

Considering the Case of Hong Ying's *K: The Art of Love*: Home, Exile and Reconciliations

Philip Tew

School of Arts, Brunel University
Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 3PH, United Kingdom
E-mail: Philip.Tew@brunel.ac.uk

Abstract

This essay initially considers central patterns in Hong Ying's work, including: the aesthetic self in opposition to ideological and cultural identity; and, artistic metamorphosis and its inevitable confrontation with forces underlying the rule of law, which in *Summer of Betrayal* involves protagonist Ling Ying in the events of June 1989 in Tiananmen Square and their aftermath. Part of Beijing's young, liberal artistic elite she finally dances naked in defiance of both privileged fellow students, and the police as representing an overarching patriarchal order. Overall this piece explores themes of home, longing, exile and reconciliation in *K: The Art of Love*, and how its author retrieves a forgotten episode linking China and Bloomsbury—against the backdrop of the Japanese invasion and Chinese Civil War—and sketches a struggle for identity and creativity in the 1930s through her depiction of the illicit love affair between two intellectuals and writers, Englishman Julian Bell and the wife of his Dean at Wuhan University. Both represent aspects of Bohemian avant-garde intellectual movements. Tew reads in detail the novel's opening

describing Bell's death in the Spanish Civil War, and the text's sense of the spectral and traumatic rupture which both haunt the lovers, underpinning the narrative's visceral relationship to Bloomsbury. Also considered are themes of sacrifice, violence and death underlying libidinous desire, ethnic and cultural identity, uncanny doublings, and the maternal. Finally through its depiction of loss, longing, self-discovery and passion, the novel can be regarded as interfusing the exotic and the familiar, reconciling home and exile, and through an intercultural *ars moriendi* it suggests aesthetically larger, universal, humanistic reconciliations.

Key Words: Hong Ying, Anglo-Chinese intercultural relations, Bloomsbury, trauma, spectrality

Hong Ying's *K: The Art of Love* (1999/2004b) is a novel permeated throughout by the interactions of English and Chinese cultures, its narrative focusing on such interrelationships on many levels but in the specific historical contexts of Bloomsbury, the Chinese avant-garde and the months spent by Julian Bell in Wuhan Province teaching at a provincial university and travelling elsewhere. However, essential to accurately interpreting and understanding this narrative structurally are certain characteristic themes and contexts recurrent in Hong Ying's fiction more generally. The central concern of her writing is the emergence of both the aesthetic individual, and the ideological and cultural self within. Importantly the struggle that this entails inevitably leads to the potential metamorphosis of the committed artist who is at the centre of the narrative, pivotal to its interconnected concerns. This cartography of the economy of personal creativity one can read as central to *Summer of Betrayal* (1997) where, in a largely autobiographical narrative, a personal and creative struggle occurs, set against the violence of the events in Tiananmen Square in June 1989. The novel details the emergent confidence, the womanhood of a poet, Ling Ying, which ends with the protagonist's arrest while dancing naked in defiance of the police as representative of both the state and implicitly a patriarchal order. In its evocation of the impassiveness of the powers-that-be (arguably common to all large-scale nation states) for whom the individual remains always distant and potentially resistant, the narrative is concerned also with what Slavoj Žižek in *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* calls "the topic of an 'illegal' violence that founds the rule of law itself" (2008: 59) which in the novel's case is the exertion of state power and authority to suppress the movement protesting for a more liberal, and in the western sense democratic government. Importantly this is set against the protagonist's feminist struggle for personal and professional status as a poet, which becomes more essential for her as she faces the crackdown on the young, liberal artistic elite. The personal in its relation to the hegemonic defines her understanding of the world. Such elements pattern her

increasing aestheticization of the world, her interpretation of the Chinese state in a period of change, with its various contradictions and their implications on a personal, creative level.

Exactly as with the focus of *Summer of Betrayal, K: The Art of Love* centres upon the artist in an antagonistic environment surrounded by many others less than responsive to the sensitivities of the creative self. A very similar struggle for identity and creativity (representing the attempted synthesis of the ideological and the cultural self) is thematically central to the novel, which concerns itself with an illicit love affair between two intellectuals and writers, one English, the other Chinese, its narrative based as indicated above on Julian Bell's experiences in China at Wuhan University when he had an affair with his Dean's wife. Historically (and as reflected upon by Hong Ying's character, Julian) at this point Bell feels himself to be a less than successful artist, his book having been rejected by his aunt, Virginia Woolf. Drawing in part in an unusual way given the setting on a well known historicity, that of Bloomsbury, Hong Ying's narrative is predicated upon several recoverable historical fragments noted in letters or related by others such as Bell's mother, Vanessa, and Woolf herself. The novel commences with the movement from the historical moment in the locatable geography of Spain to a specific personal involvement in war, that of Bell as yet unidentified by the narrative just before his untimely death, presaging the later wider conflict:

On July 6th, 1937 the Republican Army launched the battle of Brunete in an attempt to lift the siege of Madrid. Several International Brigades threw themselves into the assault and suffered heavy casualties: more than a hundred German planes provided air support for the enemy. As the battle extended into mid-July even the wounded became a target: the Fascist pilots repeatedly struck at ambulances despite the huge red cross painted on top of them. He had managed to escape the bombardment several times.

On the morning of the 18th he drove a ramshackle ambulance—a truck that had just been repaired—to the

front again. (1999/2004b: 15)

And note that here the progress of the narrative is from the general (historical) to the particular (personal). There follows the death scene of the young man referred to and a prolonged post-mortem scene where Bell is finally identified, and an account of the immediate aftermath in the field hospital where the doctor looks through his possessions, finding “a yellow handkerchief of shimmering silk, wonderfully smooth in the half-light, with a delicate pattern of bamboo leaves. There was a letter ‘K’ in one corner, apparently hand embroidered, in a darker yellow thread” (1999/2004b: 19). The events and the symbol of the love affair that follows emphasizes the transitory, the ephemeral nature of being and of course finitude. The scene with its remnants of Bell’s life and his passions found both in the doctor’s memories and the objects Bell leaves behind, creates a sense of loss and passing that permeates all that follows. And as a consequence a strong undercurrent of the text is the elegiac and its relation to moments of intensity, of trauma. It seems retrospective, charged with doom and foreboding, but these synthesize so that the reader shares the lovers’ intensities. In London in the real world Woolf wrote in her diary of Bell’s death about a fortnight later on 6th August 1937 in her diary after returning from comforting his mother, her sister, Vanessa, “Thats [sic] one of the specific qualities of this death—how it brings close the immense vacancy, & our short little run into inanity” (Bell, A. O., 1985: 105), and later on 17th August she comments on the “queer power” he had had over his mother (108). By coming at the very beginning, and preceding the narrative of the past this initial trauma becomes a retrospective narrative, an opening episode that becomes deeply significant structurally, since what René Girard in *Violence and the Sacred* calls “the mechanism of violence” (1972/2005: 44) subtends this human sacrifice. Moreover, in Girard’s economy of meaning curiously there is arguably a link in this death to the illicit affair that permeates the subsequent novel both in its transgressive nature

and the intensity of the lovers' physical passion, their studied eroticism, since as Girard argues "Sexual prohibitions, like all other prohibitions, are sacrificial in nature; and all legitimate sexuality is sacrificial" (231). Although Hong Ying's afterword defends the supposed "eroticism" of her narrative on the grounds of its relation to lived experience, and its expression of normal, underlying libidinous desire, the recurrence of violence and death imply that structurally there is much more to this excess than simply a matter of mimetic similitude or a wish to inscribe the historical.

It is interesting structurally to consider what external factors might be said to influence the novel's composition and shape, especially as it is a text written in exile about exilic longings, and that the narrative reverses Hong Ying's abandonment of her homeland in its fictional recovery. So first it encompasses loss, longing and discovery on the part of the author. Originally published as *K* (1999) in Taiwan, the novel was composed during her time spent in part in Bloomsbury; it combines intriguingly in terms of apprehending the depth of the novel's six fundamental characteristics, which I set out below without any implied hierarchy of significance:

- first, it is a love story;
- second, it combines a set of intense transnational relations on a cultural and individual level;
- third, it involves an implicit political and ideological critique of various historical and cultural positions;
- fourth, the author has engaged in the precise (and well-researched) adaption and recreation of a number of historical settings from experience and documents, including Wuhan, China, Civil War Spain, and more marginally Bloomsbury itself;
- fifth, both the novel is testament to the explicit and implicit presentation of evidence of archival research particularly concerning the two main individuals as characterized;

- and sixth, Hong Ying's historically-situated characters are identifiably drawn in large part from the life-world and contemporaneous accounts of that past.

Subsequently it was the last two elements that were to cause Hong Ying legal problems in China that were initially controversial in a court case later decided in her favour on appeal. As Christopher J. Smith reports in "Culture and Cultural Change in Urban China" there was a rather unusual response to such a novel rooted in the facts of the past, since "a Chinese woman living in London actually filed a lawsuit against Hong Ying, claiming that the book had caused her significant 'spiritual damage' by libelling her late parents (the fictionalized head of the department and Cheng Lin)" (2007: 154). According to the website of Hong Ying's original English publisher, Marion Boyars, in an anonymous introduction to the novel entitled "Hong Ying:"

Known only as "K" in the letters that he wrote home to his mother, the true identity of Julian Bell's Chinese lover continues to spark controversy to this day. Already dubbed the Chinese *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, Hong Ying's imaginary account of the real-life love affair in the 1930s between Julian Bell, son of Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf's nephew, and Ling Shuhua, one of China's most highly regarded short-story writers, was the focus of intense legal debate and became the subject of a scandalous court case on the Chinese mainland. The author was sued in Manchuria by Chen Xiaoying, the outraged daughter of Ling Shuhua, who died 12 years ago. The daughter has pronounced the book defamatory and is taking advantage of Chinese law, which stipulates that dead people can be protected from libel. (Anonymous, n.d.)

Rather than obsess about this controversy (and personally I can empathize with someone being angered by such a depiction, albeit belated, of a parent, though I feel if I had been so swayed the quality of the novel might have persuaded me not to pursue a legal

objection) which has many ethical and judicial intricacies of its own, I want largely to consider all of the implication of the above characteristics that I have identified in terms of through both the ramifications and the inherent logic of Hong Ying's process of coming to this narrative, an engagement which I suggest one can not only reconstruct (as she has done the past), but also may be subject to theoretical scrutiny. Its provenance is self-evident.

Clearly a great deal preceded the writing of this fiction, made evident in the "Author's Foreword" found in the English edition. Hong Ying comments explicitly on the "creation" of the novel, and states that while part of the underground in the 1980s, she came across "the chief protagonist of the book—that is, K herself" (1999/2004a: 7). Hence at least in retrospect, Hong Ying may regard the figure of Julian Bell as secondary to the cultural presence of the female, although clearly the interconnection of Bloomsbury with the Blue Moon Society with which "K" was connected fascinates Hong Ying. Clearly on one level the narrative in its eroticism reflects something of such avant-garde worlds, since as Elizabeth Wilson contends in "Bohemian Love," Bohemian must remain a fluid and contested term, one whose arose widespread usage 1840s, but nevertheless "One of its central components, however, was a rejection of bourgeois marriage and conventional family norms and the espoused view of eroticism as a source of inspiration and as the raw material for works of art" (1998: 111). Hong Ying explores exactly these dynamics in *Summer of Betrayal* in the context of the upheaval caused by the events of Tiananmen Square and their affect upon a group of writers, painters and actors in Beijing.

In *Negotiating Identities: An Introduction to Asian American Women's Writing*, Helena Grice does not consider Hong Ying's novel about Bell and his lover I assume because it was not translated until after her own study had been published, but she does very briefly attempt to situate Hong Ying's earlier novel, *Daughter of the River*, as "testimonial" and dealing with trauma. However, unfortunately she does not pursue the implications of

the latter category (2002: 106). This passing suggestion is interesting because precisely a sense of traumatic rupture haunts *K: The Art of Love*. However the novel does not simply revisit old contexts, actual losses and tribulations, but reworks them. Drawing upon Woolf's response to his death cited above that regards Bell through the prism of the closeness of the mother-son relationship, Hong Ying identifies the restlessness and boredom of Julian in terms of his relations with women and relates this as being: "because no woman could stand comparison with his mother. He knew none whose mind or talents equalled hers, nor who were even as remotely attractive" (1999/2004b: 65). Consider too what underlies his teasing comments made during one of his initial encounters with Lin before the attraction becomes self-evident:

'Modern educated Chinese don't have affairs then?' he said satirically. 'Obviously their British teachers didn't do much of a job educating them.'
She looked at him with complete incomprehension. So Julian began to tell her about his family, much as though he were telling students about the lives of famous writers.
(57)

In fact like Bell, Lin has already been identified historically as part of an avant-garde tradition, although less in the sense of relation to specific others (which is part of his arrogance), but more a matter of the zeitgeist, a cultural set of symbols personally significant to her, since: "she had had her hair cut short eighteen years ago, leading the fashion for progressive women. Short hair was a symbol of emancipation" (46). Thus the novel alludes in passing to a specific moment when as Haiyan Lee asserts in *Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900-1950* the May Fourth Movement which freed sexual mores and had a great artistic and specifically literary influence. Lee says: "The early 1920s were the heyday of free love fuelled by the iconoclastic spirit of the May Fourth" (2007: 5), which helps situate Lin's personal journey, and offset Bloomsbury as the only

source of the libidinous as central to the struggle against literary conventions and social norms. Of course subtly Hong Ying thus highlights the case for reading critically and interrogating the grounds of Julian's notions of an oriental position being characterized and defined by its secondariness as presumptive and Eurocentric at heart, which underlies his treatment of Lin cited above.

In the sense of ethnic and cultural identity explored by Grice in the "Preface" to her book, Hong Ying's position in *K: The Art of Love* might be considered as bridging at least intellectually and creatively the space from Hong Ying's origins into a particular kind of Englishness read outside of its usual context, that of Bloomsbury and the avant-garde with all of its contradictions and elitism, that is an essential coordinate used to judge both senses of belonging (and of not belonging) for Hong Ying. Given this active affiliation, I sense she might comprehend my own reading of her text, although an act of appropriation or intervention (which all such acts of reading surely are, but in my case this is further complicated by dealing with the text in translation) I worry just a little less than Grice about the "Concern [which] has been voiced in certain ethnic quarters about the appropriation of ethnic literatures by white critics, and the perils of misreading such texts" (2002: x). Moreover, Grice's uses a category of "laborious research" in accordance of which she feels one can only justify any "white" (x) intervention into such texts. Her position risks a vulgar essentialism and implicitly allows a hierarchical (and institutionalizing) ring-fencing that hardly encourages the comprehensive integration of such recent texts as she is concerned with into the field of contemporary literary studies. Are such texts or their cultures to be ghettoized by experts somehow in their defence? I have my doubts about foregrounding our "racial selves" (xi) in the manner implied by Grice, since it, at least implicitly, naively assumes the possibility of avoiding "othering" (xi) when the gaze is reversed. I remain unconvinced by Grice's notion of a critical self-reflexivity rendering any radical revocation of the kinds

of asymmetries of power that she perceives as lurking in any intervention, since its model is too monolithic and lacking nuance, lacking any sense of individual power, eminence, class, gender, age variation and so forth. Grice's "racially aware reading" (xi) is insufficient. Critical engagement is and can never be about two monolithic cultural abutments, one simply abject and the other uncomprehending in its triumphalism, since there is always a certain permeation, and hybridity. Curiously it is a radicalization of these concerns that animates Hong Ying's text, although I reserve judgement as to the outcome of her inversions, the making exotic and desirable of the western literary elite by her characters. As the novel clarifies, everyone brings the baggage of their own complex agency to living itself, and certainly applies this to any elective interpretation, whether of a person, a culture or a text, the complexity of which few literary critics seem to concede so concerned are they with variations of a liberal agenda. Moreover, very few individuals, critical or otherwise, reach the level of self-knowledge required to position themselves truthfully, given the inadequate coordinates of Grice's model. Hong Ying's novel carefully and intuitively charts such complex territory, mapping it fictionally, inflecting both of the primary cultures concerned in this individualized encounter in much of their diversity.

Hong Ying's foreword offers the reader a cartography of her preparation, a confessional, yet engaged account. She very self-consciously narrates her role as a writer undertaking research, finding her way, charting specifically the coordinates of her research: photographs of K which testify to being "exceptionally beautiful" (1999/2004a: 8), encounters with contemporary biographies of her, and the publication of the 1993 edition of Vanessa Bell's letters as almost epiphanic, and a concrete realization of a certain inter-cultural penetration with her visit to Vanessa's house in Charleston where Hong Ying finds evidence of the permeation of Chinese cultural artefacts, both from the distant past and the 1930s. The two aspects are becoming as if dialectically engaged. She further supplements such sources, tracing her

discoveries almost cartographically, implying a voyage of rediscovery.

In the London University library I found Julian Bell's collected letters and poems, and also came across a photograph taken of him in Spain. In this last image of him, he is standing in a group of people, leaning against the ambulance, wearing a battle-helmet and long boots. There is something ghost-like about his appearance. (8)

Again one senses a complex spectrality, both of Bell and her process, with its nostalgic compulsion, the requirement to revive that which is lost. Moreover, both in the act of researching the novel and in rendering such preparation as both introductory to the text and also as exhibited in that very text itself Hong Ying, in the sense that Jacques Derrida explores in *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, echoes in Derrida's terms the archontic in marking a "passage from the private to the public" (1995/1996: 2) adopting "The archontic power, which also gathers the functions of unification, of identification, of classification, [and which] must be paired with what we will call the power of *consignation*" (3) and of which latter aspect or act Derrida relates as that of a presupposition, a gathering together. Hence he concludes the archival engagement on one level opposes the secretive (3), and enacts a kind of violence (7), an element which clearly both literally and symbolically subtends Hong Ying's novel which opens in 1936 with a quintessentially *traumatological* scene (Tew, 2007), Julian's injury and death in Spain which setting came to symbolize the larger ideological rupture of Europe in the 1930s and signified a convulsive and conclusive stage in the road to a wider war. The novel recovers the moment and the sacrifice implicit in Julian's actions. Hong Ying evokes something uncanny about his injury since "His face, protected by his helmet, bore not a single scratch. His skin was pale as alabaster. He lay as in an exhausted sleep" (1999/2004b: 17) and after expressing his satisfaction at having had a "beautiful mistress" (17) falls into a coma after murmuring

what the reader must presume is Cantonese. In the first chapter the narrative describes the director of the hospital recalling the arrogance of the young man, followed by a reversion to the past as Julian arrives at Wuchan (Wuhan) University where he will meet Lin, who becomes the essential love of his life, his eleventh, but significantly not one that will settle him or bring him to abandon his idealism. The rupture of the relationship frames the novel, ending with Lin's own demise, as if joining Julian.

After time the erotic object, always unknown at its first encounter, becomes increasingly familiar, but its initial encounter is both fearful and exhilarating. Hong Ying uses these capacities as central to the novel, which charts the encounter by two very different people in a zone of intimacy of that which is comprehensively unfamiliar to them. Nevertheless, as a character Bell does self-consciously and perhaps explicitly recognize her effect upon him, the transformation of his perception as when she appears not to have come to his class after a conflict, but appears in his line of sight, as if answering not only his longing, but allowing him to mature critically and intellectually. The narrative describes his response to T. S. Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, a poem which he has been teaching that day and a writer who has never previously impacted upon him positively.

Julian was moved by the poem for the first time: it was such a brilliant dissection of the self-torment of a loser. He had never admitted to admiring Eliot, which was natural since he was obsessed by the need to move out of the shadow of such established literary figures, especially his parents' friends. Yet this first published work of Eliot's convinced him that it laid bare the basic predicament that tormented those who lived in civilized society. He felt as if the poem were about him. (68)

Bell sees himself and Lin as being akin to the figures of the poem. He has lived in the penumbra of such fame, and in Hong Ying's version of his life, China and Lin have the capacity to

liberate him.

Throughout the initial courtship and seduction the narrator makes the reader aware of the cultural difference, of the impact of this on desire and attraction. Both make of the other something exotic, most particularly Julian. During their first sexual encounter in “Peking” the narrator comments, “He felt a twinge of guilt, as if he was violating some taboo, which only excited him further. He was eager to enter her. But Lin was in no hurry” (109). A sense of imperialist penetrative debasement of the self, and making erotic of the unknown strongly merges, a patriarchal transgression, and yet Bell is not confident. The act itself produced “strange and irrational worries [that] plagued him” (109), a sign of the unconscious cultural barriers and restraints. Her cradling of him in sleep evokes an image of his mother (110), a strongly oedipal desire denied Bell by the circumstances of Bloomsbury’s promiscuities. Moreover, despite Bell’s notion of his wide sexual experience, he remains more naïve than Lin. In Wuhan each disturbs the other; she irritates him so much he reflects “Why did she not go away? What gave her the right to invade his house? He was irritated by her silence, her stillness. She looked somehow immaterial—like a Chinese painting” (87). Although cultural differences dog them, both are impelled to move beyond such comfort zones, a form of violence in itself, for as Žižek comments: “Habits are the very stuff our identities are made of. In them we enact and this define what we effectively are as social beings, often in contrast with our perception of what we are” (2008: 140). On a certain level this evokes the nub of the novel’s primary encounter with its disturbance of expectations, its ongoing libidinous and emotional fracturing, for Julian all about and reduced to the contrast between the delicate Lin and “those big-boned women back home, those girls who reached puberty too early and then aged prematurely and grew fat, while Lin was curvy but slender” (Hong Ying, 1999/2004b: 119).

In one way both *K: The Art of Love* and the added foreword are reconciliations of Hong Ying’s own experience of home, of

exile and of her fascinations concerning both. If one recovers certain sources and retraces Hong Ying's steps, the factual basis is clear, but as something elaborated upon, and modified rather than adhered to slavishly. Such sources are intriguing hints as to the novel's relationship with the remnants of this moment in time. Bell writes a letter to his mother dated on July 16 1935 found in *Julian Bell: Essays, Poems and Letters* which suggests their intimacy and openness. He tells her of the forthcoming lectureship which is so central to both Hong Ying's fiction and Bell's notion of himself at the time:

Dearest Nessa,
I hope this letter won't be upsetting to you. No, I've not got married. But I have accepted a job in China—the English professorship I tried for last year. [. . .] £800 a year, one year certain, three probable: it could be renewed after that, but I don't want to spend my life away from you. (1938: 28)

One part of the novel's milieu can be retrieved from these epistolary elaborations by Bell for the delectation of his mother and her circle. In another letter from Shanghai on October 1st 1935 he describes a violent encounter with “a soi-distant pimp”(36), who with associates tries to rob Bell. Subsequent letters sent home allude extensively to the details and characters of Bell's time in China, including his neighbours “My dean, Prof. Cheng Yuan, and his wife, are my neighbours and simply angelic. [. . .] she a painter (Chinese style), writer of short stories and editor of a literary page in one of the big Hankow papers: I gather she's sometimes called the Chinese Katherine Mansfield, but I fancy there's more to her really, though she's very quiet and gentle” (42). In the early letters he attempts to offer sketches and details concerning Hankow with its riding school, “superb library” (43) at the university, and to generalize about the Chinese, their politeness, perceived inefficiency and so forth, and the ex-patriot communities. These remains haunt the novel, informing and permeating its very

structure. The layering of the narrative and its explicit dependence on historical, textual research creates at its core triadic time scheme, with first Bell's death, poignant and evidently retrospective especially with the reading of his letter, the apparently teleological coherence of Bell's time in China, and subtending both the authorial presence which implicitly evokes a period of reading, research and reconstruction. This rejects the kind of time that Gaston Bachelard describes in the *Dialectic of Duration* as "a continuous process [. . .] the familiar axis of time, and by this we mean vulgar time" (1950/2000: 111). In novel time is choreographed. Rather the novel focuses both on the instantaneity of love which conjures the self-concern of the self and the admission of the other, doubling the experiential possibilities of the moment and the time duration that makes up the affair, and on the individual whose time for Bachelard is "plainly discontinuous" (111). Overall, the novel's duration or time is historically complex in terms of provenance and geographic range: it relates to the childhood of both lovers, the provenance of their families, the emergence and reality of Bloomsbury and its avant-garde, and the coterminous time in England and Europe where Hong Ying's Julian, as had the original person, broods on Fascism, Spain, and his sense of an impending European war. Finally it takes the traumatic violence of the trip north to for him to be enthused ideologically, to commit him politically, but in so doing he turns his gaze homeward. Like pretence which in Bachelard's terms which cannot ever be "continuous" (112), the novel embraces the lacunary, although it must simultaneously just like Bachelard's definition of pretence it is "both full of lacunae and also uneven" (113) and yet must "make what is essentially discontinuous and disparate, appear to be continuous" (113). And as with pretence which Bachelard imagines without both the cause initiating the falsity and that which is being pretended, there still remains "the order, place, density and regularity of instants [. . .]" (114). Thus the novel takes on an uncanny doubling, since in Bachelard's terms it is capable of existing within the penumbra of the past, and yet

surviving without its presence. The informed reader is constantly aware of this paradox, both inhabiting its frame and extending the exegetical beyond its possibilities, one kind of spectrality.

There is another spectral quality that Hong Ying notes in her image of Bell. She attempts to convey a sense of his change and the profound quality of his epiphany in China faced with the realities of love and of war, all of which suggests an origin or potential derivation in her reading of Virginia Woolf's diaries where the modernist novelist, aunt of Julian, notes the transformation wrought in him after his return from China, adding a more tragic quality, which Hong Ying ascribes to his affair with K. She feels compelled to write the latter's story, feeling herself to be uniquely placed, "Since no one else had drawn the two halves of this story together, I could no longer resist the challenge [. . .]" (1999/2004a: 9). The subsequent self-interrogation Hong Ying undertook reveals precisely her acute sense of history, of the antagonism (and implicit and explicit violence) underlying both the characters and their cultures, in which confrontation she seeks precisely to avoid stereotyping which was "Julian's down fall: he believed that Oriental women were all docile sweetness, while western men were brave and strong" (1999/2004b: 10). Hong Ying might be taken as over-critical of Julian's ebullient self-centredness, but this and his mother's obsession with him were characteristics of Julian from infancy. I think it is reasonable to conclude that Hong Ying's portrait is guided by certain published archival sources including letters written by his mother. Consider a number of them in the context of the characterizations in *K: The Art of Love*. The first dated February 1908 is to Margaret Vaughan to comment on the birth of her son. Vanessa writes "Julian came into the world shouting healthily and has continued to do so ever since, whenever he thinks food or attention are due to him" (Marler, 1993: 58). It is clear from her ongoing description of her son that the attention continued. In a letter to Julian dated November 1st 1935 she writes to him in Wuhan, commenting "We do seem nearer each other now, our letters will reach each other regularly and at not too

impossible intervals. [. . .] Oh Julian, I can never express what happiness you've given me in my life. I often wonder how such luck has fallen my way" (400-401). She comments favourably in a later one dated 25th January 1936 on "Sue's essay" (405) and her writing. As the editor makes clear this refers to "the writer and artists Ling Su-Hua, the wife of the dean of the School of Letters" (405 n8). In another letter dated June 13th 1936 Vanessa refers to the apparent civil war in China (411) and her idea he might leave early before the end of his contract (412). In one of her final letters to Julian dated 3rd–4th February 1937 in which she attempts to dissuade him from going to Spain, commenting "All I want to say now is, that though your irrational feelings have to be reckoned with, (and indeed I find them easy to understand and sympathise with) and allowed for and dealt with both by yourself and those who love you, yet they mustn't be allowed to destroy what I feel to be more real and fundamental and freer" (431). In a profound sense Hong Ying may critique, but also memorializes Julian Bell, and his cultural incursion into China. His character learns from his experiences in China, but it does not appear to be so in the narrative as he becomes jealous of Lin, resents her, visits a White Russian prostitute and decides that of his feelings for Lin that "these were only passing sensations, not a place to rest his spirit for ever" (232). After his trip to see the war in China where he is confronted by the horror of conflict, the lovers reconcile only for Lin's husband, Cheng, to discover the truth from his wife. In a sense it is the latter who confronts Bell, demanding a commitment, since "She would no longer be the prisoner of Julian's ceaseless wavering" (268). Bell resigns and leaves rather than accept his love for Lin and allow himself to be controlled by it. Hong Ying has her Bell reflect in Hong Kong on what he has done:

On that fateful morning when they had been discovered together she had seen right through him. She knew that he was no less racist than any of the other Westerners in China. The only difference was that he was unwilling to recognize it. He still had a deep-seated contempt for the

Chinese, even for the one he loved so madly. His decision that morning to cut himself off from her in that way was typical of his European arrogance. (271)

Hong Ying's characterization here is more complex and perceptive than it first might seem. For Bell to wallow in such self-accusation does not necessarily indicate the potential for either self-knowledge or change, for to see himself as if monstrous might actually represent curiously enough an act of perverse self-affirmation, for as François Flahault points out in *Malice*:

Now—as we saw when we compared the respective advantages of love and hate—being nice means internalizing the split between oneself and the other; it means limiting oneself in order to make room for the other, and is therefore a kind of renunciation of being whole. The monster's malignity is a kind of affirmation of its wholeness. (1998/2003: 87)

The indication is that Bell leaves only with his sense of melancholy which has absorbed his bitterness. And yet at least at an implicit level overall the novel mediates this position, seeming less judgmental in the implications of its structure, for finally, after their separation, the novel ends with a spectral, ethereal embrace between the dying Lin and Julian, with a fusion of the East and West in a Heraclitean symbol: “They were locked in the climax of their mutual love, yin and yang revolving one around the other, the glittering Great River surging about them” (277). Perhaps Hong Ying's conclusion is that in both love and aesthetics the difficulties of cultural divides, which are profound and not be underestimated, might finally not prove insurmountable, offering the faint possibility of some kind common humanistic universalism underlying the human condition at least at its extremes, in the perversity of sacrifice. Perhaps in this, and in the admixture of historical sources, for Hong Ying there was another evocation of the inner need of the artist, an embracing of the turbulent irresolution of both simultaneously accepting and yet rejecting the

constraints of the mundane, and as such an interfusion of the exotic and the familiar and hence affecting a reconciliation of home and exile. On another level in its movement from the death of the male lover through to the retrospective account of the passion of the lovers and concluding with their implied metaphysical interaction (and the death of the female lover) the novel finally becomes a contemporary intercultural *ars moriendi*, a larger reconciliation with the inevitable conclusion of all of our desires.

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虹影的《英國情人》：家園、流亡與和解

杜菲益

(王智明譯)

School of Arts, Brunel University
Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 3PH, United Kingdom
E-mail: Philip.Tew@brunel.ac.uk

摘要

本文討論虹影作品的基本形式：美學自我與意識型態和文化認同的對立，以及藝術轉化和律法的衝突。這些形式在《背叛的夏》裡展現為主角林穎的六四經驗，特別是在林穎對北京年輕的自由派藝術菁英裸舞的那一段，凸顯了她對優渥學生和警察所代表的父權秩序的反抗。總地來說，本文探索家園、想望、流亡以及和解等主題，並討論《英國情人》這部小說如何萃取一段在日軍侵華與中國內戰背景下，連結中國與英國布倫茲伯里藝文圈的塵封往事，並描寫一九三〇年代一場在認同與創意之間的掙扎，如何透過兩個知識分子和作家（即英國人貝爾與武漢大學院長的妻子）之間的不倫戀來表達。這兩個主題都呈現了波西米亞前衛運動的一些面向。我將小說開場描述貝爾死於西班牙內戰的場景詮釋為小說中鬼魅與創傷的斷裂，而小說正是以這樣的方式和布倫茲伯里藝文圈建立起密切的關連。同時，我也將討論依附欲望之下的犧牲、暴力和死亡，還有族裔文化認同，怪誕分身，以及母性等主題。最後，透過小說對失落、想望、自我發現和熱情的描述，我認為小說交織著陌生與熟悉之物，協商家園與流亡，並透過跨文化的死亡書寫來投射更巨大的，更具普世價值的人性和解。

關鍵詞：虹影、中英文化關係、布倫茲伯里藝文圈、創傷、鬼魅