⁴ Faderman, Lillian. *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*. London: The Women's Press, 1985. pp.74-85.

⁷⁵ Denmark, Florence, and Michele Antoinette Paludi. *Psychology of Women : Handbook of Issues and Theories*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2007.

⁷⁶ Freud, Sigmund, and James Strachey. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. New York: Basic Books, 2000.

⁷⁷ See Freud's classic paper on homosexuality, “Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality,” *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. London: Hogarth Press, 1900. The essays original appeared in 1905. Prof. Roy Shafer, Department of Psychiatry, Yale University, has pointed out that Freud's view of sexual behavior was strongly influence by nineteenth century evolutionary thought. Within Freud's schema, genital heterosexuality marked the height of human development(Schafer, “ Problem in Freud's Psychology of women,” *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 22 [1974] : 459-85).

⁷⁸ Object Relation Theory describes the process of developing a mind as people grow in relation to others in the environment. Otto Rank was the first to create a modern theory of “object relations” in the late 1920s, and formulated by Ronald Fairbairn in 1952. The “objects” are the people or things a person is relating to such as their mother or her breast. Objects may be both real others or things in one's world and internalized image of others. Object relationships are initially formed during early interactions with primary care givers. These early patterns can be altered with experience, but often continue to exert a strong influence throughout life. The basis of Object Relation Theory is that the way we relate to people (and situations) in our adult world is programmed into us by the way we experienced our parents when we

friendship in terms of a dichotomy between normal and abnormal, they have sought the origins of such apparent deviance in childhood or adolescent trauma and detected the symptoms of “latent” homosexuality in the lives of both those who later became “overtly” homosexual and those who did not. Yet, defining and analyzing same-sex romantic friendship involves deeply problematic questions and interpretation of Freud’s theory. In this century, such hypotheses have been subjected to criticism both from within and without the psychological profession.

At the beginning of the early nineteenth century, changes in the structure, meaning, and role of women’s romantic friendships with each other begin to emerge. This is not to say that friendships were reduced in importance within women’s loves or that the centrality of support, intimate exchange, and companionship did not continue to exist, but these changes reflected a shift to modern conceptualization of women’s friendships.⁷⁹

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg in her essay “Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth Century America”⁸⁰ reveals that passionate relationships between women during that period are fully compatible with heterosexual marriage. The late nineteenth century is usually referred to as the “Magnificent time” of female romantic friendships, and it is common for women to have platonic love and make mutual vows of eternal love. Anthony Giddens(1938), states in “*The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Society*,”⁸¹ that romantic friendships introduce the idea of a narrative into an individual’s life. According to Giddens point of view, romantic love, associated with freedom and therefore the ideals of romantic love, creates the ties between freedom

were infants. The Self (or subject) relates to Objects in the unconscious. “Objects” are usually images (internalized) of mother or father. Objects can also be parts of a person. Object relation theory may be considered as Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, “pre-Oedipal” complex.

⁷⁹ Denmark, Florence, and Michele Antoinette Paludi. *Psychology of Women : Handbook of Issues and Theories*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2007.

⁸⁰ Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. *The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America*. The University of Chicago Press, 1975.

⁸¹ Giddens, Anthony. *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*. Stanford. Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000.

and self-realization, and the concept of romantic love is popularized in Western culture. To make distinctions between romantic friendship and sexuality, romantic friendships are tender affectionate and caring, sometimes involving physical contact, but do not extend to sexual relations, regardless of whether the two intimate friends are sexually attracted to each other.

Hence, regarding romantic friendship as a passionate same-sex relationship that excludes sexual activity, is a kind of platonic love, a chaste strong type of love that relates to non-sexuality.⁸² Sometimes, it is considered as a lack of a sexual orientation. Romance is the pleasurable feeling of excitement and mystery associated with love. In the context of romantic friendships, romance usually implies an expression of love, or deep emotional desire to connect with friends. Such friendships offer emotional support and companionship in a society where women have little freedom. Women routinely form emotional ties with other women, a female world of varied and yet a highly structured relationship appears to have been an essential aspect, and such romantic friendships are casually accepted in western society. We can explain the nature of romantic friendships by placing it in a historical context; romantic friendships are socially acceptable in earlier centuries.

It is evident that women's romantic friendships in the nineteenth century are expressed in affectionate letters. The suffragettes of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century intersperse their political communication with personal friendships. Men enjoy a phallogocentric confidence which is commonly popular in the twentieth century. At that time, they could not believe that they were unnecessary to women in any way. It was universally acknowledged that women had to form bonds with men in order to survive in this society. The claims of romantic friendship between two women were based on the bond of heterosexuality. Women's friendships with women become vivid and important in the twentieth century. The second wave of feminism in the 1960's, with its slogan rewrite by Carol Hanisch, "The personal is

⁸² De, Munck V. C. *Romantic Love and Sexual Behavior: Perspectives from the Social Sciences*. Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1998.

political,”⁸³ produced a woman’s network of conscious raising groups. Janice Raymond’s (1943) wording “Gyn/ affection” aims to describe that female friendship involves not only fondness and affection but also the sense of empowerment that female friendships can create.⁸⁴ I find that not all female same-sex love relationship is condemned, and most of the female romantic friendships probably do not have a sexual relationship.⁸⁵ Women’s romantic friendships have seldom been limited to that expression of sexologists.⁸⁶

ii. Female Romance in Chinese Society

Some people state that romantic love progressed differently according to various cultures, for instance, Henry Grunebaum, points out that some therapists even mistakenly believed that romantic love is a unique phenomenon only in Western culture. Indeed, culture is the crucial factor in the conceptualization of romantic friendships and same-sex love. It provides the social norms and rules that regularize interpersonal behaviors and it also influences our values, self-construal, and relational orientations of individuals. Power structures and various contextual factors can also influence of how people manage the contradiction of romantic friendships. Different cultures define different roles, functions, and forms of female romantic friendship and also the power distance, gender hierarchy, and level of individualism. It is reasonable to assume that both Western and Chinese cultures have their own understandings of female romance.

Homosexuality, as a term, is relatively ambiguous in the contemporary context, although many instances have been recorded in

⁸³ Carol Hanisch is a radical feminist and was an important member of New York Radical Women and Redstockings. She is best known for popularizing the phrase “*The Personal is Political*” (1969). She was a leader of the feminist movement that protested against the Miss America Pageant in 1968.

⁸⁴ Raymond, Janice. “*Coalition Against Trafficking of Women*”. Catwinternational.org. Retrieved 2010-03-23.

⁸⁵ The essential question is not whether women have overt sexual expression and can therefore be defined as heterosexual or homosexual. The important thing is spiritual connection between female romantic friendships.

⁸⁶ Faderman, Lillian. *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*. London: The Women's Press, 1985. pp.65-70.

dynastic histories. In Chinese, traditional terms for homosexuality only point to males such as “the passion of the cut sleeve,” “male trend,” “allied brothers,” and the formal modern term for homosexuality is *Tongzhi*, which was first adopted by Hong Kong researchers in Gender Studies. Lesbian is a term most widely used in the English language to describe sexual and romantic desire between females. It refers to women who identify themselves or who are characterized by others as having the primary attribute of female homosexuality, or as an adjective, to describe characteristics of an object or activity related to female same-sex desire. The word “lesbian” is derived from the name of the Greek island of Lesbos and before the 19th century, the word “lesbian” is referred to any derivative or aspect of Lesbos. However, in 1890, the term was used in a medical dictionary as an adjective to describe tribadism.⁸⁷ The term “lesbian” demonstrates a synthesis of Chinese cultural specificity and imported Western concepts. It reflects the circumstances in which the word “lesbian” had been borrowed directly with a phonetic translation read as “lei-si-bian” (蕾絲邊) in Taiwan before “*tongzhi*” was reappropriated for referring female homosexuality.

Before the Republication period, lesbianism seemed to disappear in the Chinese history. It was till the emergence of a new movement, The May Fourth Movement, that the issue of lesbianism was gradually emerged. The May Fourth Movement took place from 1917 to 1927, which affected the Cultural Revolution afterwards. This movement was a revolution that foregrounded new trends of thought. Since the late Qing Dynasty, the discourses of democracy and technology had been infiltrating from western society. Following the opening of the borders, intellectuals in the late Qing Dynasty began to confront the corruption of the empire and advocated the combination between western and eastern cultures.⁸⁸ However, they also faced the dilemma of “change”

⁸⁷ Tribadism means sexual gratification of two women which is by simulating intercourse.

⁸⁸ For instance, Liang Qi-Chao (1873-1929), one of the crucial intellectuals of the period, portrayed this cultural combination as a kind of marriage:

There are two man civilization in the world, one is Tai Xi, which means the Western Civilisation. Another is Tai Dong, the Chinese Civilization... As far as physiology is concerned, the combination of two sexes, as well as two different civilizations brings many advantages... The 20th century is the very period for

and “reform.” What traditional cultures should change and what should reserve, many intellectuals joined the intense arguments.

For instance, people especially the female writers in the May Fourth Movement promoted women’s roles by encouraging women not to bind their feet⁸⁹, to receive education, and to participate in politics. Those who were called “New Women” played multiple roles of feminist activists, novelists, socialists, lesbians, educators, and so on. The “New Women” were keen to wear masculine dress, smoke in public, discuss books in relation to women’s issues, and even reveal their attachment towards other women. For instance, one of the female revolutionists, Ding Ling, followed not only the style of mannish appearance but also practiced a “free” marriage during her life. She maintained the importance of women’s autonomy in marriage. It is through her letter to her niece in the Moon Festival of 1978 that her notion of free marriage is fully revealed:

I am especially dissatisfied with my marriage problem. When I was very young, I was arranged by my grandmother to marry my cousin. However, I am not willing to be his wife, and feel annoyed by this arrangement. This matter does harm me like a needle stabbing directly into my heart. Even in the pleasant moments, I remember this pain.⁹⁰

Anti-imperialist and anti-feudalist wished to challenge traditional Chinese culture inclusive of the female homosexuals that once lurked in the shadow of the society. Therefore, many Republican fiction writers,

the combination of these two civilizations. We should celebrate, and welcome it for the newly born baby in the future will reproduced by the Western Beauty, and will inherit and advocate the Chinese civilization.

Qi-Chao Liang, “The Discussion of the Changing Thoughts in the Academy of China,” *In Bing Sh He Ji I* (Beijing: Zhong Hua Press, 1989) 4.

⁸⁹ Since the Wei Jin Ban Bei Dynasty, women had to be forced to bind their feet since childhood. As girls grew up, their feet would remain as small as three or four inches. They were unable to walk fast or keep their balance. Man at that period liked to see women moving their body whilst walking, considering it beautiful. Rich families had their daughters’ feet bound, for it symbolized power and wealth.

⁹⁰ Yian-Zhao Ding, *The Biography of Ding Ling: In Man’s World* (Taipei: Yie Qiang Press, 1998) 45.

Ding Ling, Lu Ying, Yu Da-fu, Ling Shu-hua, Feng Yuan-jun., Su Xue-lin and Lu Xun, depicted the plots of romantic friendships with other women. The literary discourses they recreated resulted in more public attention being paid to women-loving-women behavior than to male homosexuality. However, the fictional representations of intimate same-sex relationships during the May Fourth Movement emphasized more on the emotional, platonic, and aesthetic elements of a relationship than the physical ones.

Therefore, being influenced by the science and new discourses of the West, the intellectuals of the May Fourth Movement embraced Western medical, psychological, democratic, and sociological ideologies. For instance, Zhao Jingshen attempts to define Lu Yin's *Lishi's Diary*, Zhang Yiping's *Love Letters*, and Zhang Ziping's *Flying Catking* as examples of female homosexuality by using Havelock Ellis's and Sigmund Freud's theories of homosexuality. In addition, Lu Xun, in 1924, shows a great interest in Freud's works. He translates Kuriyagawa Hakusan's *Symbols of Agony*, a work that utilizes Freud's interpretation of dreams. He argues that when the consciousness embraces the wisdom of unconsciousness, "a metaphor for the under-classes, the spiritual healing of society would be accomplished."⁹¹ In addition, creative writers liked to adapt the new terminology of "same-sex love" to describe female friendship in their literary works⁹², and the first public sphere of female same-sex love usually happens in boarding schools. At the May Fourth Movement, fiction played a critical role in society's debate and negotiation about women's same-sex romantic relations in the fledgling public sphere of Republican China.⁹³

Zhou Zuoren translated Sappho's poetry "To a Beloved Woman"

⁹¹ Lu Xun, however, claims that if Freud had lived in China, he would have known that hunger would be more significant than sex.

The quotation is from Carolyn T. Brown, "Woman as Trope: Gender and Power in Lu Xun's 'Soap,'" ed. Tani E. Barlow, *Gender Politics in Modern China: Writing & Feminism* (London: Duke University Press, 1993) 86-87.

⁹² In fact, the intellectuals did not translate the term "homosexuality" when referring to same-sex sexual desire or same-sex sexual intercourse. Instead, they used an indistinct term – same-sex love.

⁹³ Sang, "In Search of a Historical Prospective on Lesbianism in Modern Chinese Literature," 145.

into Chinese in 1925. In spite of describing romantic love and jealousy between women, Zhou Zuoren denied this intimate relationship as a kind of same-sex love. Same-sex love, for him, was perverse, and should be separated from romantic friendship. However, in Britain, same-sex love between women had not been recognized as lesbian until the late nineteenth century. Before this, the image of same-sex love is so ambivalent that men viewed it as harmless, and even encouraged it as a preparation for heterosexual marriage.⁹⁴ Zhou Zuo-ren views romantic friendship and same-sex love as different categories for two reasons. Firstly, many translators and intellectuals were heterosexual males, and they had a strong anxiety about these women who refuse to marry men, and would rather pursue same-sex love. For instance, Chen Dong-yuan, in *A History of the Lives of Chinese Women (Zhongguo funu shenghuo shi)*, argues that the lesbian spinster with economic independence has a negative impact on the “natural” order.

Phobia and jealousy often occur in other lesbian novels, such as Lu Zhao-Huan's *The Twin Bracelets*, in which Huei Hua keeps the married Xiou Gu away from a Guang (a latter's husband). The protagonist, Huei Hua, would burst out with jealous crying, “I hate, I hate your man! I will quarrel with that bandit, and to keep bothering you. I would not let you with that man...”⁹⁵ A Guang, struggling with his wife's same-sex friendship, can only regard them with a furious and melancholy look. Unlike the physical intimacy between women in western literary texts, the women in Chinese society reveal a different lesbian code to much more ‘reticent’ ways such as holding hands, physical embrace, bathing together, and worrying for each other. Only with the introduction of Western theory and term of homosexuality does sexuality start to appear in contemporary Taiwanese lesbian novels.

The meanings of Western “same-sex love” or “same-sex desire”

⁹⁴ Lillian Faderrman provides one example of two female students who fell in love with each other in 1811. Their odd behaviors of sleeping together was noticed by the school authorities. However, the case was thrown out by the judge, for “according to the known habits of women in this country, there is no indecency in one woman going to bed with another. A woman being in bed with a woman cannot even given a probability to such an influence. It is the order of nature and society in its present state. If a woman embraces a woman it infers nothing.”

⁹⁵ Zhao-Huan Lu, *The Twin Bracelets* (Taipei: Fong Yuen Sh Dai Press, 1989) 55.

do not actually exist in Chinese. What is the term that refers to the meaning of “same,” “sex,” and “love” in the Chinese language? It is *Tongxing lian'ai*, *tongxing ai*, or *tongxing lian*⁹⁶ - meaning “same,” “sex,” and “love,” but they are slightly different from the West’s “same-sex-love.” However, *Xing* (sex) actually indicates human nature, a much more patriarchal ideology of Confucianism. Mencius supports that men’s privileges should take priority over the human nature of desiring food and sex. In Chinese, both “gender” and “*Xing*” are similar, but are tenuous in their meaning:

The link between gender and the traditional meaning of *xing* was similarly tenuous. A single character denoting “gender” does not exist in classical Chinese. *Xing* was chosen to be used as “gender” out of the need to translate the category “gender” in European language.⁹⁷

The usage of “*Xing*” originated in Japan, and was established in China by the 1920s, combining the dual meanings of Western “gender” and “sex.” Along with *Xing*, the innovative neologism of “romantic love” also becomes a novel concept for the Chinese intellectuals of Republican period. That is why the intellectuals translate and interpret homosexuality as “same-sex love” rather than “same-sex sexual desire” or “same-sex sexual intercourse.” There is no doubt that the promotion of women’s status in the May Fourth Movement did foster women’s same-sex and romantic love, albeit unconsciously.

Following the Cultural Revolution in Communist China, homosexuality was stigmatized and criticized by communism as “counter-revolutionary,” as well as capitalist bourgeois and individualist. Unlike the May Fourth Movement, Republican Chinese discourse surrounding homosexuality was completely ignored in Mainland China. Only after the Cultural Revolution was the neologism of “homosexuality” which was recognized officially as *Tong Xing Lian Ai*⁹⁸. Although defining homosexuality as an inversion and as pathological was outdated, this perception was still in use in the 1980s.

⁹⁶ *Tingxing* means “same-sex,” *lian* and *ai* mean “love.”

⁹⁷ Sang, 96.

⁹⁸ *The Dictionary of the Modern Chinese Language* defines *Tong Xing Lian Ai* as a psychologically perverted relationship between men or between women.

In late twentieth-century Taiwan, multiple lesbian voices started to flourish in many forms: sexology work; ku'er (Queer) theory; feminist and lesbian movements; fictional discourses; and, the sensationalism of the capitalist mass media. Countering public and private oppression, lesbian activists in Taiwan had close alliances with feminist groups and gay male activists, claiming legitimacy for lesbianism. Lesbians in Taiwan had a double burden: lack of filial piety (Bu Xiao) to the patriarchal family (the private sphere) and a voyeuristic attitude from the hegemonic society (the public sphere).

Unlike the western literature, same-sex love can sometimes be difficult to differentiate in classical Chinese because the pronouns he and she were written with the same character. That is, Chinese does not have grammatical gender. Thus, poems in the Tang Dynasty⁹⁹ and other Chinese poetry may be read as either heterosexual or homosexual, or neutral in that regard, depending on the reader's wish. In addition, male poets will use the female narrator, as a persona to lament the abandonment by a male comrade or emperor. A remarkable aspect of traditional Chinese literature, in contrast to English literature, is the prominence of same-sex friendship. Bai Juyi¹⁰⁰ is one of many writers who wrote dreamy, lyrical poems to male friends about sharing experiences. He also wrote intensely romantic poems to fellow officials with whom he studied and traveled. The descriptions of sharing wine, sleeping together, and viewing the moon and mountains is a way to improve romantic friendships. He contributed a poem to one of his friends, named Qian Hui(錢徽), as an imagistic souvenir of a frosty winter night they had shared,

Night deep-the memorial draft finished;
 mist and moon intense piercing cold.
 About to lie down, I warm the remnant last of the wine;
 we face before the lamp and drink.
 Drawing up the green silk coverlets,

⁹⁹ The Tang Dynasty was an imperial dynasty of China preceded by the Sui Dynasty and followed by the Five Dynasties and the Ten Kingdoms Period. It was founded by the Li family, who seized power during the decline and collapse of the Sui Empire.

¹⁰⁰ Bai Juyi (Chinese: 白居易) was a Chinese poet of the Tang dynasty.

placing our pillows side by side;
like spending more than a hundred nights,
to sleep together with you here.¹⁰¹

He and fellow scholar-bureaucrat Yuan Zhen¹⁰² even made plans to retire together as Taoist recluses once they had saved enough funds, but Yuan Zhen's death kept that dream from being fulfilled.

In ancient China, women's roles are tied up by family, husband and children and shall dedicate their whole lives to them. Women are expected to be subordinate, when they are married. Women were excluded from education because an educated woman was considered to be the most extravagant luxury. Only men learned how to read and write. Bound feet and social criticism confined women to their husband's home. Women do not need to know how to read and write since their main function in the society is to be virtuous wives and caring mothers. It was even considered better if a woman did not know much, as she would not be able to challenge any man, especially her husband. Therefore, there was never any formal education for women until the late Qing Dynasty¹⁰³ (1644-1912), and only then for those parents who were rich enough to "waste money" on the education of their daughters, or hire private tutors to educate their daughters at home. They did this because the proper mannerisms of "how to be a lady" would make their daughters better brides in the future. As for those women from poor and working class families, they usually remained illiterate. Even though poor women were deprived of the right to receive any standard education, some still found a way. They created their own language called Nüshu to share their emotional feelings, escaping from the oppressions of a patriarchal society, which is similar to the Western

¹⁰¹ Hinsch, Bret. *Passions of the Cut Sleeve*. University of California Press. 1990. p. 80.

<冬夜與錢員外同值禁中 >

夜深草詔罷，霜月淒凜凜。欲臥暖殘杯，燈前相對飲。
連鋪青縑被，對置通中枕。仿佛百餘宵，與君同此寢。

¹⁰² Yuan Zhen (Chinese: 元稹) was a politician of the middle Tang Dynasty, but is more well known as an important Chinese writer and poet.

¹⁰³ The Qing Dynasty was the last dynasty of China, ruling from 1644 to 1911 with a brief, abortive restoration in 1917. It was preceded by the Ming Dynasty and followed by the Republic of China.

term “*Écriture feminine*.”¹⁰⁴

Nüshu¹⁰⁵, which literally means “Women’s Writing,” is the only written language in the world known to have been developed by women, and was created and used exclusively by women in a remote part of China. It was a way for the sworn sisters of this rugged and tradition-laden Chinese countryside to share their hopes, joys and sorrows. In addition to the language itself, the young women also learned Nüshu songs and stories. The transmission of the script was, however, primitive.¹⁰⁶ Take Lisa See’s *Snow Flowers and the Secret Fan*¹⁰⁷ as an example of Nüshu. This shows how women share their emotional feelings with each other. In rural Hunan Province(湖南省), Lily and her friend Snow Flower are “laotong” (or sworn sisters for life 老同)¹⁰⁸, related more closely than husband and wife.

Lily’s aunt describes a laotong companion as “A laotong relationship is made by choice for the purpose of emotional companionship and eternal

¹⁰⁴ See page 21 and footnote 55, 59.

¹⁰⁵ Nüshu which means “women’s writing,” is a syllabic script, a simplification of Chinese characters that was used exclusively among women in Jiangyong County in Hunan province of southern China.

¹⁰⁶ In a particular village when all seven-year-old girls were having their feet bound, their mothers helped them form a sworn sisterhood. The girls would learn Nü Shu together, work on their diaries together, and prepare what were called “third-day wedding books” for each of their friends as they married at age seventeen. Once all the girls had married, the sworn sisterhood dissolved.

¹⁰⁷ See, Lisa. *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan: A Novel*. New York: Random House, 2005.

¹⁰⁸ When a woman had a daughter about to turn seven and begin her foot binding, she would meet with a matchmaker, not to find a suitable husband but to look for another girl in another village who could match eight characteristics with her daughter. The two girls had to match birth dates, be in the same birth order in both families, and have the same size feet. Obviously, this was much harder to find than just linking up with other girls in the same village. If a prospect could be found, the two girls would be brought together to sign a matching contract as a pair of laotong for life. At seventeen, the girls would get married to a man from another village, have children, and follow the normal course of their lives, but they would also continue to keep in contact with their *laotong* through their writing and occasional meetings for the rest of their lives. This type of “emotional marriage” didn’t interrupt marriages between men and women.

fidelity. A marriage is not made by choice and has only one purpose- to have sons.”¹⁰⁹ *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* is a novel about this friendship. The story was told by Lily. She told her story in anticipation of the afterlife, as an explanation of her actions to her ancestors, her husband and most importantly, Snow Flower, all of whom she expects to meet there, but only one of whom she longs for. Her story reeks of misery. Snow Flower is from a high family in a prestigious neighboring town, her grandfather was an imperial scholar. She can teach Lily the social rituals of important families. Lily can teach her the humble arts of cooking and cleaning. The first communication between Snow Flower and Lily was inscribed on a fan in the code of Nüshu. The secret fan became a journal of their lives.

Traditional Chinese culture is male-centered and forbids women from any kind of formal education. Consequently, Nüshu was developed in secrecy over hundreds of years, in Jiangyong County(江永縣) of Hunan province. The two girls, Snow Flower and Lily, both experienced the painful process of foot binding at the same time, and wrote letters to one another on a fan. This secret that forms of communication between the women of Hunan Province was a delicate, graceful script handed down from grandmother to granddaughter, mothers to daughters, and from girlfriend to girlfriend, usually orally, and never, ever shared with men. Once girls learned the Nüshu script, they could utilize the language to communicate with their companions. They wrote letters to each other and made their vows in Nüshu during the practice of sworn sisters. Even when a woman died, her Nüshu works would be buried with her in the belief that she could bring her works to her next life through reincarnation.

As the years passed, Lily and Snow Flower continued to write down their messages to each other on fans and composed stories on handkerchiefs; reaching out of isolation to share their hopes, dreams, and accomplishments. They endured the agony of foot-binding together, and reflected upon their arranged marriages, shared loneliness, and the joys and tragedies of motherhood. The two women found solace, developing a bond that kept their spirits alive, which was a

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p.43.

companionship of soul and spiritual friendship. But when a misunderstanding arose, their deep friendship suddenly threatened to tear apart. The fan guided Lily as she recorded her memoirs. Because times had changed, she filtered her memories through the late-life awareness of what mattered and what did not matter. What mattered most of all was her friendship with Snow Flower. There existed, as far as we knew, no sex between them, and laotong's commitment was just like the friendships between women, as female romantic friendships is for women's reasons, a choice of companionship, understanding and happiness. It is a symbol of deep-hearted love for each other. Although these romantic friendships between women were invisible in Chinese culture, it did exist in the form of emotional attachment. It was evident that romantic friendships between women did exist both in Chinese and western cultures.

Here is another example where female sisterhoods and romance can be verified. "Self-combed women" which existed in nineteenth century Guangdong Province(廣東省) near the Pearl River Delta(珠江三角洲), and there are still some today. They formed a society of women who chose a life of strict celibacy, to live apart from men. In the end of Qing Dynasty, the Pearl River Delta¹¹⁰ was forced open and factories were set up, which provided work opportunities for girls in that area. With economic independence, they chose to be independent socially and refused to get married. Girls combed their hair into a certain style and invited guests to make it public that they would be single all lifelong, and they vowed to resist the patriarchal conception of marriage. Margaret Topley in her influential article "*Marriage Resistance in Rural Kwangtung*,"¹¹¹ describes the regional practice of young women in the Pearl River Delta, Guangdong. (廣東) They refused or postponed their heterosexual marriage, swearing to become virginal "comb sisters," and earn economic independence through the

¹¹⁰ The Pearl River Delta is one of the most densely urbanized regions in the world and one of the main hubs of China's economic growth. Since economic liberalization was adopted by the Chinese government in the late 1970s, the delta has become one of the leading economic regions and a major manufacturing center of China and the world.

¹¹¹ Topley, Marjorie. *Marriage Resistance in Rural Kwangtung*. , 1978.

local sericulture industries.¹¹² Topley's essay, a product of second-wave Western feminism, tends to read regionally constructed political resistance in terms of personal freedom, because the comb sisters' economic independence and traditions of marriage resistance are inherently deviant from Confucian norms. They promote a kind of radical nativist feminism that was once advocated by the May Fourth movement.

Intimates,¹¹³ is a Hong Kong film, written by Anita Tong and directed by Jacob Cheung. The film offers a more liberal, cosmopolitan version of these marriages. It begins in the present-day. It is about the historical event of self-comb.

In Chinese title of "Intimate" is ZiShu(self-combing 自梳), the background was set in part in 1930s China, the film centered on two women, Yi Huan(意歡) and Jade Bangle(玉環). Yi Huan was a young woman fleeing from a loveless marriage, her parents tried to impose on her. She ended up with these women and took the ZiShu oath of lifelong celibacy. While working in a silk factory, she soon befriends the factory owner's concubine named Jade Bangle. Jade Bangle helped Yi Huan to join the Golden Orchid Society.¹¹⁴ Unlike some other Golden Orchid

¹¹² For an analysis of the sericulture industries that granted combed women (some) economic independence.

¹¹³ The movie version is directed by Jacob Cheung, 1997.

¹¹⁴ *A Record of the Customs of All China* by Hu Pu'an, first published in 2 volumes in 1773-1774, contains the following account of Golden Orchid Associations, women-only associations that practiced marriage-like ceremonies among its members. This custom was practiced by women in the Guangdong province of China. The practice of the Golden Orchid Oath is known by the common name of "Heart-to-heart Friends" and also called "Making Friends." It is not known when this custom started. If two parties have mutual intentions towards each other, one party would prepare peanut candy, honey dates and other things as an offering of honor, to express (her) intentions. If the other party accepts, she makes a promise to indicate her assent. A refusal of the gift indicates a "no."

At the time of executing (their) vow, if the parties have (sufficient) resources, they will invite many friends over to drink through the night. These friends would come in droves to congratulate them. After the writing (of the contract), (the parties) are practically each other's shadow when sitting, lying down, rising, and living. Once the vow is established, if (one or more of the parties) has a change of mind, and are thought to have turned (her/their) backs on (her/their) oath, the female collective

members, Yi Huan has no bias against heterosexual union. She had a male sweetheart and only took the ZiShu oath to avoid being married to another man. After Jade Bangle leaves her husband with a stone heart and, finally preparing to fulfill her lesbian desires, Jade Bangle passionately kisses Yi Huan, but after kissing, Yi Huan responds, “We’re women...it’s impossible,”¹¹⁵ the statement explains Jade Bangle’s difference between comb-sister homosociality and outright homosexuality. However, Both Yi Huan and Jade Bangle are later betrayed by the men in their lives. After seeing each other through a difficult time, they drew close and became a pair of sworn sisters, spiritual intimates; they developed a kind of romantic friendship. Their love spanned a lifetime and inspired the next generation.

We can see the difference between the English and Chinese title, while the original Chinese *Self-Combed, ZiShu*, simply expresses a much more reticent subject; meanwhile, the English *Intimates* obviously positions this subject in Westernized homosexual subjectivities. Just as history and literature illustrates that prejudice and violence are often part of a lonely journey in establishing one’s identity, it also provides a map and a comfort to individuals and societies in the process.

There is another novel: “The Twin Bracelets.”¹¹⁶ (Shuang Zhuo 雙鐲) which presents different types of female romance. *The Twin Bracelets*, was written by Zhaohuan Lu (陸昭環); directed by Huang Yu-shan¹¹⁷ (黃玉珊), is a contemporary literature which illustrates women’s lives in the Pearl River Delta, and their sericulture economics.

would rally as a punishing army, often beating and humiliating (the offender/s); it is almost their custom (to do so). Hu, Pu'an(胡樸安). *Zhonghua Quan Guo Feng Su Zhi* (中華全國風俗誌). Taipei: Qi xin shu ju, 1968.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*,

¹¹⁶ Lu, Zhaohuan. (陸昭環) *Shuang Zhuo*. Taipei Shi: Feng yun shi dai chu ban gong si, 1989. 風雲時代出版公司：發行所大鴻圖書有限公司

¹¹⁷ The movie version is directed by Huang Yu-shan (黃玉珊) 1990.

In China, Fujian Province(福建省), there is a group of women called Hui'an maidens or Hui'an women (惠安女)¹¹⁸. "The Twin Bracelets" is a story about Hui'an women. In a remote fishing village, Hsiu and Hui-hua are best friends; they make a pledge to each other "to be sisters as man and wife." The notions of women's rights of sexual freedom are absent in their oppressive Hui'an maidens' culture.¹¹⁹ Local customs mandate that girls must marry in their teens and may visit their arranged husbands only three times per years to procreate, and man must beat his wife in public while he suffers only social humiliation.

Hsiu and Hui-hua are aware of their fate, they swear a pact as blood sisters to avoid the abusive marriages they see in their future. After a few years, Hsiu married a man and lived happily; on the contrary, Hui-hua's parents pawn her off to a local bully in exchange for his sizeable dowry. Hui-hua reiterates their earlier vow "which is the closer relationship that between man and wife or that between sisters?" At the end, Hui-hua seeks to free herself from a lifetime of abuse, she desperately looks for a way out by committing suicide. Hui-hua's love for her best friend, Hsiu, is merely the love of a close friend who seeks to avoid the abuse of an arranged marriage, and though there are lesbian overtones, the true nature of two girls' relationship remain undefined.¹²⁰

Fran Martin argues that the second wave of female homoerotic representations since the late twentieth century, have tended to dwell on the theme of the "temporary" same-sex love of a conventionally feminine young women for one of her companions, a love that is forcibly served by the incursion of socially mandated cross-sex relations, frequently in the form of the marriage by one of the partners.¹²¹ Due to

¹¹⁸ Hui'an maidens or Hui'an women (Chinese: 惠安女) are a group of women residing in Hui'an County of Quanzhou, Fujian Province, China.

¹¹⁹ Hui'an culture, customs and mores treat women as property with no human rights.

¹²⁰ Women's romantic friendship can also be found in the works of 丁玲、盧隱、林白、王安憶、赫譽翔、成英珠、邱妙津、陳雪 or Li Lu's (李漁) play, *Lian Xiang Ban*, (憐香伴) and etc.

¹²¹ Martin, Fran. *Backward Glances: Contemporary Chinese Cultures and the Female*

the influence of western culture, women's private lives and emotional connections with other women has become the focus of public debate in 1980's. People began to debate about women's role and women's emotional liberation. Romantic friendships with other women enable them to distance themselves from women's conventional roles in the family and advance their struggles for autonomy. This display of romantic friendship makes it clear just how much women's lives have changed and their will become freer in the twentieth century. Women's roles are limited no longer; they receive formal education and are influenced by feminists. Due to the development of feminism and women's awakening, a large group of educated women see the possibilities of organizing for social betterment rather than being tied up by old traditions of valuing men and belittling women, sexual discrimination, and even that women are raised to believe that men and women are different species and can share nothing but the family. Women's friendship with women becomes more and more important and is bolstered by the prominence of representations of intimate friendships between women in modern China.

It is difficult to explain a romantic friendship, because romance is fused with erotic desire in the contemporary culture. Friendship and sexuality in twentieth century were dichotomized, and attitudes of romantic friendship, fundamentally in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, have distorted the nature of women's emotional interaction. Lesbianism in the west has turned up two central tropes of lesbian epistemology and social practice, female romance that clearly emerge in eighteenth century. Two similar formations loom large in modern Chinese cultural interpretations and practices of women's same-sex love as well.¹²²

IV. Present: The Introduction of Queer Discourses in Taiwan

i. Conservative Exposition

Homoerotic Imaginary. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010. p.30.

¹²² Martin, Fran. *Backward Glances: Contemporary Chinese Cultures and the Female Homoerotic Imaginary*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.

Same-sex friendship sentiment is particularly encouraged and discussed amongst Taiwanese lesbians and the academic research. How do Taiwanese lesbians represent in the modern era? How do they create their own lesbian identities, away from western theoretical influences and the Chinese homosexual movement? As is revealed in the above analysis, the history of homosexuality in ancient China is actually a homosexual male history. It was not until 1990 that lesbianism appeared in the media or in the academy publicly. However, despite an awareness of the “coming out” difficulties, lesbians continuously encounter sexual and social discrimination. Homosexuality is discriminated against as a crime, as eccentric, as a morbidity, and as a perversion. From the medical point of view, an essential differentiation of mental structure in defining homosexual behavior. Others informed by constructionism tend to look for how the environment affects or encourages children’s homosexual dispositions, e.g. unpleasant childhood experience, single parent family, or sexual harassment.

One of the negative perspectives towards homosexual behavior is expressed in Tu Hsing-Che’s academic research at the National Taiwan University. The journal *Tung Chih Hsiao Pao*¹²³, criticized this research as untrue, sensational, and an utterly absurd matter by using the title “We are not Guinea-Pigs”:

All the crew in *Tong Zhi Gong Zuo Fang* feel annoyed and furious about the content of this research. We do not see any respectful outcome from academic research, instead, the academic institution continuously regards homosexuality as a guinea pig, fully satisfying people’s curiosity... We hope, with sincerity, researchers do not define homosexual behavior as “a social construction, or influenced by a broken family.” Because once we define homosexuality as coming from a special environmental

¹²³ *Tung Chih Hsiao Pao* was first published by a homosexual organization - *Tong Zhi Gong Zuo Fang*, in 1994. *Tong Zhi Gong Zuo Fang* was founded in December 1993. Its aim is to protect homosexuality from negative views. Professor Tu Hsing-che’s research is one of the examples which strengthens their beliefs. Han Chia-Yu, one of the people in charge of *Tong Zhi Gong Zuo Fang*, claims that, “we do not use forged names: *Tong Zhi Gong Zuo Fang*. The aim of our job is to proclaim our voice.”

background, it will stigmatize homosexual as an abnormality, a minority, and a perversity in our society...¹²⁴

Discrimination against homosexuality not only happens in the academy but also in the media. The “TTV Evening News” (18 March 1992) produced an issue about women in Taiwan by interviewing singer Pan Mei-Cheng, and by entering a T-Bar with an invisible camera. The journalist, Hsu Mei-Feng, disguised as a masculine lesbian and using negative and mysterious tones, said “Those men-like people are actually women...”¹²⁵ The report then followed various controversies. The lesbian organization, “Between Ourselves,” pointed out that the TTV report could cause some misunderstandings and could encourage people to spy on the lesbian world.

This incidence also reflects the ‘homophobia’ in Taiwanese society. According to Chang Chuan-Fen, the media mislead society into a “lesbophobia” area. The conservative side considers heterosexuality to be normal. Homosexual behavior, for them, is transient and may be rectified by the external force. For instance, the Legislative Yuan (Parliament) held a Public Hearing of ‘Human Rights in Homosexuality’ at the end of 1993. A great number of issues were discussed and represented by many scholars, from fields including law regulation, psychoanalysis, education, social culture, and feminism. However, the hearing revealed that the government representatives still have a conservative view toward homosexuality. Cheng Chung-Chen, the representative of the Ministry of Education, argued that:

¹²⁴ Cheng-Hua Wang, *The Black Lesbian* (Taipei: Hau Chiao Press, 1995) 83-84.

¹²⁵ Chuan-Fen Cheng, *Against the Wall* (Taipei: Lian Heng Press, 1998) 56. In the interview, Hsu questioned how Pan Mei-Cheng built an impression before the public. Pan answered without hesitation, “You are supposed to rectify yourself to be more sedate, for you cannot let everyone like you.” Then, Hsu asked suddenly, “It is said that you are a lesbian, are you?” Pan was stunned by Hsu’s question and Hsu indicated that Pan did not have to respond. The program edited these two conversations, so that the interview ran:

(Hsu (Q): “It is said that you are a lesbian, are you?”; Pan (A): You are supposed to rectify yourself to be more sedate, for you cannot let everyone like you.”). The reporter of TTV evening news, Chang Ya-Ching, claimed that, “The media has the freedom to report on any issue.”

The educational institute cannot conclude a law to prevent the homosexual student from being expelled... It is not appropriate to protect homosexuality, for if we do so, it seems that the educational institute may encourage homosexual behavior... The meaning is the same as we cannot expel students who do the stealing... As we probe into the question of the “meaning” and the “worthiness” of a human life, if homosexual people think their own lives are respectful, and meaningful, then they can live like a “human being”... As far as I am concerned, heterosexuality is more normal than homosexuality... Take drug addiction for instance, should it be considered as a “human right”? Or should we be aware of the cost we may pay as we tolerate the drug behavior? In addition, I have to warn all people joining these homosexual groups, please do not try to “pollute” others while trying to extend your rights... An eloquent and exaggerated argument does not actually represent a “truth”...¹²⁶

The statement encouraged a fierce rebuttal in educational circles. The governmental officer is relatively conservative, neglecting the equality of homosexual rights in Taiwan. Firstly, how can the government representative define homosexual behavior as a drug addiction, implying homosexuals are criminals, patients, or insane? For him, homosexual behavior, like drug addiction, does not deserve basic human rights. Secondly, the criterion of judging a “meaningful” and “worthy” life is actually based on a social point of view. How can homosexual people esteem the meaning of life while facing social discrimination?

There were three major aims to this Public Hearing: firstly, the emphasis of a multi-cultural society in terms of the analysis of psychology, medical research, and law; secondly, the theoretical approach of deconstructionism in educational, familial, and social constructions;¹²⁷ thirdly, the advocate of modeling political western

¹²⁶ *Public Hearing for Homosexuality: Against the Discrimination* (Taipei: Tung Hsueh Kuan Press, 2000) 62-64.

¹²⁷ For instance, Josephine Ho (Ho Chun-Jui) asserts in “The Review of How Our Sex

society. However, the hearing demonstrated a lack of powerful and quantitative evidence, as well as a lack of using “human rights” as a core issue.¹²⁸ The former implies that few homosexuals attended the hearing to testify to the homophobia they encounter in daily life. The latter indicates the indistinct framework of power relations that “human rights” assumes. Once people advocate homosexual liberation in terms of “human rights,” then conservatives might respond with: “if everyone has basic human rights, we hope homosexuals do not intrude on human rights of heterosexuality.”¹²⁹

However, Chang Chung-Chi does not provide a full explanation of the problematical approach to human rights at the hearing. There are a number of ways of addressing human rights in minority groups. “Equal treatment under the law,” and “the rescinding of any law that discriminates against minorities” are the first and basic policies that would need to be encompassed.¹³⁰ Besides these basic rights, the minority needs to focus not merely on equality before the law, but also for some sort of preferential treatment, thus allowing minority groups to be treated fairly and enabling equality of opportunity to be fulfilled. Riddell indicates that:

Equality in law precludes discrimination of any kind; whereas

Education Defames Homosexuality” that:

Our education is actually a heterosexual education. From family to school education, the heterosexual ideology is in control from childhood...Because of this ideology...we predict the love story in fairy tale should be a prince who falls in love with a princess. We never hear of a prince who marries a prince, or a princess with a princess...Every love story presumes the lover with opposite sex...

The politics of heterosexuality should be out of the current education system. Therefore, not only should we discourage homosexual discrimination but also try to include homosexual and bisexual ideologies in the education vigorously... Our education is supposed to treat everyone equally, no matter what your sexual disposition is. *Public Hearing for Homosexuality: Against the Discrimination* 58-61.

¹²⁸ Chung-Chi Chang, “Are You a Homosexual, Queer or Tongzhi- the Hybrid Sexual Politics?” *From Queer Space to Education*, ed. Josephine Ho (Taipei: Rye Field Press, 2000) 219-220.

¹²⁹ Chang 221.

¹³⁰ Roger Riddell, *Minorities, Minority Rights and Development: An Issues Paper* (London: Minority Rights Group International Press, 1998) 8-9.

equality in fact may involve the necessity of different treatment in order to attain a result which establishes an equilibrium between different situations. It is easy to imagine cases in which equality of treatment of the majority and of the minority whose situation and requirements are different would result in inequality in fact... The equality between members of the majority and of the minority must be an effective genuine equality; that is the meaning of this provision...¹³¹

Therefore, understanding human rights for homosexuals as a threat is unreasonable. Instead, human right is based on a heterosexual hegemony and advocating homosexual liberation is actually looking for the basic rights that have been lost. This agenda for the liberty of human rights in homosexuality is considered as an act of power redistribution, since heterosexuality plays a hegemonic role in our society.

In addition, though the holding of the hearing is a point of progress for the homosexual movement, the government did not respond with a satisfactory reply. For instance, Josephine Ho describes an ideal education as a “Non-Sexual Disposition Education,” in which ideology may bring about a radical or ambiguous approach. In addition, though scholars claim that the “ideology of heterosexuality” controls our society, they do not provide specific or quantitative evidences to the government. Persuasiveness was the main shortage at the hearing. However, generally speaking, this hearing played a significant role in Taiwanese homosexuality.

ii. Liberal Exposition - Humanitarianism, Feminism and Queer Theory

Following the influx of information about homosexual movements from western theoretical approaches, many books and academic theses concerning homosexuality started to emerge in China and Taiwan. They can be divided into three factions - Liberal Exposition (Humanitarianism), Feminism and Queer Theory, and each of them, more or less, has a significant role in the Taiwanese homosexual movement. Both Humanitarianism and Feminism tend to liberate oppressions, and to find a way for homosexuals. Cheng Mei-Li indicates,

¹³¹ Riddell 9.

under the construction of heterosexual society:

Liberal Exposition (Humanitarianism) views homosexuality as the personal tendency of loving. Take *Homosexuality in Chinese* for instance, a conservative exposition of viewing homosexuality as perversity is refuted by exemplifying western theories. This book is thus designed for heterosexual readers, considering homosexuality as otherness and a minority, including some miserable experiences of homosexual people.¹³²

There is a close relationship between lesbianism and feminism in Taiwan. In the beginning, feminist theory and movement excluded lesbian issues. It was not until the influence of Adrienne Rich's "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" that the ideology of "women-identified-women, women love women" emerged in 1990s. Both heterosexual hegemony in monogamy and patriarchy were and are categorized in homosexual oppression. If it is only through the union of heterosexual and homosexual women that the liberation of these two groups can be achieved.¹³³

However, Cheshire Calhoun is aware of the limitation of this union, and tends to distinguish lesbianism from feminist theory, for she believes that "both of them are not within one category"¹³⁴

Lesbian theory and feminism, I want to suggest, are at risk of

¹³² Mei-Li Cheng, *The Reproduction of Sexuality and Gender of Lesbians in Taiwan* (Taipei: Fembooks Press, 1997) 33-34.

¹³³ Lesbian issues - such as lesbophobia or coming-out - are discussed in some magazines. For instance, Josephine Ho, in *Fu Nu Hsin Chih*, addresses the relation between women and lesbian's movements on July 1995. In the article, "The Exploitation of Feminism," Ho questions the possibility of fusing lesbian feminist theory within the category of feminism in favour of the participation of lesbianism.

¹³⁴ Chuan-Fen Chang, "Against the Wall: Lesbian Movement," *Lian Heng Literary* (1998) 140. Gian Jia-Shin, in "Calling Out Lesbian: Theoretical Framework and Movement in 90's Taiwanese Lesbianism," illustrates the lack of the feminist and lesbian union in terms of an interview with a lesbian student:

Though sometimes I would help the women's movement on the campus, yet I deeply believe that it would be more meaningful or useful to fight for lesbian rights rather than women's rights merely... In doing it, you cannot tell which is for homosexual people or not... As far as Gian Jia-Shin is concerned, the women's movement is only a sort of comfort for lesbian romantic expression.

falling into a similar unhappy marriage in which “the one” is feminism. Although lesbian feminist theorizing has significantly contributed to feminist thought, it has also generally treated lesbianism as a kind of applied issue... Now, there is nothing wrong with using feminist tools to analyze lesbianism. Indeed, something would be wrong with feminist theory if it could not be usefully applied to lesbianism in a way that both illuminates lesbianism and extends feminist theory itself. And there would surely be something lacking in lesbian thought if it did not make use of feminist insights. My worry is that if this is all that lesbian feminism amounts to then there is no lesbian *theory*. Lesbian theory and feminist theory are one, and that is feminist theory... To the extent that feminist theory lacks a concept of heterosexuals and nonheterosexuals as members of different sexuality classes and thus of heterosexuality as a political structure separable from patriarchy, feminist theory must treat lesbian oppression as a special case of patriarchal oppression and remain blind to the irreducibly lesbian nature of lesbian lives...¹³⁵

Calhoun argues for “separating lesbian theory from feminist theory,”¹³⁶ because the patriarchy and heterosexual hegemony are totally different systems. Lesbianism is not merely the resistance of patriarchal power, but also the one that tends to react against heterosexuality. Lesbians’ experiences of heterosexual hegemony do not actually reveal the form of men controlling women; rather, they fully show how homosexual people are ruled by the system of heterosexuality.

As far as Calhoun is concerned, lesbian subjectivity should be separated from heterosexual women, for they do not actually share the same experiences. That is to say, the original power relation of repression for heterosexual women is patriarchy. The figuration of homosexuality through tropes of patriarchy and heterosexual hegemony is unquestionable, but the division of these two (also the division of heterosexual and homosexual women) cannot function in Taiwanese lesbianism. Calhoun’s motivation in advocating lesbian separation implies a progressive liberation of lesbianism in western society, for the sake of an independent orientation of different sexual disposition.

¹³⁵ Cheshire Calhoun, “Separating Lesbian Theory from Feminist Theory,” *Leaving Home* (Taipei: Fembooks, 1997) 49-50.

¹³⁶ Calhoun 50.

However, Calhoun's assertion cannot actually be utilized in the Taiwanese lesbian movement, since lesbianism is still a minority. And the women's movement in Taiwan is also a minority without a strong presence. Therefore, from a practical point of view, lesbian and women's movements should unite together. Both groups can become "good neighbors":

The "dual derailment" of lesbian (*the derailment from patriarchy and heterosexuality*) implies the possibility of alliance with heterosexual women, for lesbian women also experience patriarchal oppression. The emphasis of "neighborhood" between homosexual and heterosexual women encourages not only the subjectivity of lesbianism, but also provides mutual help and protection to each other. At this time, the wall between them becomes a "short wall" which cannot cause any hindrance.¹³⁷ (emphasis added)

In a word, lesbianism in Taiwan should gain a clearer understanding of the situation, trying to achieve the ultimate goal by means of external assistance. The appropriation of the sign of lesbianism relies not merely on sexual disposition but also on the friendship between women.

V. The Oppression of Lesbianism in Taiwan: The Traditional Values

The Master (Confucius) said, In serving his father and mother a man may gently remonstrate with them. But if he sees that he has failed to change their opinion, he should resume an attitude of deference and not thwart them; he may feel discouraged, but not resentful.¹³⁸

The Master (Confucius) said, Women and people of low birth are very hard to deal with. If you are friendly with

¹³⁷ Chang, *Lian Heng Literary* 141.

¹³⁸ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, trans. and annotated by Arthur Waley (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1911) 105.

them, they get out of hand, and if you keep your distance, they resent it.¹³⁹

Master Yu said, those who in private life behave well towards their parents and elder brothers, in public life seldom show a disposition to resist the authority of their superiors. And as for such men starting a revolution, no instance of it has ever occurred. It is upon the trunk that a gentleman works. When that is firmly set up, the Way grows. And surely proper behavior towards parents and elder brothers is the trunk of Goodness?¹⁴⁰

These passages are from *The Analects of Confucius*, which explain the traditional conceptual paradigm of familial and women's roles. The first passage reveals the privilege parents possess, even when they are patently in the wrong. If children are unable to change their parents' opinion, they should keep their voice down and still respect their parents. Furthermore, children should behave properly, otherwise they would bring ignominy to their parents. Family "still serves as a basic unit that sustains the survival and social standing of each member of the family."¹⁴¹ Being influenced by such a conventional conception, family becomes the main site of oppression for lesbians and gays. Zhou Hua-Shan, in *Post-Colonial Tongzhi*, points out how the familial system plays a significant role in Taiwanese homosexuality:

In traditional Chinese culture, the social structure was based on the networks of family and kinship; it was not a sole, irrelative entity. The traditional Chinese were linked with the intensive, ethical relationship amongst people. The concept of "family" thus became the nucleus of the network. Primary individual identity was located at the position of such ethical relationship - for example, the relationship between fathers and sons, between kings and

¹³⁹ Confucius, 216-17.

¹⁴⁰ Confucius 83.

¹⁴¹ Chen Yao-Min, "Figuring the Homosexual Struggle: From Social Regulation to Family Ties," diss., National Central University, 1998, 30.

counselors, and between mothers and daughters.¹⁴²

Meanwhile, the second passage encourages women to respect and obey their parents and elder brothers. For instance, Confucius appeals to women to obey their fathers, elder brothers, and sons. It was not until the emergence of liberal and democratic forces weakened the control of the family that more space and freedom in women's rights, as well as personal identity in lesbianism, was allowed.

However, being women and having a homosexual disposition, lesbians possess a double burden. With the emerging awareness of lesbian issues the problem of familial mechanism was noticed. Most lesbians would suffer from oppression in their families - the superiority of sons, the unwilling marriage, and the desexualized friendship (romantic friendship).

Marygery Wolf analyses the relationship between husband and wife, and between mother and daughter according to the theory of the "uterine family."¹⁴³ "Uterine family" implies women's ambiguity as a wife, as well as a mother. For Wolf, although women in Chinese culture, obey their fathers, husbands, or even sons in their lives, they intend to build a family of their own, members of which include sons, daughters, daughters-in-law and grandchildren.¹⁴⁴ A woman starts to found a "uterine family" once she marries and raises children of her own. When it is an unpleasant marriage, she starts to disbelieve her husband, and relies on her son entirely. This kind of mother-son relationship may incur disharmony between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Following the change of familial structure post - 1960, the "husband-wife circulation" started to strengthen.

Most lesbians in Taiwan suffer from marriage pressure when they reach the age. Cheng Mei-Li depicts this situation in her interview with a lesbian (Fei Fei):

My ex-girlfriend was born to a well-known family, and

¹⁴² Hua-Shan Zhou, *Post-Colonial Tongzhi* (Hong Kong: Tongzhi Studies Association, 1997) 319.

¹⁴³ Cheng, *The Reproduction of Sexuality and Gender of Lesbians in Taiwan* 50.

¹⁴⁴ The "father-son circulation" plays the main part in Chinese familial system rather than the "husband- wife circulation". It was not until the 1960s that the nuclear family became more popular than the stem family in Taiwan.

she encountered more pressure about marriage than me. For instance, her mother is a faithful Christian, she would kneel on the ground crying for her marriage. She thinks that if her daughter does not marry, she couldn't face God and her ancestors after her death. In addition, her relatives would deride her parents' failed educational method...One year, when she celebrated the Chinese New Year with her relatives, they said with threatening words, "If you do not bring a boyfriend next year, don't come home again."¹⁴⁵

The coming of the right age for marriage is a major pressure for lesbians, and it reveals people's view of how abnormal women do not marry. Cheng Mei-Li claims that the bigger the familial structure, the more pressure lesbians receive. However, familial pressure might be seen as a major hindrance to lesbian liberation, but it is the heterosexual hegemony that controls the family, and thus indirectly creates the oppression. Hence, the advocate of "defamilization" cannot solve the implicit problem of discrimination. It is the notions of patriarchal and heterosexual systems that involve the manipulation of public perception. Once patriarchy and heterosexual hegemony are removed, the function of the family might become a reliable and helpful place for lesbianism.

Besides familial and social regulations, lesbians also suffer from religious oppression. According to Chinese folk religion (Taoism), an unmarried woman cannot be worshipped by other family members. A daughter who does not intend to marry might challenge the traditional religious belief. Therefore, lesbians' parents would feel annoyance, suggesting their unmarried daughter adopt a son in order to grieve for her and the family after death.

Another thwart for lesbian development is the ideology of Yin and Yang, which emphasis balance and harmony. Yin often implies female, feminine, and dark side, and Yang as the male, masculine, and light. The theory of Yin and Yang is a reasonable and normal mechanism for heterosexuality, as well as a most powerful exposition against homosexual behavior.¹⁴⁶ When applied in the husband and wife

¹⁴⁵ Cheng, *The Reproduction of Sexuality and Gender of Lesbians in Taiwan* 50.

¹⁴⁶ Cheng 69.

relationship, the husband in the Chinese culture is referred to as heaven, *Chien*, and Yang, and the wife is referred to as earth, *Kun*, and Yin. Coordination between Yin and Yang is essential, and thus, a lesbian's sexual disposition may influence her health. It might be concluded by the heterosexual mother that, "If my daughter is a lesbian, I would give her a guidance, for homosexuality is not good for health. It is a matter of endocrine."¹⁴⁷

VI. Conclusion

In this article, issues concerning the past and the present homosexual subjectivities have been explored. The differentiation between these two eras is apparent. Firstly, in ancient Chinese culture, there was no apparent objection or strangeness associated with homosexual behavior. Instead, the male prostitute, male concubine, and *Xing Gong* should be understood as expressions of a power dynamic. The meaning of the term "homosexuality" is not actually applicable to the past, and, according to this historical survey, it is the "intimate friendship" that society views as the normal homosexual behavior.

Secondly, under the influence of feminist and queer theories, the pluralistic concept of homosexuality gradually develops, and mainly divides into the conservative and liberal camps in the contemporary Taiwan. People on the conservative side oppress lesbians by means of familial and religious paradigms. Many homosexual organizations and movements have been established since 1995 such as Gay Chat, Between Ourselves, *Tong Zhi Gong Zuo Fang*, as well as there being a growing awareness in the academy. However, many organizations assert the passive view of familial relation, and consider that only defamilization will let lesbians liberate completely. But the oppression from the familial system cannot be denied, whereas most assertions do not actually see the profound reason of why and in what way the family

¹⁴⁷ Cheng 71.

becomes a conservative representative. It is, in fact, the mechanism of patriarchy and heterosexual hegemony that allows parents' control over their lesbian daughters. Therefore, it is these two mechanisms that need to be debated rather than the surface family system. Once the patriarchy and heterosexual hegemony are removed, families might become a safe harbor for lesbians to live in. Lesbians in Taiwan may create an additional exposition for the sake of letting people accept lesbianism. By looking back through homosexual history, homosexual behavior may possess the power of the "intimate friendship." I think Chinese culture has more tolerance towards women's friendship, and this should be developed.

Glossary

- Bai Juyi 白居易
Bu Xiao 不孝
Chang Chuan-Fen 張娟芬
Chong 寵
Ding Ling 丁玲
Feng Yuan-Jün 馮沅君
Fujian 福建
Guangdong 廣東
Han dynasty 漢朝
Huan guan 宦官
Huang Yu-shan 黃玉珊
Hui'an women 惠安女
Hui-hua 蕙花
Hunan Province 湖南省
Hung Lou Meng 紅樓夢
Jade Bangle 玉環
Ji Jian 雞姦
Jiangyong County 江永縣
Josephine Ho 何春猷
Laotong 老同
Liang Qi-Chao 梁啟超
Lu Yin 廬隱
Lu Zhao-Huan 陸昭環
Mei ren 美人
Nüshu 女書
Pearl River Delta 珠江三角洲
Qian Hui 錢徽
Qidi 契弟
Qin dynasty 秦朝
Qixiong 契兄

Shu sheng 書生
Shu tong 書僮
Tang dynasty 唐朝
The Classic of Odes (Shi Jing) 史記
The May Fourth Movement 五四運動
Tongxing ai 同性愛
Tongxing lian 同性戀
Tongzhi 同志
Tongxing lian'ai 同性戀愛
Tong Zhi Gong Zuo Fang 同志工作坊
Tu Hsing-Che 涂醒哲
Xiang Gong 相公
Yi Huan 意歡
Yu Da-fu 郁達夫
Yuan dynasty 元朝
Yuan Zhen 元稹
Zhou dynasty 周朝
Zhou, Hua-Shan 周華山
ZiShu 自梳

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