



XENOFEMINIST FUTURES AND THE BEAUTY MYTH: REPOSITIONING CHINESE FEMININITIES IN WANG'S *THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF DESIRE*

Sahar Javaid
saharjavaid@gcuf.edu.pk

Lecturer, Department of English, Government College
University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.

Prof. Dr. Ghulam Murtaza
drghamaatir@gcuf.edu.pk

Professor, Department of English, Government College
University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.

Abstract

Wang's *The People's Republic of Desire* examines the intricacies of Chinese women's struggle for social visibility, tracing their metamorphosis through Hester's gender abolitionism and Wolf's beauty myth. This paper explores how these frameworks illuminate the intersections of technology, desire, and femininity in contemporary China. Wang narrates the story of modern China through the lives of four professional women, reflecting the rapid cultural and economic transformations of urban society in China. Through characters such as Niuniu, a returnee from America; Biebie, an entertainment agent; Lulu, who endures multiple abortions; Lingling, who undergoes repeated cosmetic surgeries; and Colourful Clouds, who marries her husband's grandson, Wang captures women's complex negotiations with modernity. His heroines redefine themselves by adopting xenofeminist aesthetics, which are framed through the theoretical constructs of Wolf and Hester. As trendsetters and harbingers of social change, these women exercise autonomy by embracing techno-modern cultures in a rapidly transforming era. However, in conforming to the dictates of fashion and beauty, they ironically reterritorialize patriarchy, subjecting themselves and society to intolerable pressures. In doing so, they inadvertently provoke a backlash against feminism. Their fixation on the ideal body signals a desire for bodily inscription. In contrast, their technologically enhanced bodies grant them entry into Wolf's machinic futures, where they transgress traditional gender norms and align with Hester's vision of gender abolitionism. Ultimately, this culminates in a xenofeminist future, where these women navigate the tension between self-empowerment and the commodification of the body.

Keywords: *Femininity, Gender Abolitionism, Reterritorialize, Returnee, Xenofeminism*

Corresponding Author: Sahar Javaid (Lecturer, Department of English, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan).

Email: saharjavaid@gcuf.edu.pk

1. Introduction

The People's Republic of Desire (2006) is a type of science fiction that critically examines the threats posed by science and technology to individuals and to society. Wang (2006) highlights the dystopian elements of a culture becoming increasingly influenced by media and technology, where virtual identities and superficial relationships are replacing genuine human interactions. Their internet dating, plastic surgery, and media manipulation through storytelling indicate the genuine potential for technology to create isolation, shallowness, and the loss of touch with each other. It suggests a pessimistic future for human relationships and, by extension, humanity's identity. Wang (2006) creates a picture of a society where traditional values struggle with contemporary yearnings, and the media has a two-faced character: not only a mirror of Chinese women's lives but also a shaper of their identities. The story critiques how the press becomes a trustworthy source of people's identity, showing how society and the individual are caught.

The novel also explores the issues of public attention and the image of celebrities, as represented by people such as Beibei, who is forced to live a life of public scrutiny when society's eyes are on her and finds the key to survival with the help of the media. Due to her role as president of Chichi Entertainment Company, Beibei's life has become a testament to the balance between power and personal desire. Her fabulous background and how she handled her fame exemplify the heavy public behaviour that inevitably results from societal expectations (Wang, 2006). Beibei's use of media and her controversial publicity stunts as a tool of manipulation allows her to exercise control in the industry, says the author, who also notes that she is a master of this tactic and criticises the impulsive gimmick as a cheap publicity stunt practised by third-rate celebrities. Her blind acceptance of the media's influence made her perceive herself as superior to others. Moreover, the novel examines the social impact of mass media, including the erosion of traditional norms and a fixation on instant gratification. The movie illustrates this, particularly in the shifts in attitudes towards love and loyalty. Pointing to a survey, the author reports that "37% of all one-night stands occur between partners who meet online," illustrating the

transformation of social standards brought about by modern media and technology (p. 377). Wang's (2006) narrative examines how various media types, such as fashion magazines, television, and internet dating platforms, transform and sometimes disrupt women's lives. In particular, Lingling's repeated surgeries and Lulu's story of her online dating experiences illuminate the ever-increasing importance of computer-based vestibules in finding love and companionship. Notwithstanding her initial mistrust, Lulu jumped into the online dating world, only to encounter fake profiles and disconnected dates, which revealed the reality behind the digital façade (Wang, 2006, pp. 171-182). The clothing industry's influence on women's self-perceptions is another significant aspect highlighted in the novel. All credit goes to the idea of Lulu's career as the executive editor at Women's Friends magazine, which exposes beauty standards and consumerism —two factors that undermine women's self-esteem and public image in China. Her focus on beautiful men is one of the pressures women experience to conform to the beauty norms presented by the media (p. 10). Apart from the elements mentioned above, the novel highlights the extreme measures some women take to meet social attractiveness criteria, which include plastic surgery. The line of the story explores the normality of plastic surgery in society as part of attaining the ideal look presented by the media. Lulu's friend remarks on the obsession with beauty that women in China need to have long legs, wide eyes, a small face and tiny feet, big breasts, but a small bottom, and Lulu suggests that to have all this, they need to have “genetic mutation or plastic surgery” (Wang, 2006, p.419).

Wang's *The People's Republic of Desire* (2006) depicts modern China through various passionate Asian women characters, including Niuniu, CC, Lulu, Colourful Clouds, and Beibei, as they pursue their unrelenting goals amid the global resurgence. The novel explores contemporary Chinese identity through the diverse aspirations, experiences, and perspectives of China's women, as narrated by the young journalist Niuniu. After eight years in the United States, Niuniu first finds her own country strange, as it has turned into a society that prioritises status above morality and where it is more shameful to be poor than to be a whore. In modern China, Starbucks is a symbol of high culture; divorce and abortions are commonplace, and individuals would do everything to

gain a brief moment of notoriety because it makes them win fame. Niuniu becomes friends with fellow returnee CC and relies on her childhood friends Beibei and Lulu to reconnect her with Chinese culture. Together, the four women fight to survive in a society purportedly designed for those deemed bad girls. Wang (2006) examines the conventional notion of postfeminist cultures that lead postfeminist women to xenofeminism, focusing on techno-material and antinatural futures infused with new and unmetable trends.

2. Literature Review

People's Republic of Desire (2006) by Annie Wang has drawn the attention of critics, authors, reviewers and the audience. Kelly Yin Nga Tse (2017) in an article titled "Feminist Impulses: Neoliberal Ideology and Class Politics in Post/Feminist Impulses: Neoliberal Ideology and Class Politics in Annie Wang's *The People's Republic of Desire*", elucidates that Wang's keen and often humorous insights shed light on the complexities of modern China, particularly in the realm of gender dynamics and the clash between traditional and contemporary values. She focuses on the Western-educated Chinese returnees, whose credentials from prestigious American and other Western institutions ensure a privileged status in the new China. Employed by Western companies, they relish salaries far surpassing those of their domestically educated peers. Engaging in conspicuous consumption with gusto, they embrace Starbucks, designer brands, and lavish lifestyles that often surpass those of their Western counterparts. However, despite their successes, challenges persist. Wang stresses that female returnees seeking partners of similar social standing often encounter difficulties, as male returnees tend to prefer less worldly companions who admire them. Notably, this group appears to have abandoned the traditional Confucian and socialist values that once defined China's ideals. Tse (2007) posits that this "paper argues that despite its feminist consciousness of class inequality, *The People's Republic of Desire* ultimately aligns with postfeminist ethos, neoliberal ideology and its restrictive class politics" (p.67). The optimism of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests has given way to a relentless pursuit of wealth and beauty. This transformation leaves one contemplating the true essence and purpose of the communist

revolution in the face of such overwhelming materialism and shallowness. Wang's incisive observations provoke contemplation about the evolving identity of modern China and the profound shifts in its societal values. Given her transnational exposure to Euro-American culture and the worldwide flows of gender epistemologies, Wang's 2006 book, which is set in post-socialist China, integrates Western postfeminist literary norms. These femininities inscribe new stereotypes through constrictive notions of female subjectivity. Tse (2007) discusses the novel in the context of “post/feminist imperatives concerning neoliberal ethos and class dynamics” (p. 66), and Chinese women are viewed as influential because they now possess consumerist agency, financial power, and sexual freedom.

Concurrently, Jia Liu (2010) in “The Reception of the Works of Contemporary Chinese Glam-Writers in Mainland China” examines the works of five contemporary Chinese glam-writers in mainland China and explores three different types of receptions. Liu (2010) focuses on “literary critics, actual women readers, and participants on the glam-writers’ blogs” (p. 2), rather than Wang’s novel in the context of feminism and xenofeminism. Liu 2010 has not included Wang (2006) in her research, but this dissertation focuses on her novel. This thesis makes a novel empirical contribution to audience research in mainland China, where such a study has not been previously conducted, by focusing on the role of the reader in reading and interpreting the works of glam writers. Liu (2010) examines how modern Chinese readers comprehend and respond to a specific genre of women's literature at the beginning of the twenty-first century, employing a range of qualitative research techniques.

3. Research Method

This research is theoretical and interpretative in its scope, and the interpretive study utilises the inferred framework to analyse this novel, addressing the research questions and achieving the study's objectives. It is theoretical because it develops a model based on current theories of body technologies and xenofeminism. Additionally, the study employs textual reading methodologies, including close reading, comparative analysis, open coding, and thorough contextual analysis of primary and secondary sources. Textual

analysis is one of the most popular study approaches in the humanities, especially in literary and cultural studies. Interpreting the text facilitates a deeper understanding of it within its historical, social, and cultural context. Belsey claims that an understanding of how meaning functions is essential to any meaningful textual study. Despite what strong common sense may suggest, meaning is not up to the individual and is not an issue of purpose or a separate "idea" that was developed entirely before it was inscribed. A language that always appears before us is what we learn to mean (Belsey, 2013, p. 163).

4. Discussion and Analysis

4.1. Wang's Heroines and Xenofeminist Ideologies

Annie Wang's heroines in *The People's Republic of Desire* 2006 reflect several xenofeminist ideologies in their navigation of contemporary Chinese society. They strive for autonomy, identity, and empowerment within a landscape of modern materialism. They all believe in freeing themselves from cultural ties, which promises them an alien future. Niuniu, a journalist trained in the West, lives in post-socialist Beijing, where her sophisticated female companions —Lingling, Beibie, Lulu, CC, Colour Clouds, and Huahua —enjoy their newfound independence in their sexual and economic lives. Lingling an aspirant of medically improved facial features, an aspirant of cosmetic surgeries is embodied as xenofeminism's embrace of technology to transcend biological limitations. Beibei started Chichi Entertainment Company five years ago, and she currently serves as its president. She presently has 500 employees and represents 25% of the leading singers and actresses in China. These days, Chinese singers are well compensated. They charge \$100,000 to sing four songs in a concert. Moreover, this is after-tax money. Beibei emphasises the importance of joining the media with a cute face. Conversely, Lulu serves as the executive editor of Women's Friends, a fashion publication. She was presented with several lucrative employment offers after graduating from Beijing University, but she ultimately chose to work as an editorial assistant for a fashion magazine. Due to the low wages for individuals employed in the sector, fashion publications were still relatively new in China at the time, and few people could afford to

purchase them. Many friends advised her to try something else. Biebie's stance as a master of her life and economy asserts her as a woman who controls herself by resisting gender-based hierarchies (Hester, 2008). However, Lulu has a natural passion for the beauty industry. She has a strong attachment to her job, and she is the second most important person at her magazine. Although her pay is very low, she receives complimentary memberships to gyms and spas, as well as gifts from Chanel. She is also interested in her job because she enjoys perks like free trips to Paris, Tokyo, Milan, and New York. Lulu has long, flowing dark hair and is slender, elegant, and fashionable. No matter what she is doing, her hair always seems to fall just right on her shoulders. She also has large, deep eyes that resemble those of a Caucasian. At one point, Ximu, Lulu's boyfriend, called them "pools of sex" (Wang, 2006, p.10).

Designers like Versace and Gucci provide opulent, high-end gowns that Lulu loves to wear. She does, in fact, appear strong and even a little intimidating when she is with her Chinese coworkers and rivals due to these Italian designs. She loves to outshine others and find confidence in doing so. On the other hand, the audacious Beibei "cannot risk being thought of as old or outdated" (Wang, 2006, p. 15) and is called a gold collar. As the president of Chichi Entertainment Company, she is a member of China's nouveau riche. With an income twice that of her husband and one hundred times that of the average Chinese, Beibei has the privilege of driving a BMW 750, and it costs her more than \$100,000. In China, imported luxury goods, such as cars and cosmetics, are taxed at nearly 40 per cent, but this does not deter Beibei from carrying Fendi handbags and wearing Estée Lauder makeup. Even her maids get Estée Lauder gift bags. Furthermore, she still often complains that the luxury brands sold in China are not up-to-date, so she has to fly to Paris or New York to shop at up-to-date brands (2006, p. 16). Biebie considers herself "the master of men" (Wang, 2006, p. 16). Beijing determines the status of men and women based on the following criterion: when women become bad, they receive money; when men receive cash, they become destructive (Wang, 2006, p. 17). Biebie's Chi Chi Entertainment company often hosts concerts and provides tickets to Niuniu and Lulu, who work in the media. At the same time, Lulu, a charming and attractive fashion magazine

editor and aspiring author, finds it challenging to identify herself when her relationship with a Chinese artist who studied in France goes south. CC, a business manager in international public relations and an Oxford-educated Hong Konger, returned from England after her Welsh partner left her for another Chinese woman. This research clarifies how Wang's female characters resonate with their middle-class counterparts in Euro-American postfeminist literature. Wang's texts' Chinese heroines are the wanting subjects who represent China, which is becoming more globalised. Nonetheless, the neoliberal recognition system, which imposes new stereotypes through constrictive notions of female subjectivity, also applies to these.

According to Wang (2006), the new economy is dominated by cosmopolitan women. The book's narrator, Niuniu, is a Chinese American who worked as a writer for a Western magazine after returning from Berkeley with a degree in Chinese and English. She is referred to as a "fake foreign devil" due to her emphasis on Westernised principles (Wang, 2006, p. 38). Beibei is the most prosperous proprietor of her own entertainment business at the same time. She marries a husband who cheats on her, and Lulu, who edits a fashion magazine, has a long-term affair with a married guy. As a result of her commitment, she has already had many abortions.

However, a different lady, CC, is also a returnee who is experiencing an identity crisis, as she is unsure whether she identifies as Chinese or English. Under the guise of studying English, a Chinese females go for her when she dates a Welshman who travels with her to China. Readers are presented with a series of chapter-long vignettes in which Wang (2006) offers her sharp and sometimes amusing remarks about the war of the sexes, the new China, and the old versus the new (or, more precisely, the new versus the plain new). She is undoubtedly a specialist in the field of Chinese returnees with a Western education. Wang (2006) relates the "Sex and the City" situation (Wang, 2006, p. 236) to the narratives presented in this novel, where everyone seems concerned about making a quick profit; everyone wants to look younger and more beautiful, and everyone seems shallow. Wang's description of her heroines follows the xenofeminist ideology of gender-

abolished set hierarchies. By rejecting biological essentialism —such as Biebie’s strong-headed personality and Lingling’s act of undergoing surgical procedures, which aligns with Wolf’s societal framework —they are direct indicators of a xenofeminist future.

4.2. Wang’s Women: A New Form of Subversive Subjectivity

As a xenofeminist technological artefact, ‘the Del-Em menstrual extraction device devised by American feminists in the 1970s, was introduced to women to get rid of menstrual blood after suctioning the blood at once to avoid long days of periods and also was introduced for DIY abortion technology to give women control of their bodies (Hester, 2018, p. 72). Based on this, Wang’s heroines, such as Colourful Clouds and Lulu, who had multiple abortions, have control over their sexuality. According to postfeminist trends, these young women have inevitable cycles of life events like sexual freedom, control of fertility, and delays in marriages, which have imposed new time frames in the lives of women as they are gaining control of their sexuality and reproductive system. This act complements the argument that new women are challenging the binary gender system (Hester, 2018, p. 22). Colourful Clouds exemplifies Hester’s (2018) “gender abolitionism”, which challenges assigned gender roles. Wang’s (2018) heroines chant the new rhyme of the era that first-class girls marry the Americans and second-class girls marry the Japanese; third-class girls marry the Taiwanese or Hong Kongers; fourth-class girls marry the mainlanders" (Wang, 2006, p. 196). Colourful Clouds is a true emblem of xenofeminism, deeply immersed in a techno-material life and compromising her feminine agency. As Helen Hester (2018) suggests, xenofeminism calls for a reconfiguration of the relationship between technology and gender, aiming to dismantle traditional gender roles through technological and material means. Colourful Clouds came from the Guangxi countryside. After marrying a man forty years her senior, she left China. Following their divorce, she married his grandson, Brian, a physicist, and became an upper-middle-class American suburban housewife. Forty-two-year-old Colourful Clouds, a former small-time actress, believes her men have helped her successfully upgrade her social status (Wang, 2006, pp. 78-79).

4.3. Cosmetic Surgeries and Wang's Narrative

Being antinatural, techno material, and gender abolished justifies the xenofeminist status, as well as Wang's (2006) heroines in *The People's Republic of Desire* (2006), who are engaged in this unrelenting pursuit of permanent fame and social visibility. Cosmetic surgeries and online dating are transforming human identities and making them altogether alien because they enable these candidates to move from their cultures, bodies, families, and even their set gender binary roles. In this scenario, xenofeminist women are found to be paid for their appearance, and this is a 'professional beauty qualification' (Wolf, 1990). Women of any age or race need a qualification, especially in the beauty industry, to boost their confidence and enhance their professional standing. This beauty qualification is categorised according to US law as a BFOQ, "bona fide occupational qualification" (p. 27), and according to British law, it is a GOQ, "genuine occupational qualification" (Wolf, 1990, p. 27). The 'ideology of beauty' took control of women immediately after the feminine mystique and suffrage. The ideologies of beauty drive women to adopt a mindset similar to Lingling's, who is willing to spend 300,000 Yuan on her surgeries to improve her face and features. Wang's (2006) heroines are described as having long legs but small feet. They prefer having big breasts but a small bottom; wide eyes but a small face," Lulu says. "At the end of the day, we have two choices: genetic mutation or plastic surgery!" (Wang, 2006, p. 419). In *The People's Republic of Desire* (2006), the character Lingling, who has 'registered with a top modelling agency,' also receives offers from film producers (p. 417). She epitomises the intersection of media and beauty standards with a focus on plastic surgery in Chinese society. Lingling is desirous of undergoing cosmetic surgeries by investing 300,000 yuan in an extensive cosmetic surgery package, which includes liposuction, double eyelid surgery, and leg lengthening. She dislikes her natural appearance. This transformation, meticulously documented by the Chinese media, propels her into celebrity status, securing her modelling contracts and offers from film producers and magazine publishers. Lingling's story illustrates the pervasive pressure to conform to idealised beauty standards, often perpetuated by media and cultural narratives. Her surgeries bring about physical changes and boost her confidence, enabling her to pursue

opportunities she might have previously avoided. This phenomenon highlights the drastic measures women take to meet societal expectations of beauty, reflecting a broader trend where cosmetic enhancements become a strategic investment in one's social and professional success. The narrative highlights the cultural fixation on physical perfection and the lengths individuals will go to attain it, as encapsulated in Lulu's remark that achieving the ideal body often requires "genetic mutation or plastic surgery" (Wang, 2006, p. 419). Lingling's experience serves as a microcosm of the broader societal dynamics, where beauty is commodified and surgical enhancements are normalised in the pursuit of fame and acceptance. She considers herself a celebrity after the plastic surgeries (Wang, 2006, p. 418). Nevertheless, Lulu, another woman from the novel, warns them to think about these procedures by claiming that Look at Korea; all those young models are getting facelifts, breast implants, and cosmetic eye surgery. They are becoming a nation of plastic beauties, and it does not seem to bother our men. These Koreans might start giving birth to plastic babies and fake milk from "fake boobs" after implants. (Wang, 2006, p. 418)

In the context of Wang's (2006) narrative, this research establishes that Wolf's beauty myth took control of women, where plastic surgery is a spooky business. It urges people to correct their appearance to earn money because celebrities are the set examples for them, who use plastic surgeries to get fame and economic stability, such as Lingling. She is more successful because her surgery has given her the confidence to pursue new opportunities. In Wang's (2006) narrative, Lingling is not satisfied with her appearance and features. However, it was not the case; in fact, she was pretty, and the problem was with her mental state, not her appearance. She could, however, buy a cosmetic surgery package for 300,000 yuan that included double eyelids, a three-centimetre leg lengthening, and liposuction on her stomach, back, and rear. In preparation, Lingling also requested that the Chinese media document her procedure from start to finish. She released her new products on public market evaluations shortly after her recuperation. She is now receiving proposals from book publishers and movie producers and is enrolled with one of Beijing's leading modelling agencies. (Wang, 2006, p. 426). As Balsamo claims, the body is a site for inscription, and women undergo beauty surgeries. The body is a material site where

the female body is surgically altered, stretched, carved, and reconstructed (Balsamo, 1996, p. 43). Lingling finally undergoes the obsession of taking her body as McRobbie's (2008) "task" and chooses Balsamo's (1996) idea of the correction of flaws. The beauty myth (Wolf, 1990) first makes women think themselves ugly, and then to fix that ugliness, they go for surgical procedures. Western ideals influence global beauty standards. Because they often marginalise and exclude non-Western notions of beauty. The emphasis on specific physical traits perpetuates a form of cultural imperialism, which reinforces racial hierarchies and Media critique because the media promotes normative whiteness and excludes diverse racial identities from mainstream beauty ideals (McRobbie, pp. 69-71).

Therefore, gender dynamics, consumerism, cultural globalisation, media influence, and transnational relationships redefine traditional gender norms and inequalities from xenofeminist perspectives on empowerment and cultural exchange in a globalised world. This modernity in globalisation influences women's choices in forming transnational identities, as depicted in Wang's (2006) narrative. It impacts an individual's agency and aligns with women's techno-material and antinatural identities. As this narrative explores the complex interplay between gender, consumer culture, and global fashion in contemporary China, there are unimaginably chaotic and illogical times. Wang's (2006) heroines are dynamic, impulsive, pragmatic, chaotic and brimming with desire. Wang (2006) highlights trends emphasising individuality and commercial culture, reinforcing neoliberal ideology. She also skillfully demonstrates how class politics and postfeminism intersect, offering insight into those striving for upward social mobility in a society marked by apparent class differences and depicting Chinese women as active players adept at navigating complex power relations rather than helpless victims. As is the case with Western stereotypes, the novel challenges conventional beliefs about Chinese women. The narrative offers a nuanced perspective, emphasising a tension between individual objectives and communal action as characters battle their aspirations for success on a personal level. The novel revolves around an insatiable thirst for worldly pursuits, a shallow yearning for youth, beauty, and prestige, accompanied by a deep-seated desire to be free, to belong, and to fall in love with the West and the United States.

4.4. Quest for Social Prestige: A Political Weapon Against the Advancement of Women

Gender equality was always confused with gender sameness by the communist erasure of sexual diversity, which went against the meek and subservient characteristics of pre-socialist Chinese femininity. The myth of beauty is still powerful enough to control women, states Wolf (1990). All the female characters discussed in this research demonstrate that beauty significantly influences their lives, as beauty standards dictate their actions and behaviours. They forget their cultures, undergo Westernised realities, breach their privacy and dignity by opting for knives and surgeries, and forget their roots, be it China, India, Korea or Japan, to win a name in a Western culture either by following them or getting married to a Western man. This is the driving force behind the beauty myth: becoming beautiful through attitude and behaviour. The rest of the feminine ideologies that women or men have achieved have made it regular and accessible for them. Still, beauty myths remain a myth for them even in this global and modernised feminism, where consumer culture and capitalism hold the driving seat. Wang's (2006) work attests to the rebirth of femininity, which is seen as a sign of modernity and a new kind of female liberation through harnessing technology in feminism.

Technology in “airbrushing and photo doctoring” introduced itself as superhuman scrutiny (Wolf, 2002, p. 109). The act of self-surveillance compliments one of the four luminous spaces theorised by McRobbie (2008) where the space of attention works through the fashion and beauty complex and space of globalisation regarding Niuniu, who just returned from America and is trying to explore a changed China instead immersed in the global phenomenon of subjugating women in luminosities of postfeminist masquerades in the form of beauty and media complex. Niuniu's hands are encrusted with unique white-gold rings featuring various designs, such as apples, snakes, skulls, and tiny feet. Nonetheless, the heroines in postfeminist literature are sexually assured and financially aggressive; they avoid feminism as a social struggle and support the individualistic language of "empowerment" and "choice" in a consumptive culture (McRobbie, 2009, p.11). In Wang's (2006) writing, there are echoes of the value placed

on the individual above society as well as the self-governing and self-seeking subjectivity. Women accepted the ‘professional beauty qualification’ more quietly than other labour pools (Wolf, 1991, p. 29). Given Wang's (2006) cross-cultural exposure to Euro-American culture and the worldwide flows of gender epistemologies, it is not inconceivable that she would employ Western postfeminist literary patterns in a novel set in postsocialist China. Importing postfeminist features from a European-American framework into a Chinese context raises concerns about cultural distinctiveness. McRobbie (2009) argues that rejecting feminism is often “richly rewarded with the promise of freedom and independence, most evident through” and connects the postfeminist paradigm with “anti-feminist sentiments” of wage-earning abilities, which also play a symbolic role as a badge of entitlement, citizenship, and respectability (pp.1-2). In essence, postfeminism is a cultural phenomenon that shares ideological similarities with neoliberalism.

4.5. Trending Starbucks and Media Craze in China

The media has a strong influence on Chinese people because they often engage with celebrities such as Colourful Clouds and others. A German student, Rus, argues about Western beauty and glamour, as seen in “Ricky Martin.” Shortie: “James Bond.” China Ball: “Britney Spears.” Little Thing: “Catherine Zeta-Jones.” Lovely: “Richard Gere.” Yellow Chrysanthemum: “Audrey Hepburn.” Wolf in Sheep's Clothing: “Sharon Stone” (Cha, 2006, pp. 81-82). Chinese people find Western style and Western people attractive in many ways. They adopt their trends and how they live their life, even if they have to commodify their values to gain social prestige. They want to gain visibility, and to achieve this, they are willing to go to any extent.

Divorce among women is becoming a trend due to the appeal of social visibility. It symbolises fashion in China: a xenofeminist culture of inclusivity. Every prominent woman in the Media asks the other, “Have you divorced yet? A very famous question in China (Wang, 2006, p. 65). Divorce gives sexual freedom to women, reshaping notions of womanhood and reengineering it in postfeminist Asian cultures. According to McRobbie (2020), some women follow the “imperfect” dispositif in feminism by allowing room for

"retooling, rerouting, reorienting, and repurposing the radical calls for social change. These phenomena provide women with a platform to assert their femininities by repositioning new femininities (p. 337). Modern women in Beijing often prefer to remain single and view divorce as a trend and fashion. They practice repositioning their femininities in response to new trends, shaped by the age of technology, acceleration, and alienation, thereby generating new worlds for their subjectivities. On the contrary, Wang's (2006) heroines are lost in this labour of celebrating singlehood and giving birth to the idea of Xeno-aesthetics. According to Lulu, "Fashion magazines say that truly mature women are those who have children with their second or third husbands" (Wang, 2006, p. 66). Lulu's idea complements McRobbie's 2018 claim about top girls having control over their sexual freedom, their fertility, and parenthood. As Ah Du Wang's (2006) character has been divorced three times and to catch up with Liz Taylor, she even has to quicken her pace to increase the divorce numbers," (Wang, 2006, p. 67). Moreover, Huahua got divorced because staying married seemed dull to her. Ah Du goes for a divorce because she finds her husband terrible in bed. Lan Huahua, a talented singer, decides her future and claims that one must have an exciting life to achieve fame. "Divorce is just my first plan. If necessary, I should also prepare to become a single mother, a lesbian, or a bi" (Wang, 2006, p. 70). These women characters in Wang (2006) celebrate xenofeminist ideologies and accept dystopian emancipation, which is not emancipation, but rather another entanglement with an even more profound grip of Hester's (2018) gender abolitionism.

4.6. Obsession with screens and brands

The Chinese desire for royalty has never waned, consistently giving people a sense of superiority (Wang, 2006, p. 28). The dystopia of all times is that women in China are dystopic, suggesting ways to become increasingly famous by following odd lies, as they have a firm belief that stirring up controversy by being famous as homosexual or bisexual, having or spreading false extramarital affairs to shock people. Moreover, asking the government to ban and start speaking offensively about prominent people, making fun of institutions, and ridiculing famous individuals can make one famous all over the world.

This act of achieving fame this way is the dystopian emancipation that women in China desire (Wang, 2006, p. 95). Lulu had multiple abortions because of her boyfriend Ximu. Biebie is running Chichi Entertainment, Niuniu is a returnee, and CC thinks of herself as a princess, bragging that she is a Western-upbringing, Oxford-accented, Oxford-educated Hong Kong girl (Wang, 2006, p. 139). This transnationalism, exemplified by marrying foreign men and valuing objects made in other countries, has become a fashion symbol. Lulu and Colourful Clouds marry Western men, embodying McRobbie's (1993) concept of "Western modernity," where foreignness is celebrated as an achievement on a global scale. The entertainment industry, encompassing media and beauty, is characterised by the successful execution of popular and capitalist culture approaches. They first create the atmosphere and target the most vulnerable audience, usually women. Especially Asians consider themselves less behind regarding their appearance and want to compete with the Western beauty standards, either possibly or impossibly, by undergoing different procedures, no matter the cost. Nevertheless, Chinese people occasionally enjoy going to The Den because of the DJ who plays retro-Euro house music from the 1970s and 1980s (Wang, 2006, p. 73).

Tabulated Analysis of the Chinese Novel *The People's Republic of Desire*

Cause	Effect	Result	Affectees
Postfeminist masquerades and the fashion-beauty complex push women to seek social visibility	Wang's heroines—	They reterritorialise patriarchy within the fashion-beauty system, reinforcing beauty standards instead of dismantling them.	Women themselves (experiencing both agency and oppression)
Americanness	Biebie (with young lovers)	Pushing feminism back to backlash	Society (facing pressure to conform to aesthetic norms)
Social Prestige	Lulu (multiple abortions)	Tech-infused identities	Inclusive feminist movements (Xenofeminism)

Beauty Myth	Lingling (repeated surgeries)	Techno-commodification in the guise of empowerment	Postfeminist masquerade (McRobbie, 2008) — beauty as both agency and entrapment
Body Technologies	Colourful Clouds (marrying into wealth)		The techno-body (Balsamo, 1996) — perfect body as obsession and site of inscription
			Machinic futures (Wolf, 1990) — rejecting set gender rules.
			Gender abolitionism (Hester, 2018) — xenofeminism as future identity
			Backlash against feminism (empowerment paradox)

5. Conclusive Remarks

Wang's 2006 narrative portrays women, caught in different pursuits of achieving social visibility, under Wolf's (2008) attention-grabbing lens of the beauty myth; the complex world of fashion and beauty, and Hester's xenofeminist future. Wang's heroines, such as Biebie, who has young lovers younger than her; Lulu, who has many abortions; Lingling, who undergoes repeated surgeries; and those who, like getting married to her husband's grandson, reposition themselves through xenofeminist aesthetics validated by the theoretical concepts of Wolf (1990) and Hester (2018). These young women, the forerunners of social change and trendsetters, assert their autonomy by making informed choices in an era of accelerated transformation. They, by adhering to fashion laws, reroute, retool, reposition, and reassert their femininities. Moreover, their action to confine in the regressive techno modified aesthetics, reterritorialises patriarchy in the fashion-beauty complex, creating unbearable pressure on society and themselves. This way, they are responsible for creating a backlash in feminism by validating Balsamo's idea of the perfect

body as an obsession and as a site of inscription. Moreover, becoming techno bodies opens a way for Wolf's machinic futures by rejecting set gender rules and accepting Hester's gender abolitionism, where they do not follow set gender roles: a xenofeminist future.

Refereces

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