

# ***A Research of the Special Relationship Between Families Based on Freudian Psychoanalysis***

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to explore the reasons for the emergence of a special bond between members of the opposite sex in the family - father-daughter love - and the changes in the behaviors and attitudes of the bearers of the bond because of societal views on the bond. This paper adopted the research method of reading relevant literature and books as well as watching relevant classic movie and television productions to consider and explore society's attitude towards father-daughter love and the impact of this emotion on family relationships. The results of the study show that the emergence of this emotion is not conducive to the stability of family relationships and can lead to the distortion of the child's view of love and cause depression within the wife. Although it's unusual for such marvelous emotion to be existed, it deserves a deeper study in the context of multiple social and character relationships.

**Keywords:** Heterosexuality, Father-daughter Relationship, Freudian Psychoanalysis, Lolita Complex

## **1. Introduction**

Heterosexuality is defined as the pattern of sexuality in which sexual behavior and thinking directed towards people of the opposite sex [1]. However, there is a particular affection that also arises between the opposite sexes, that is, father-daughter love. By examining the literary representations of the theme of father-daughter relationship with the theoretical framework of Freudian psychoanalysis from three dimensions: emotional, psychological and social, this paper centers *Xin Jing* from Eileen Chang to seek for answers for the following questions. What kind of emotion exactly is it that generates between father and daughter? What are the causes of this emotion? What is it that makes a daughter ostracize her mother's position? In what kind of language institution is it considered as a perverse feeling? What kind of love is considered to be "normal?"

## **2. Historical and Social Stakes**

Eileen Chang's *Xin Jing* was in serialization in 1943 and being included in *Romances* which republished in 1944. At the time, Shanghai's literacy had entered a "prosperous period" when the general environment of literacy creation was relatively relaxing. Topics such as father-daughter relation, same-sex sentimentality, erotic desire and so forth could be released to the public without

being locked down by censorship. This open environment set up the primary ground for literacy creation, upon which writers were able to narrate stories based on their personal life experiences, emotions, and psychological struggles in details. Eileen Chang's short stories show how Chinese intellectual community were incredibly impacted by the collision of western thoughts and Chinese tradition through her personal writing experiences, with *Xin Jing* touching the extremely sensitive theme of father-daughter relationship.

Eileen Chang came from a prestige family, with her father a typical late Qing dynasty relic. He was a scholarly man who was born at the wrong time. Most unfortunately, he became addicted to opium at an early age and has eventually grown old and got depressed. Chang had a warm relationship with her father in the early years, but as time passed, the fatherly affection gradually faded, and their relationship ended up with being deteriorated to the point that they looked like strangers. Chang in fact had complex feelings for her father, which she incorporated into her writing by creating the image of Xu Fengyi in *Xin Jing* [2]. In addition, it is also believed that the torn love between father and daughter depicted in the fiction bears a strong resemblance to that of Eileen Chang and Hu Lancheng<sup>1</sup> [2]. At 23 years old, Chang fell in love with her sympathetic confidant, Hu Lancheng. Unfortunately, Hu became a traitor and betrayed his relationship with Eileen Chang, which made Eileen very confused about whether she loved the right person. She started to think about whether she was loving the essence of him or the identity of him [3]. In the fiction, Xiao Han believes that true love should not involve identity, including being a husband to another woman. In a way, it reflects the tangled feelings of Eileen Chang's reality towards Hu Lancheng. Struggle, pain, and annoyance are all present in love. It is because these emotional elements are intertwined with love that they can constitute the emotions between two people. Therefore, *Xin Jing* can also be called a window for the author to express her emotions, feeding back to the readers and the society through her words about the effects she suffered in the patriarchal system.

In the 1940s, the time when Eileen Chang wrote *Xin Jing* in Shanghai was under the strong influence of "Westernization." Many Western cultural elements, such as household goods, clothes, and foreign literature, were being introduced to the Chinese, including Freudian psychoanalysis, which focuses on identifying and releasing unconscious, repressed feelings, thoughts, memories, and desires that are negatively impacting life. The introduction of Western culture, technology, and ideas gradually opened the minds of Chinese people and also had an impact on literary creation. Eileen Chang's creation of the *Xin Jing* was one of this influence.

### 3. A Lolita Complex in the East

According to the expansion of Freudian psychoanalysis in *The Ego and the Id* [4], human beings have a wide range of sexual orientations, including homosexuality, bisexuality, asexuality, and pansexuality. Heterosexuality, on the other hand, becomes the major sexual relationship in human societies over the long course of time. It refers to an enduring sexual and emotional attraction to people of the opposite sex. However, there is a special emotion that has thus arisen in the relationship between the opposite sexes, that is, father-daughter love. Being startling and questionable for its authenticity and anti-morality, it is undeniable that this affection did come into being in the history of civilization, with a rarefied presence in the modern era. The examination about domestic sentimentality in the logic of heterosexuality can help demonstrate that.

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<sup>1</sup> Hu Lancheng (February 28, 1906 - July 25, 1981) was a modern Chinese writer, formerly known as Hu Jirui, nicknamed Ruisheng, a native of Sheng County, Zhejiang Province, and the first husband of Eileen Zhang. He was listed as a famous traitor for writing for Wang Jingwei and fled to Japan via Hong Kong after the victory in the War of Resistance.

Being labeled “abnormal” indicates that human society generally considers such sexual orientation as father-daughter love to be inconsistent with the common sense of moral norms. Freud defined the compounded emotion of attachment to father and hatred of mother in the development of girls as Electra Complex, which characterizes the second stage of female psychosexual development [5]. In this psychosexual stage, the little girl feels defective after realizing that she lacks a male organ, which leads to “penis envy” and a consequence of blaming her mother for this. Then, she will see her father as her primary sexual partner because he has the genitals, she “lacks,” which increases her love for him and makes her mother's presence redundant. However, such a competitive relationship is not permitted, so the girl develops an Electra complex, repressing her feelings for her father and submitting to her mother. This temporary solution of Electra complex becomes the base for the formation of a father-daughter relationship.

According to Freud, the availability of sex education for girls, encouraging girls to move towards same-age same-sex partners, and getting mothers to behave more closely to their daughters while fathers firmly and subtly alienate them are all useful ways to help a girl go through the complex [5]. In *Xin Jing*, however, Xiao Han's father-love complex is not guided in a regular direction, which means that she does not grow to be psychologically detached from her father as most children do nor is she able to get along well with people of the opposite sex of her age. She can only maintain a perpetual, near-love relationship with her father and grow distant from her mother. For example, Xiao Han always mentions her father outside and keeps her mouth shut about her mother, leading outsiders to believe that her mother has long since passed away. When her leg is close to her mother's, it creates intense disgust and horror inside her. They are two women who love the same man and there is a rivalry [6]. This is a demonstration of the effect of the Electra complex. On the other hand, she always behaves ambiguously and excessively intimate with her father, which makes outsiders misunderstand the relationship between the two. She was complaining about her father's lateness for her twentieth birthday party. Some gestures between them are intimate, such as sliding her finger up and down her father's nose. Xiao Han longs to be loved in front of Xu Fengyi forever so she loses her mind and even says that she is not going to leave him for the rest of her life. All the words, emotions, and behaviors, rooted in Xiao Han's admiration and affection for her father and showing a young girl's crazy infatuation with a man, have raised the suspicion of transcending the boundaries between father and daughter defined by their domestic roles. The most shocking thing is that they have been getting along like this for seven or eight years, indicating that the father-daughter love has already changed at the age of Xiao Han's sexual enlightenment. What are some other factors that cause the father-daughter love to go this far?

It's widely believed that in the process of children's growth, the attitude and influence of parents on their children is often greater than the influence of children on their parents unilaterally. Instead of saying that Xiao Han constantly ostracizes her mother because of her Electra complex and develops a monstrous love between a father and a daughter, which means she got an overpowering dependence on the father, I would argue that it is more likely Xu Fengyi, as a father, has not grasped his attitude towards his daughter. “Lolita complex” functions as a catalyst for the father-daughter love between the two. In 1955, Russian American writer Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* was published by Olympia Press in France after being banned in several British and American countries. The classic monologue, “Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul.” [7] became popular, and the term “Lolita Complex” spread to describe middle-aged men who had a special preference for young girls. Psychiatrists termed them as “pedophiles.” The image of Xiaohan is a typical example of the “Lolita girl” in the East. Her face resembles the face of a mythical child, round and cute, with red lips and a strange on it, which is disturbing beauty [6]. Such beauty has a fatal attraction to men with the Lolita complex who rely on the domination of young girls to gain psychological comfort. In the fiction, Xu Fengyi is a rich man with social power who is afraid of old age. When a few more gray hairs start to

appear on his head, he becomes very melancholy. His wife's body has long been out of shape, and she is living with low self-esteem. Xiaohan gives him psychological comfort to meet part of his lack of emotion and lust. But after Xiaohan falls deeply into the security he gives her; he abandons her and turns around to run away with Xiaohan's best friend since he knows he can never go into any relationship more than family affection with his own daughter or he will be drowned in public opinion. Xiaohan's friend, Lingqing, is also "Lolita girl" type. Since Lingqing has lack of father's love in the process of growing up, she has specific affection to older men, which allows Xu Fengyi to take advantage of the opportunity. Thus, Xu Fengyi is a typical man with a Lolita complex who gets psychological comfort from dominating young girls. Xu Fengyi's love for his wife may have been diverted by his love for his daughter. From the time Xu Fengyi became more and more indifferent to her and was attracted to a younger body, their marriage was already in the grave. But Mrs. Xu has always maintained a kind heart. For the many times she has seen intimate behaviors between her daughter and her husband, she has yet not been too concerned. She believes that her daughter is just still young and uninformed. Precisely because of this, she does not realize that her daughter has long regarded her as a hostile rival. Her deformed figure with the passage of time and the deep wrinkles on her brow were all witnesses to her descent into misery. She maintains the most superficial harmony of such a deformed family, being unaware of the fact that it contributed to the father-daughter relationship.

#### 4. The Social Label of Father-Daughter Love

Although father-daughter love is within the scope of heterosexuality, it has been recognized as "abnormal," which raises the question that in what kind of language institution is "normal" affection defined. According to the *Experience of Emotion*, the two-factor theory of emotion states that emotions are the attitudinal experiences that a person has about whether or not an objective thing meets his or her needs [8]. Thus, emotions are not only merely feelings of human beings, but also attitudes based on a person's own needs. Moreover, emotions will be more inclined to the experience of attitudes toward social needs and desires. In other words, human emotions will be subject to social and moral constraints. Normal emotion, consequently, is defined by social logics. It is socially unacceptable for a child to develop a heterosexual romantic relationship with his or her parents since such emotion is extremely monstrous in the moral code that humans follow in modern civilization.

According to Darwin's evolution theory from Khan Academy [9], natural selection is the mechanism that how evolution works. Since resources are limited in nature, organisms with heritable traits that favor survival, and reproduction will tend to leave more offspring than their peers. Therefore, in human society, people will also leave behind traits that are conducive to survival and reproduction to survive. In order not to be discriminated against by others, people will hide their non-mainstream emotions from others. In the story, although Xu Fengyi loves Xiaohan all the same, he eventually makes the decision to send her to a relative's house or take his wife far away from her. On the surface, it's a father's compassion for his child, fearing delaying his child's future and making good deeds. In fact, he might be spurned by the society and suffered a moral judgment.

Promoted by moral constraints and the Lolita Complex, Xu Fengyi comes up with the idea of living with Xiaohan's best friend, Lingqing. Same age as Xiao Han, Lingqing is a sweet-looking girl whose family is a mess. The terrible childhood makes her desperate to escape her own family by getting married. Currently, Xu Fengyi comes along to fulfill her needs – his attachment, money, and companionship. To avoid moral judgment, Xu Fengyi quickly transfers his affection for Xiaohan to Lingqing and even decides to move in with her. Being deeply hurt by Xu Fengyi, Xiaohan sees her best friend Lingqing as a love rival. She has tried a series of actions such as getting her mother to block her father's idea, introducing love to Lingqing, and warning her family, but none of these actions succeed in making her stop Xu Fengyi.

In such a dilemma, she finally ends up with an even more ridiculous decision: to get engaged to Gong Haili. She thinks that she will consolidate her father's attachment to her by doing this, while she does not realize that she will not be able to stop a man who has determined to leave to avoid getting condemned by social censorship. She becomes a complete loser in the game of polygamy, while Xu Fengyi moves on to have a secret affair with his daughter's best friend, leaving his daughter and his wife to suffer in the same place, with Xiaohan even more difficult to carry out a “normal” relationship as she has discarded the peers who fell in love with her. The narrative makes it clear from Mrs. Xu’s thoughts from the third-party perspective. The countless extreme actions Xu Fengyi has taken because of his sense of morality confirms that father-daughter love is an existence that is taboo enough for society to call it a taboo. It also just goes to show that both in the novel are in love with people they shouldn't be.

Based on the content from *Su Qing and Eileen Chang's Conversation* [10], the point that Eileen believes that a girl should marry a man that ten years older than her is the reflection of Oedipal complex. Since the lack of a close relationship with her father while growing up, her Oedipus complex could not be repressed well. So her ex-husband was 14 year-old elder than her, reflecting the importance of a healthy father-daughter relationship to a girl.

## 5. Conclusion

Father-daughter love as a special family emotion within the logic of heterosexuality has a great influence on family members. The emergence of this emotion is not conducive to the stability of family relationships; rather, it leads to the distortion of the children's concept of love and cause depression in the wife's heart. When father-daughter love occurs, the moral norms set by society can cause pain and anxiety to the father. Out of his love for his family and his daughter, the father will choose to end this “shameful” love relationship in the gentlest way possible. It is a marvelous emotion that deserves an examination in the context of multiple social and character relationships, and the reasons behind its formation and consequences.

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