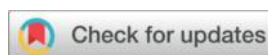


# Commodity · Body · Dream——A Polysemous Interpretation of Ding Ling's "A Small Room in Qingyun Village"

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**Abstract:** The work "A Small Room in Qingyun Village" elaborates on the reasons why women have become capitalist commodities by depicting the normal life of a group of prostitutes. Body writing presents women's bodily experiences, emotions, and desires from a unique perspective, truly caring for the feelings of the prostitute community and transcending traditional concepts. The metaphor of dreams reveals the predicament of women while implying the longing of rural and urban women for a "beautiful spiritual home". This article takes Ding Ling's work "A Small Room in Qingyun Village" as the center, and deeply analyzes the female subject consciousness from three dimensions: commodity, female body awakening, and metaphor of dreams, demonstrating the multidimensionality of human nature.

**Keywords:** Product, Body, Care, Dream

Ding Ling is renowned in the literary world for her 1928 publication "The Diary of Ms. Safi" in the "Fiction Monthly". Her works bear the imprint of the May Fourth

Movement, and "Ms. Safi" is the cry of young women whose hearts are burdened with the pain and trauma of the times. The publication of "Mrs. Safi's Diary" marked Ding Ling's debut in the literary world with a pioneering attitude at that time. The book "A Small Room in Qingyun Village" was written at the end of 1928 and published in the second issue of the monthly magazine 'Red and Black' on February 10, 1929. The publication of this novel indicates that Ding Ling had already experienced the hardships of the lower class working people in her early works, and she shifted her focus to the lowly status of the lower class prostitutes. At the same time, this provided an internal basis for Ding Ling's ideological transformation after creating "Water" in 1930. Ding Ling's early works not only focused on the moans and pains of petite bourgeois educated women, but also shifted her perspective to the concern for the survival of the working class at the bottom and the profound exposure and ruthless criticism of society. In the highly overlooked work "A Small Room in Qingyun Village", on the one hand, brothels serve as commodity markets and prostitutes become commodities. On the other hand, as the consciousness of prostitutes increases, Ding Ling attempts to reveal the hidden inner world of this special group through "dreams".

### **1.Reduced to mere commodities in the capitalist market**

In 1923, Lu Xun's creation of "What Happened After Nora's Departure" gave many inspirations to literary writers. "The dominant ideology of the May Fourth Movement only left a brief moment for women - the new women - that is Nora's moment, Nora's moment." [1] As a fragmented mirror of the new women, Nora is praised and worshipped by people. Nora's departure "represents the attitude of women in the new era who step out of their homes to seek independence and personal liberation. Ding Ling was deeply influenced by the women's liberation movement during the May 4th Movement. A Ying in her works is a transformation of "Nora". Although A Ying has no knowledge and culture, she resolutely left her lover's hometown and went to the city to find Xintiandi. Finally, she could not escape the fate of "Nora". As described by Lu Xun, "What should we do after Nora leaves? Either she falls into depravity or she returns." [2] The prosperity and extravagance of the city plunged A Ying deeply into it, indulging

her, but she lost herself and ultimately fell into the abyss of depravity.

Ding Ling placed her writing space in a brothel on a bustling street in Shanghai, and her articles are filled with a strong cultural atmosphere of Shanghai. Firstly, Shanghai is very different from other parts of the country. Lodz. Murphy referred to Shanghai as the "key to understanding modern China". Since its opening as a port, Shanghai has been favored by Western powers due to its natural geographical characteristics and has since been incorporated into global trade. Shanghai, as a concession, was established from November 1845 to August 1943, lasting nearly a hundred years. In modern Chinese history, the foreign concessions in Shanghai were opened earliest, existed for the longest time, and had the largest area. The concession has already occupied three-quarters of the urban area of Shanghai. Due to the long-term influence of Western cultural atmosphere, the values and lifestyle of the citizens in the concession are far from traditional culture. The main location mentioned in this article, "Qingyunli," also belongs to the British Concession. "The definition of" Qingyunli "in" Biographies of Flowers on the Sea "is" a lane on Wuma Road, bordered by Baoshan Street to the south, Zhaorong Lane to the west, and Renji Hospital to the north. The approximate range of Shuyu is the middle section of Sima Road (now Fuzhou Road) in the British Concession, centered around Xihuifang Lane to the north and Tongqing Lane to the south, starting from Zhonghe Lane to Daxing Lane to the east, Gongyang Lane on Sanma Road to the north, and Qingyunli Lane on Wuma Road to the south. "Shanghai's citizens' thinking is closest to Western values, and commercial spirit slowly seeps into their hearts. Gradually formed a value system based on commodity concepts. So the concept of rural areas and self-sufficient culture have been forgotten. They emphasize "equality, competition, and individual freedom", and the success of Shanghai merchants has gained identity recognition, and the status of scholars and merchants has also undergone a transformation. The traditional ethical concept of hierarchy has undergone changes, with the status of the upper and lower levels being surpassed, and the distinction between good and evil among the common people gradually being eliminated. For example, the prostitutes in Changsan Shuyu were

originally considered lowly but were referred to as "servants" and "gentlemen". Under the situation of respecting fame and reputation in heavy industry, traditional ethical standards have also undergone significant changes. The concept of 'pursuing wealth through profit' has driven many people to leave their hometowns and live in the metropolis of Shanghai. The pursuit of profit and wealth is the deepest desire of many people, and Zhang Ailing once summarized the lives of Shanghai citizens as "men and women in food and drink". The brothels, teahouses, theaters, and restaurants play the flute every night, indulging in debauchery and endless enjoyment, becoming synonymous with the nightlife of Shanghai. On the other hand, during the period of 1912-1936, Chinese society was turbulent and unstable, and the concessions were relatively less affected by turmoil and disturbance compared to other places, which attracted a large amount of social capital and labor to transfer to Shanghai. The culture of Greater Shanghai corrodes and influences every citizen of Shanghai. As an ordinary brothel in the urban area of Shanghai, it is undoubtedly a microcosm of the debauchery and decadence of Shanghai's commercial culture.

Ding Ling went from her hometown in Hunan to study and develop in Shanghai. Her youth, in the 1920s, was a period of transition and development from rural to urban life, from feudal farming to capitalist life, under the influence of the trend of the times. Under the influence of the May Fourth Movement and the New Culture Movement, cities have been tainted by capitalism. Since the failure of the Great Revolution in 1927, the vast rural society in China was no longer able to resist the impact of the capitalist market in the 1930s. The ancient agricultural civilization has been broken, and although China's industry has taken shape, it is unable to escape the exploitation of foreign investment. The semi colonial China is transitioning to capitalist cities. Although the market for commodity culture is gradually becoming standardized, it is only a vassal of capitalist civilization. The Xinhai Revolution did not break the dreams of Ah Q and ignorant people in local civilization, and the May Fourth Movement and the Northern Expedition did not have a significant impact on local culture. Rural areas still retain the same ignorant and closed ethnic customs, lifestyles, and behavioral values as feudal

society. The historical style of this period deeply influenced Ding Ling's creative pattern. At the same time, as a marginalized group of people who came from rural Hunan to Shanghai, Beijing and other big cities to strive, Ding Ling had a deep sense of identity with those who tried to establish themselves in the city, specifically a sense of helplessness, loneliness and wandering.

Ding Ling's creations have always focused on female characters who have transitioned from rural areas to the outskirts of cities. These women have gone through the entire process from the construction of urban dream homes to the shattering and disintegration of their dreams. The novel "Mengke" depicts a girl who leaves her hometown and travels alone to the city to work hard. After rejecting false emotions, she becomes an admired film and television star in order to survive. Selling out love, dignity, and beauty, one has completely become a commodity in the capitalist market, to be bought and sold by others. Behind the character Mengke, there is a shadow of Ding Ling herself. Ding Ling once told Hu Yepin about her idea of going to Shanghai alone to act as a movie actress, but the film work itself and the director's picky behavior towards the appearance and behavior of the actors made Ding Ling feel her self-esteem was damaged. Later, Ding Ling placed this experience on the female lead "Mengke" in the work. The female protagonist Ah Mao in "Miss Ah Mao" has been to a bustling city full of lights and wine, and since then, she has been unstoppable. A simple and hardworking woman from a small town dreams of becoming a wealthy lady in a big city. She longs to become a wealthy person and live a happy life that people envy. But when the dream turned into a foam, he chose suicide. Until Ding Ling's work "A Small Room in Qingyun Village" depicted the protagonist prostitute A Ying and explained the psychological changes of rural poor who had not integrated into the city in the early days. These three early works of Ding Ling all depict from different perspectives how rural women are alienated by capitalist cities. Three women with different personalities "went to the city" and all ended up betraying the city, revealing the common destiny of women from the countryside to the city, from anti feudalism to exploring freedom. However, this is not a way for women to achieve liberation, but a process from feudal

slavery to capitalist gender slavery. Especially for Mengke and A Ying, the process of realizing their urban dreams is also a process of women falling from being sacrificial victims of male dominated society to actively selling their colors and becoming pornographic commodities.

## **2.The dissolution of shame and the highlighting of self-care**

The May Fourth Movement, as a turning point between old and new literature, had a powerful impact on the feudal autocratic system and ethical morality, demonstrating a new posture of modern culture. The most prominent feature among them is the promotion of the modern cultural spirit of "self-expression" in literature. The May Fourth Movement writers reshaped their self-image and presented their true selves in various forms with an unprecedented pioneering attitude. The concepts of "self" and "individual liberation" were first truly proposed at that time. At the end of 1918, the famous writer Zhou Zuoren was the first to propose the concept of "human literature", which for the first time clarified the consciousness of "human" in thought and put the consciousness of affirming human value and rights into practice in the field of literature.

Ding Ling is a practitioner of the "self", "individual liberation", and affirmation of the value of "human" in the May Fourth New Culture. Throughout Ding Ling's creative process, "A Small Room in Qingyun Village" has continued her tradition of focusing on the themes of character desire and bodily awakening. In Ding Ling's works, it was found that "with the addition of a pair of female body eyes, they gained gender, the knowledge and ability of adults to see the existence of the body - desire, hear the language and voice of the body, and understand the meaning of the body." [3] Her debut work "Mengke" first introduced language describing male desires and their behavior. "When his body leaned forward, the faint breath made her neck feel a warm and itchy sensation." "Mengke was wholeheartedly calculating her chess moves. She didn't notice that there was also a pair of eyes on the other side scrutinizing her slender fingers." Later, her work "The Diary of Ms. Safi" comprehensively displayed Safi's feelings towards "beautiful" men as a young woman. Desire and demand. I saw two bright red,

tender, deeply sunken corners of the mouth. "" Why don't you rush over and kiss his lips, his eyebrows? The work "A Small Room in Qingyun Village" continues this desire. As a prostitute, A Ying instead comments on the guests, picking three and picking four. "She thinks that young students have sharp and thin hands and clean clothes, but it is not boring." "That hairy hand is ugly, but rich. She laughs at the guests of her sisters who are flat, numb and short." This completely subverts people's stereotype of prostitutes. If Safi is a rebel against feudal ethics, then A Ying is a cry out for herself.

The May Fourth Movement was an era that pursued individual freedom and liberation for women. The New Culture Movement abolished old ethics and explored issues such as the "family system," "chastity," and "women's liberation. All of these have brought fresh blood to women's minds. In 1918, Zhou Zuoren translated "On Chastity" and published it in "New Youth", pointing out that "chastity is a hobby, a belief in cleanliness, and therefore does not have the nature of forcing others", indicating that it is love, tacit understanding, and commitment between lovers. Lu Xun also published an article titled "My View on Jielie", which argues that "Jielie" has transformed from a virtue to a moral shackle that poisons and constrains women. This is a form of oppression against women, and he deeply criticized the selfishness and extremism of this male chauvinism. So advocating a new morality of mutual respect and gender equality. In addition, Hu Shi also wrote articles such as "On the Issue of Chastity", "On the Issue of Chastity", and "On the Staining of Women by Rape" to expound that husbands should have a correct view of chastity and advocate for sincere love within marriage. In addition, there are multiple works by authors such as Shen Jingxu's "The Issue of Women's Reincarnation", Ke Shi's "The Virtuous View of Feminists", and Chen Qixiu's "The Monetary Value of Women's Virginity" to discuss women's issues such as women's liberation and gender equality. With the translation of theories by Freud, Flair, and others to China in the 19th century, it immediately sparked a great discussion. Yu Dafu's creation of "Sinking", Feng Yuanjun's creation of "Travel", Lu Yin's creation of "Mistress's Diary" and other articles respond to the new ethical and moral principles advocated by the May Fourth Movement. The most prominent among

them is Ding Ling's "The Diary of Lady Safi", in which Safi, as a rebel against feudal ethics, rebelled against traditional sexual morality and etiquette. Later in the same year, she created "A Small Room in Qingyun Village", which was a continuation of the same theme as her work "Mrs. Safi's Diary". Similarly, revealing the most authentic and secretive inner world of women, while resisting feudal ethics and indulging in the desire for self enjoyment. Safi pursues Ling Jishi's handsome appearance and is fascinated by his demeanor and posture, but in her thoughts and inner world, she looks down on his vulgar values and has a more refined pursuit. So Safi is depressed, painful, and unable to find a way out. In "A Small Room in Qingyun Village," A Ying, from the initial shame and inferiority of becoming a prostitute to the disdain for nitpicking guests' appearance, sympathizes and comforts the madam, and is willing to become a low-level prostitute, also illustrating the helplessness of urban fringe groups. However, A Ying's background and status in "A Small Room in Qingyun Village " determined that she could not have her own true sense of independence and liberation like the knowledgeable woman Sha Fei in "The Diary of Miss Sha Fei" and Zijun in "Shang Shi".

Since the May Fourth Movement, we often compare Ding Ling's female consciousness with the female consciousness in the works of female writers such as Lu Yin and Feng Yuanjun during the same period. The women portrayed by Ding Ling are more independent and autonomous, and seem to be more in line with "modernity". The women in Lu Yin's works may seem to demand independence, but in reality they are very fragile and have been pursuing male identity, but in the end, they have all ended in failure. Compared to others, the women portrayed by Ding Ling are more focused on their true emotions and free spirited personalities, attempting to break free from the constraints of traditional morality and face the world with an independent and confident attitude. In her writing, starting from Mengke, Safi, Lijia, Meilin, Zhenzhen, and Lu ping, especially the protagonist A Ying in the work, seem to have similar personality charm. They are stubborn, independent, open, dare to respect their true feelings, and dare to challenge traditional worldliness.



The book "A Small Room in Qingyun Village" was published in 1929, during the period of the May Fourth New Culture Movement. The liberation of individuality and women's liberation brought Ding Ling profound thoughts on what difficulties women, especially those at the bottom of society, faced in traditional society? Where is the way out? Ding Ling takes a different approach as a female writer to express the most authentic inner experiences and feelings of the lower class female group. The portrayal of prostitutes in her works is different from the suffering female images described in classic works such as "Rickshaw Boy" and "Crescent Moon" who are forced to be insulted and damaged by life, and even more different from the "chaste" image of sacrificing for the party and the people and losing her chastity in Ding Ling's creation "When I Was in Xia Village" in the 1940s. The portrayal of this "alternative" prostitute image is quite bold and highly creative. The female protagonist A Ying in the text, although a prostitute, focuses on her personal life experience and enjoyment. The concept of "aesthetics of survival" was first introduced by Fuke in his 1982 lecture on "hermeneutics of the subject". This is also the center of Foucault's theoretical research. He believes that caring for oneself is the core content of his aesthetic of survival. In the book, he emphasizes the close relationship between "knowing yourself" and the principle of "caring for oneself". Caring for oneself is the foundation and prerequisite for understanding oneself. Caring for oneself is an attitude about oneself, others, and the whole world. It involves a wide range of aspects, including one's own body, soul, daily life, and relationships with others in the world. "[4] Fuko quoted Zeno as saying that those who want to save themselves should constantly focus on themselves throughout their lives. As a poor and lowly prostitute, A Ying is fully aware of her lower status as a woman while also paying attention to her own feelings. This is also the difference from the image of prostitutes in the past. The article provides a detailed description of her individual feelings towards men. For example, she systematically classified and compared the men she had served. That hand is sharp, thin, and thin, how clean his clothes are. "" How small his anger is. "" Although he is clean and refined, he is just so sulky! "" She thought of this hairy haired man again, who is ugly, but has copper coins. "" And Ah sister's guest, with her short, chubby body and flat, numb face,

also appeared. "As a low-level female prostitute, A Ying did not feel the pain and shame of being a prostitute, but instead commented on the guest's appearance, wealth, and clothing. When mentioning Chen Laosan in the article, she wrote, 'She feels that he is better than all men and can make her feel comfortable, which she couldn't feel when she was at home before.' A Ying compared the men she met in brothels with Chen Laosan, thus re understanding men and the world. A Ying seems to feel sorry for Amu. She thinks she can stand alone on the road without needing the company of her aunt. Isn't Amu able to save on expenses alone? "[5]" She thinks she should work with Amu to deal with the person who really likes her. At this time, Amu loves her more than a mother loves her daughter. "[6]" She doesn't feel cold when she's soliciting customers outside, and her emotions turn from exhaustion to passionate excitement. And at the end of the article, it is mentioned that A Ying went out to solicit customers at night, but the madam pitied her and asked her to go back and rest for a good night. From this series of descriptions, it can be seen that A Ying not only fully integrated into the life of the brothel, but even sympathized with the brothel's madam who exploited the interests of prostitutes. These behaviors all demonstrate A Ying's satisfaction and contentment with the life of prostitutes at this time. Not only was he picky about his guests, but he also enjoyed and appreciated the life of the madam and even the brothel. A Ying places her own enjoyment and senses in an important position in her life journey, changing the previous pattern where women exist only to satisfy male desires and value expression, rather than as independent discourse subjects. There was also a hidden possibility behind Ding Ling's attempt to improve women's status by enhancing their discourse power, which was highly challenging in society at that time.

The famous French philosopher Michel Foucault believed that there is a close relationship between sexual desire and power. Sexual desire is expressed through power relations. For example, in various relationships such as between men and women, between young and old, between teachers and students, and between priests and laypeople. And in power relations, sexual desire is not the most difficult factor to control. On the contrary, it is the most usable and docile factor. Here, sex is manifested

through the relationship between men and women, that is, between clients and prostitutes. Women begin to understand men and the world through their bodies, and then use their bodies to enjoy life through their actions. As a prostitute, A Ying's picky selection of guests' appearance, pity for brothel madam, and satisfaction and cherishing of her current life. Rather than being a kind of corruption, it is more accurate to say that one identifies with the most genuine desires within oneself, the dignity of the body as the subject, the desire and pursuit of free life forms, the resistance to feudal traditional ethics, and the deconstruction of male power. A Ying abandoned the traditional ethical value of obedience to men and dared to engage in equal dialogue with them.

China has long been a patriarchal society, where women's physical sensations have been suppressed and obscured. As a writer with a strong sense of female subjectivity, Ding Ling breaks through the barriers of mainstream culture with a pioneering attitude, challenges traditional values, and empowers women with equal rights to engage in dialogue with men.

### **3.The Metaphor and Analysis of "Dream"**

Dreams have a dual interpretation, on the one hand symbolizing the "urban dream" of rural women entering the city, which is Ding Ling's way out for lower class rural women, and also the path for women to strive for independence and liberation. On the other hand, it implies that A Ying's "dreams" appear multiple times in the work, and "dreams" become an alternative space for the characters to express their self-awareness, a carrier for the characters' ideological expression, which not only drives the development of the plot, but also has more metaphors.

#### **3.1The Disillusionment of the 'City Dream'**

The "urban dream" constructed by Ding Ling for women refers to rural women's attempt to change their marriage and destiny by entering big cities and achieving economic independence. The ultimate symbol of disillusionment in the "City Dream" is that A Ying has completely become a prostitute. The disillusionment of dreams

symbolizes that the path of women seeking self liberation is exceptionally tortuous and bumpy. The road to the city is a necessary path for many people, including rural women, to pursue their gold rush dreams. In other words, it is a necessary choice for rural women to achieve economic independence, personal independence, and liberation. Entering the city "symbolizes the awakening of female consciousness in women, while" decisively leaving "shows a rebellious attitude. Lu Xun once said, "Unfortunately, China is too difficult to change. Even if a table is moved or a furnace is modified, it almost takes blood." [9] In the absence of a qualitative change in the Chinese cultural environment, how can China's "Nala" fight for "economic power"? Even if they obtain "economic power", whether they can ultimately achieve independence and liberation is still unknown.

This' urban dream 'not only exists in Ding Ling's writings, but there are numerous texts in the history of modern Chinese literature about rural women entering big cities and ultimately falling into prostitution. Many writers have focused on the issue between women, urban areas, and individual liberation. New Sensation writer Shi Zhecun once mentioned in "Fisherman He Changqing" that the daughter of an ordinary fisherman in a small town, Juzhen, followed her father to the city and witnessed the prosperity of big cities. Influenced by her female companion, she believed that big cities were easy to find a job in. She refused the love of the simple fisherman He Changqing in the small town and went to work alone in Shanghai. The article did not directly describe Juzhen's life in Greater Shanghai, but only learned from the villagers who returned home that Juzhen soon became a "wild chicken" on Shanghai's Fourth Avenue. The author seems to favor the characters Juzhen and Changqing, and the ending ends with Juzhen returning to the countryside and living a peaceful and peaceful life with Changqing. New sensation writer Hei Ying depicts in "Spring Song" that the dancer Yin Zi left her parents and the countryside due to her opposition to arranged marriages, and eventually became a dancer due to the luxurious environment and oppression of life in Shanghai. She wanders around the dance hall every day, making a living in the darkness, filled with despair for the world. The Shanghai style writer Zhou Tianlai's "Sister in law in

the pavilion" vividly depicts the tragic life of a woman named "Sister in law in the pavilion" who worked as a secret prostitute in Shanghai to take care of her disabled father who smoked heavily in the countryside. In the end, "Sister in law in the pavilion" died tragically from illness. One way for rural women to seek a new life in the city is to sell their bodies in order to gain the right to survival, either by falling into depravity or returning. The 'urban dream' ultimately either returns to the countryside or falls into depravity. Throughout literary history, Han Bangqing's "Biographies of Flowers on the Sea" in the late Qing Dynasty vividly portrays the urban debauchery and the moral degradation and addiction of rural people in the city. Lao She's "Rickshaw Boy" focuses on the arduous life of Xiangzi, a rural resident, after entering the city, and how his worldview gradually evolves. Women who enter the city eventually become "sacrifices" of urban civilization. Like Xiangzi in "Rickshaw Boy", they struggle in the city and can only succumb to reality. The city, as a 'home', constantly wears away various virtues and qualities from them. Just like "A Small Room in Qingyun Village", A Ying transforms from a naive and kind girl who comes to Shanghai to make money to a prostitute who pities the madam and feels that she has lived a good life every night. Women ultimately become alienated individuals under material desires. A Ying, Juzhen, Yinzi, and Tingzijian's sister-in-law have all fallen victim to the desires of the city, and they are also victims of urbanization in China's modernization process. When urban imagination has become a "tomb" for rural women, they flee from the countryside to the city, encountering identity anxiety and crisis, and the disillusionment of their vision. Returning to the countryside or being swallowed up by the city is also a drawback brought about by urban civilization.

### **3.2The Interpretation of Dreams**

The novel is interspersed with A Ying's dreams from start to finish. Several times in the article, it is mentioned that "in her dreams." "In her dreams, he returns home, and Chen Laosan holds her. Chen Laosan becomes unusually strong, and she feels that he is better than all men... She wants to spend her life quietly with him in their hometown." [8] "In her dreams, A Ying gives Chen Laosan many banknotes she earned herself, some

from tips given by customers, and some from winning at flower games. At this moment, she hopes that the two of them can spend a peaceful life quietly in their hometown." The article describes that in her dreams, she is very happy. "Chen Laosan comes to disturb her again. She wonders if Chen Laosan has become like he is in her dreams?" From these words, it can be seen that "Chen Laosan" is the person A Ying often dreams of when she leaves her hometown and becomes a prostitute in the city. This can reveal A Ying's subconscious. Psychologist Freud believes that "dreams are not baseless, but the fulfillment of wishes." [10] Dreams are meaningful mental phenomena and should be considered a continuation of mental activity in a conscious state. From this, we can infer A Ying's most authentic wishes and thoughts. Through dreams, we can derive the following information: First, A Ying had a man she loved in her hometown, "Chen Laosan." She longs to see Chen Laosan and live a simple and happy life of farming and weaving with him in her hometown. Second, her current mood is confused and perplexed. She is curious about Chen Laosan's current appearance and life, and she imagines and doubts the scenario of Chen Laosan seeing her again as an old lover. She worries that if Chen Laosan knows she has become a low-class prostitute in Shanghai and disdains her, she will be conflicted and hesitant. The article writes, "He may not be willing to treat her as well as before. Perhaps he has already forgotten about her and married someone else." From her series of imaginations, we can see A Ying's self-denial, inferiority, and doubt, as well as her doubt about whether she can return to a peaceful life after falling into depravity in the bustling city of Shanghai. Psychologist Jung believes that dreams are compensatory acts of consciousness. "The more one-sided or distant the thoughts of consciousness are from the optimal state of life, the greater the possibility of dreaming." [11] Dreams often make these weakened things reappear. The dreamer's sadness or happiness is compensated through dreams. A Ying's frequent dreams of living happily with Chen Laosan are a psychological manifestation of trying to compensate for what she lacks in life.

Life in dreams is pleasant, beautiful, joyful, and full of longing, while reality, compared to dreams, is extremely cruel, filled with sadness and sorrow. As the heroine,

A Ying, finds herself in a state of contradiction and wandering in reality. The author's emotions shift from joy and surprise upon entering the dream to a sense of helplessness and desolation after the dream is interrupted, akin to "not knowing in the dream that one is a guest, indulging in a fleeting moment of pleasure". The article repeatedly mentions imagery such as "dreams", "Chen Laosan", and "hometown". "An 'image' can be transformed into a metaphor at one time, but if it is constantly repeated as a presentation and representation, it becomes a symbol, or even a part of a symbolic (or mythological) system." [12] "Chen Laosan" is like a symbol, appearing from time to time when A Ying is content with living a life as a prostitute, representing A Ying's most secret and unrecognized longing for pure and beautiful love, and her most primitive and genuine kindness. "Dream" appears repeatedly throughout the novel, symbolizing A Ying's yearning for a better life. "Dream" metaphorically represents A Ying's ideal dream life. It is also a beautiful spiritual home that A Ying has constructed for herself, representing another subjective imagination of "home".

As an outstanding female writer, Ding Ling has always centered her writing around her concern and reflection on women's issues. Her novels are consistently imbued with a strong sense of foresight and rebellious spirit. The publication of her work "A Small Room in Qingyun Village" was not surprising. It exists as an alternative paradigm for portraying prostitutes in the history of modern Chinese literature, subverting the traditional portrayal of prostitutes in specific historical contexts by previous writers. It uncovers the long-obscured "pleasurable experiences" of the female population and reveals another facet of the lives of women from the grassroots.

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