

Gender and Female Images in *Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf* and *Mr. Wolffy, Mr. Right!*

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Abstract

Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf is very popular among Chinese children and families throughout the past 15 years in modern China. The purpose of this study is to examine how female characters are portrayed in this television cartoon. In other words, the paper examines the images or depiction of gender roles in terms of animal bodies in this popular Chinese TV cartoon. Each character reflects the current gender ideals in contemporary Chinese society. For example, Beautiful Sheep continues the long-historical visual tradition of ancient beauty, Red Wolf represents the fierce modern Chinese wife, Flower Sheep exposes the issue of ageism and objectification. The paper will mainly analyze the images of each character and the gender messages hidden behind of them.

* The Chinese character “羊” (yang) can refer to both sheep and goats.

* The Appendix attached at the end of the paper includes the images and introduction of animal characters from the cartoon *Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf*

Introduction

Most of time, in gender studies, the human body is regularly treated as a “carrier” of gender ideology. However, gender issues can also be embedded in the animal bodies in children’s cartoon, which gives a double layer for hiding its gender ideology. In communication and gender studies, “animality” is an understudied gendered position, which therefore opens up many research possibilities. Undeniably, animal characters in the cartoons can also have human-like characteristics, including walking/standing on two feet, the ability to speak and show emotions, and so on, which further indicates that animal characters can also be designed on the basis of the existing social stereotypical gender role models (Gökçearsan, p. 5202, 2010). Some scholars, such as Liu & Wang, said, “There is not any other visual art that has more imagination or surprise power than animation. Animation art can turn time back and twist the space, in which a designer can express his own ideas without any obstruction in an unfettered way” (p.41, 2010). In Shilpa Dave’s paper *Apu’s Brown Voice* (2005), she argues that “the Simpsons rearranges reality and allow the audience an even greater distance from the characters than do live action situation comedies” (p.321). Since there is a freedom from reality in animation, it gives much space and power for animators to hide real-life issues into the virtual cartoon world. In other words, the innocent display of television cartoons can also send “subtle messages with various negativities”, which here in this paper can be related to the sheep character’s gender (Gökçearsan, p. 5202, 2010).

One modern Chinese cartoon that will be discussed in the paper is called *Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf*. The story setting is in the Green Green Grassland where lives a group of sheep fighting against a clumsy Big Big Wolf. This animation became enormously popular with Chinese children since 2005. Another show is called *Mr. Wolfy, Mr. Right!*, one of the animated

series of *Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf*. It is a series of short web videos created in February 2017. Different from the world inhabited by animals in *Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf*, the story setting in *Mr. Wolffy, Mr. Right!* becomes an alternate universe populated by human characters in the contemporary and busy workplace where the pressure and workload make women eager to have a good husband like Big Big Wolf, who can tolerate everything about women themselves (Jianhua, 2010). Those human characters' archetypes are the animal characters in *Big Big Wolf*. For example, the archetype of Hollie is Red Wolf, and the archetype of Hu Fei is Big Big Wolf.

In *Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf*, there is a huge visual diversity among male characters' images, from intelligent hero Happy Sheep, athletic Boiling Sheep, gluttonous Lazy Sheep, hardworking and ideal husband Grey Wolf (or Big Big Wolf), low class working man Hufei, old chief Slowly Sheep, respected ancient goat clan, timid wolf Jay, to brave Sheep Blady, kung fu master Sheep Thinny, and so forth. By contrast, the few female characters are mainly restricted into two types of gendered images: beauty and fierce housewife. The female main character Beautiful Sheep and female supporting characters like Flower Sheep and Princess Antelope are the representatives of beauty, while the female wolf main character Red Wolf and supporting wolf roles Pinker and Yummy all represent the bad-tempered housewife who hit their husbands all the time.

Often times, the gender issue in children's cartoon are ignored by the researchers. In *Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf*, all of the characters are completely animalized, so the female animal characters in *Big Big Wolf* show a more advanced tactic for presenting the gender inequality which is much harder to be detected by the audience. There are issues of ageism and objectification embedded in the images of Flower Sheep. At the same time, the images of

Beautiful Sheep expose the gender ideology that Chinese beauty can gain the power while still retaining their feminine weakness. However, due to their intrinsic mental fragility, beauty combined with a superpower will also be more likely to be out of control. She may even become a female spy who will threaten the whole society's safety. Therefore, it further exposes the male's fear towards the females gaining power. Finally, the two contrasting images of Red Wolf and Hollie depict modern Chinese woman both as fierce and demanding and as sweet and affectionate. Based on the academic term "ambivalent dialectic" from Ono and Vincent's *"Problematic Representations of Gender and Sexuality"* (2009), rather than seeing these opposite stereotypes, the two images work together and reinforce with each other. Although they seem to be separate, they in fact have the same goal, which is reinforcing the traditional gender roles of Chinese housewife and female's dependence on male.

Literature Review

Brief History of Chinese Animation

Animation has become very popular on television since the 1950s. Cartoons were mainly programmed for children. Many countries around the world produced their own child-oriented programming, including America, Japan, China, European countries, and so on. Japanese anime TV series became extremely successful internationally since the 1960s.

Animation originated from the West, and therefore Chinese animation has been under the shadow of Disney norms for a long historical time. Chinese animated film imitated Disney's style at its early stage of production, but then the Western style was replaced by the local fine arts tradition, including Chinese painting. The techniques and styles of Chinese paintings were prominent in Chinese animation, especially during the 1950s -1980s. Chinese painting as one of the oldest arts in the world is highly appreciated by Chinese people and therefore dominates its early animation aesthetics (Chen, 2017). In other words, the earliest Chinese animation was mainly created in pen and ink. The cartoon characters were created in solid black shapes since it was much easier to animate and manipulate. The Wan Brothers, including Wan Laiming, Wan Guchan, Wan Chaochen, and Wan Dihuan, who were from the shadow play theatre, began the exploration stage of Chinese animation during the 1920s. In the 1950s, the golden age of Chinese animation, animators began to experiment with a variety of materials, techniques, and methods, including brush painting, folded paper, paper cut, cel, and puppets, and also employed Chinese literatures, folklore, and proverbs to the animation (Giesen, 2015). Today, Chinese animation industries have moved into the digital age.

The Worldwide Issues of Gender Stereotyped Images in Animation

Television programming can reinforce the existing stereotyped notions of gender. Children are constantly exposed to the stereotyped portrayals of male and female roles and behaviors in the cartoons. The male characters are more likely to show the leadership roles than female characters, while female characters are depicted as more affectionate and romantic (Barcus, 1983; Levinson, 1975; McArthur & Eisen, 1976; Sternglanz & Serbin, 1974; Streicher, 1974; Thompson & Zerbinos, 1995).

Wiserma (2001) found that across the history, gender role portrayal has not progressed and failed to show the real images of men and women regardless of the equality of male and female in the society. Thompson and Zerbinos (1995) found that in American animated cartoons, male characters were more aggressive and stronger while female characters were more beautiful with feminine characteristics.

England (2001) examines the Disney princess movies and found that gender representation in cartoons did not change. The traditional image of male and female characters remained the same as the past. Male characters are always portrayed as dominant and rescue the female characters. By contrast, female characters are depicted as beautiful and sexy. A number of studies found that in most of the animated cartoons over the world, both the male and female characters are portrayed stereotypically (England, 2001).

Analysis

Flower Sheep

Images of Ancient Chinese Beauty with Flowers

The images of Flower Sheep in *Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf* expose the gender issue of “objectification” and also reflect the similar gender messages of older female stereotypes shown in ancient Chinese painting. The symbolism of flowers has rich meanings (Michael, p.21-22, 2004). The flowers can represent youth, beauty, purity, and happiness, but at the same time they are also associated with fragility and short lifespans. In the Chinese Art history, Zhou’s handscroll (Figure 1 and 2) emphasizes that there is a strong relationship between the images of beautiful women, flowers, and animals (birds, butterflies on lady’s finger, insects, and dogs). “The intimacy between these two classes of human and non-human images indicates the painter’s intention to establish analogies between them” (Wu, p.102, 2018). Here, Zhou intended to depict that all beautiful women, animals, and flowers are representations of fragility and also parts of the decorative components of the imperial garden (Wu, 2018). In other words, women, just like flowers, are the emperor’s accessories.



Figure 1. Attributed to Zhou Fang, *Court Ladies Adorning their Hair with Flowers*, (?) 10th century, handscroll, ink and color on silk, 46x180 cm. Liaoning Provincial Museum, Chinchow, Liaoning province, China.



Figure 2, detail, showing a palace lady looking at a red flower

In ancient China, before Ming and Qing dynasties, the paintings by Chinese female artists were almost non-existent. All the female images and paintings were created by males, including emperors, literati, and so forth (Wu, 2018). Therefore, the females' voices and thoughts were greatly oppressed by the patriarchal society. Later in the Ming Dynasty, the self-image (orchid, a Chinese flowering plant) created by Ming brothels emerged. For instance, in Ma Shouzhen's *Orchid, Bamboo, and Stone* (Figure 4), the ink bamboo represents the self-disciplined gentlemen, raising its body and limb straightly and highly. The orchid is attaching itself to the ink bamboo, staying in the lower bottom part of the painting. The self-representation of orchids reflects Ming courtesans' desire to be liberated from life difficulties, waiting for their male flower protection hero. Another Ma work is *Bamboo and Orchid* (Figure 3), a folding fan. In the scene, the orchid is surrounded by poems written by males. The function of that female self-representation is to please the male customers. Here, there is an association of orchids with the feminine sphere and the sexual allure of the courtesan. The appropriation of orchids in paintings by Ma Shouzhen is multilayered. It functions as a display of femininity and a signifier of inclusiveness in the literati visual discourse (Moninca, 2011). The painting is "bodily investment, performative act and eventually as construction of

space. The bodily investment finds expression also in the theoretical discussion on calligraphy and painting, where the descriptive language is strongly associated with the body: a brushstroke can be fleshy or body and can have ‘arteries’ as much as characters have a ‘skeleton’” (Monica, 2011). Here, to Ma Shouzhen, writing and painting are used to create a space where she could stylize her body. Painting is her gender performance and social rituals between the literati and her.



Figure 3, Ma Shouzhen, Bamboo and Orchid, ink on fan, Ming Dynasty



Figure 4, Ma Shouzhen, *Orchid, Bamboo, and Stone*, handscroll, ink, Ming Dynasty



Figure 5

Flower Sheep (Figure 5) is a perfect illustration of the combination of the animality and beauty. Rather than putting lonely ancient court beauty and animal side by side as shown in Zhou's painting, such a perfect mixture of sheep and human beauty characteristics better hides the sense of eroticism and gender inequality. Flower Sheep as the most passive female character in this TV cartoon only appears in Slowy Sheep's past memories, so she is deprived of her subjective thoughts.

Just as the ancient beauty whose voice was oppressed by male artists in the Chinese painting, Flower Sheep is also deprived of her voice. In Episode 14 "Mr. Chief is Also Crazy" and Episode 15 "Expatriate Corps", Season 2, Flower Sheep was summoned from the past by Slowy Sheep's Time Machine. He is Flower Sheep's first love. When the door of Time Machine opens, she seemed anxious about this new and unfamiliar environment by only asking "where she is now." Happy Sheep's simple one-sentence response "it is the year of 3518" seems to solve Flower Sheep's confusion immediately. The episode did not give Flower Sheep enough time to ask more questions about the current condition of Sheep village and who those sheep characters are. Flower Sheep does not have the right to ask questions. Since she is from 70 years in the past, the only sheep character she knew (which is Slowy Sheep) is now in an aged state while Flower Sheep is still in a "young girl status." Even when Slowy Sheep greeted to her by saying "Flower

Sheep, do you know me? I am your Slowy Sheep!” (Figure 6). Flower Sheep failed to recognize her first love and then replied, “Hello, grandpa!” Soon after, she was then asked by Slowy to help and instruct Beautiful Sheep and Boiling Sheep’s diving game by becoming a “foreign aid.” In other words, she was considered as an expatriate in the current Sheep village even though she was welcomed by all the sheep characters, especially Slowy Sheep. After the diving game ends, Flower Sheep is somehow left out of the episode since there is no scene to show that she was sent back to the past again by the Time machine. She disappeared inexplicably in the middle of the episode.



Figure 6

Objectification

In Episode 401, Season 1, Flower Sheep did not appear as an alive sheep character but pink fireworks (Figure 9). On the surface, the cartoon shows the message to the audience that Slowy Sheep is missing the dead Flower Sheep very much. However, on the deeper level, it is only the male character who holds the speaking floor and keeps talking to a feminized object that represents Flower Sheep. In other words, there is a gender power hierarchy existing between Flower Sheep and Slowy Sheep, and Flower Sheep is constantly objectified by the male Slowy Sheep. For instance, in the Episode 127, Season 1, Flower Sheep sent a letter to Slowy Sheep

during her long final sickness and wanted to see Slowy one last time before her death.

Throughout the entire episode, Flower Sheep did not show up as an alive character. Instead, it is the letter (Figure 7) that takes Flower Sheep's place on the stage. In Episode 85 (Stacy Music Box), *Happy, Happy, Bang! Bang!* Season 6, Flower Sheep is objectified as a music box by Slowy Sheep (Figure 8). Here, the music box represents Flower Sheep. Slowy Sheep never shares this "Stacy Music Box" with other animals, and even says Flower Sheep belongs to him.

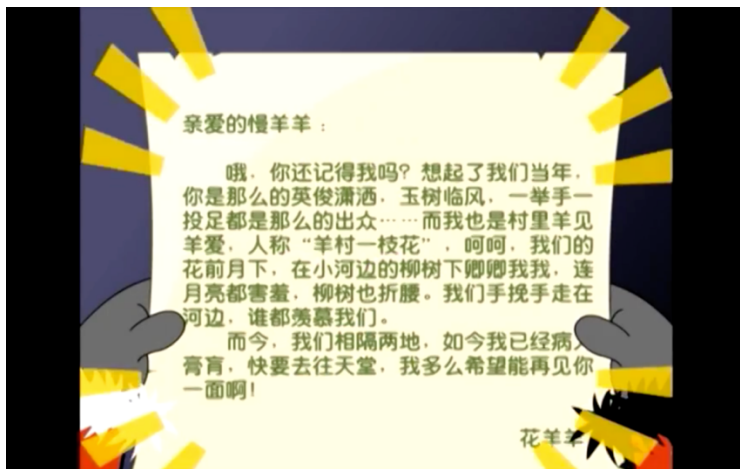


Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure

Ageism in Images of Flower Sheep and Chinese Beauty

There is ageism in contemporary Chinese entertainment industries. In modern China, many of the Chinese female actress still continue to act as a young girl in their TV play series, which gets in the way of the development of female beauty images in the modern media. One typical example is Xiaoqing Liu, the best actress of the Golden Rooster Award. Her image of Wu Zetian once amazed the entire generation. However, when she was at the age of 60, Liu still kept acting as an 18-year-old young girl in a Chinese costume drama “*Sui and Tang Heroes 3*”. Another example is a famous Chinese actress named Zhou Xun, who had received much criticism about her age in her Chinese palace drama “*Ruyi’s Royal Love in the Palace*” in 2018. As a 44-year-old woman, Zhou played as a 16-year-old girl in the drama. Later, Zhou had been widely age-shamed by the Chinese audience for playing such an adolescent in “*Ruyi’s Royal Love*.” Some audience even criticized the producers for spending most of the funds on making Zhou seem much younger. Here, ageism has been one factor that can affect a female’s job. To a female in any work industry, such as the entertainment industry, if she is not young enough, then she is not eligible for the best leading role of the drama. Based on a study “*Is it Harder for Older Workers to Find Jobs*” by The National Bureau of Economic Research, researchers argue that

“physical appearance matters more for women” since “age detracts more from physical appearance for women than for men” (Neumark, p.37, 2019).

The issue of ageism is also shown in the images of Flower Sheep. Based on the previous two examples of female actresses, the images of old Chinese females are not ideal to the audiences in the contemporary Chinese media. Similarly, in *Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf*, the image of Flower Sheep has been stuck in her most beautiful period of time by Slowly Sheep. Even though she is the same age as Slowly Sheep (beyond 80-year-old), she is never shown old. She is always depicted as youthful and beautiful in all the episodes she appeared. In other words, the image of old Flower Sheep (80 years old or beyond) is not accepted by Slowly Sheep, which indicates that female beauty is not allowed to become old. By contrast, the images of Slowly Sheep are depicted as old all the time, which means males can grow old. When the young Flower sheep comes from the past and stands together with Slowly Sheep, the cartoon makes it normal that an old man meets his first love who is untouched by the aging process. Slowly Sheep’s Time Machine can in fact bring anything and anyone from any period of the past time, but he only chooses to bring the Flower Sheep back from her past most beautiful stage (Figure 1 and 2).



Figure 1



Figure 2

Beautiful Sheep

The image of Beautiful Sheep exposes that Chinese beauty can gain the power while still remaining their feminine fragility. Due to their intrinsic and mental weakness, it would also be hard for female to truly control their newly gained power. Most of the time, Beautiful Sheep will be utilized and controlled by the villains and finally will become a spy. Therefore, it further exposes the male's fear towards the females gaining power in the modern society. Based on the long traditions of ancient Chinese beauty images, women have been constantly depicted as beautiful, affectionate, fragile, and so on. Different from the images of ancient Chinese beauties, Beautiful Sheep in *Big Big Wolf* is not exposed to the male gaze or voyeuristic gaze, which can be applied to the paintings or handscrolls where the spectator maintains the power over what is seen while unrolling the surface (Wu, p.68, 2018; Ellis, Visual Fictions). However, regardless of the absence of male gaze, the female animal character like Beautiful Sheep continues the gender inequality.

Beautiful Sheep as Controlled Object and Female Spy

The scholar Zhang argues that the “seductress-spy has become an archetype of Chinese women” (Zhang, p.841, 2020). The history of Chinese seductress-spy has been very long. From the 1930s to the 1950s, films, novels, and news about female spies swept over Republican China. One of the most famous examples is a Manchu royal and also a cousin of Puyi named Yoshiko Kawashima. She was most notoriously known as “the Chinese Mata Hari”, who worked for the Japanese before and during the Sino-Japanese War (Zhang, p.840, 2020). In the period of premodern and late imperial China, beautiful Chinese women had already been considered as dangerous, untrustworthy, and deceitful. That idea still exists in contemporary China. For instance, the modern and beautiful woman are still seen as untrustworthy due to their physical attractiveness (Weinbaum et al., 2008). The archetypes, such as the Modern Woman and the New Woman show people’s fear for Shanghai prosperity and modernity (Stevens, 2003). In other words, those female archetypes not only reflected how the people of Republican China regarded women and their loyalty to the country, but also further developed the ideas as to the contemporary womanhood (Zhang, 2020).

In *Big Big Wolf*, *Beautiful Sheep* shows that the Chinese women would be dangerous once they get power, especially when they are controlled by the villains. In Season 23, all of the characters are given the equal amount of supernatural power, but sometimes the power used by female characters like *Beautiful Sheep* will be out of control. From a female perspective, such superpower provides female characters with ability to protect their friends and themselves when they are in danger. However, when those female characters are controlled by villains, then, from a male perspective, these female characters’ superpowers will be perceived as a threat to the whole sheep society, and at the same time, as a threat to the real human society. From Episode 37 to Episode 54, *Beautiful Sheep* was controlled by Doctor Ti and became a spy (Figure 1), which

echoes with the history of “beauty is the troubled water,” which means beauty can cause trouble and also cause difficult or confusing situations where there is a lot of disagreement and problems. Based on the story plot, Beautiful Sheep was implanted with a chip by Doctor Ti (Figure 2). Since then, she worked for Doctor Ti and helped him to steal cards from her initial goat friends by deceiving her friends’ feelings. Compared with the warm, sweet, affectionate, and positive images of Beautiful Sheep in previous Seasons, her image in Season 23 showed a strong contrast by appearing as a heinous and hypocritical female spy who became a controlled object without previous memory. In Episode 58, she was mechanized by Doctor Ti (Figure 3). Beautiful Sheep turned out to be an antagonist throughout the seasons but finally was back to normal or her original sweet and positive character setting. She remembered what she did to her friends during her period of being controlled and will fell into deep self-blame. However, her friends will choose to forgive her previous outrageous behaviors.

Images taken from Season 23, *Adventures in Primitive World* produced in August 2015



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

In Season 32, except for Lazy Sheep and Big Big Wolf, all of the characters are controlled by the Queen Haoyue. Beautiful Sheep has the biggest and most destructive power compared to the others. She ruined and then controlled the whole Qimao kingdom (Figure 4). After her arrival, all of the plants grow crazy (Figure 5 and 6). She also imprisoned many of the residents from Qimao Kingdom.

Images taken from Season 32, *Against the Dark Force*



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

Feminine Fragility

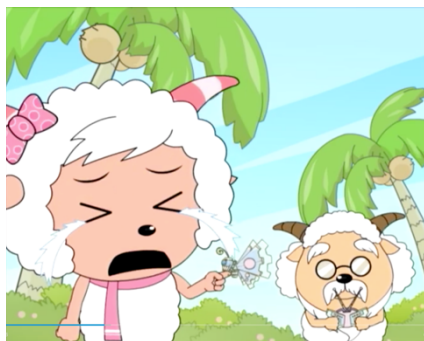
On the contrary, when Beautiful Sheep has no power, in the normal state, she represents the female figure who needs protection from the male characters. Similar to Disney Princess movies, there are always repeated rescue scenes throughout all of seasons of *Big Big Wolf*. Based on the paper “Gender Role Portrayal and the Disney Princesses”, each of the Disney Princess movies feature a central female character, the princess, and a male character who is romantically linked with the princess. It also contains climatic rescue scenes (England, Descartes, & Meek). In “Snow White,” the queen is jealous of Snow White’s beauty, so she plans to kill Snow White by giving the poisonous apple to the princess. Here, similarly, the Red Wolf gives the beauty drug to Beautiful Sheep. At the end of the Episode 12 (Way to Beauty/ The Beautiful Method), Season 1, the male character, Pleasant Sheep, comes to rescue Beautiful Sheep from the danger. The story play of Episode 12: One day, Red Wolf picks up a magic mirror in the forest. The mirror tells her, “Beautiful Goat is the most beautiful in the world, and you are the ugliest in the world.” Red Wolf is extremely angry since she thinks she is the most beautiful. Therefore, Red Wolf plans to eradicate Beautiful Goat from the world. Later, Red Wolf uses her beauty drug to fool the Beautiful Goat in front of the Goat Village Gate. After being caught by Red Wolf, Beautiful Goat shows resourcefulness in an emergency by taking advantage of Red Wolf’s desire for beauty. Beautiful Goat tricks Red Wolf into applying plaster all over the body, which makes Red Wolf unable to move. Finally, Happy Goat comes to Wolf Castle to save Beautiful Goat successfully. Here, the story plot of EP12 is very similar to the story of Disney movie “Snow White,” which exposes that male characters always play as a hero role while female character is always the prey that needs to be rescued by the male heroes.

Beautiful Sheep represents the female weakness and fragility. Her two pink bowknots on the horns are like a fragile butterfly on a court lady’s finger in Zhuo Fang’s handscroll (shown in

the green circle below, Figure 7). She is always crying every time she is in trouble or caught by the Big Big Wolf in the earlier seasons. For example, in Episode 503, *The Last Nobility*, Season 1, she lost her one pink bowknot, then she cries throughout the entire episode (Figure 8). Later, to make Beautiful Sheep happier, all of her sheep friends went to Butterfly Spring to catch real butterflies (Figure 9). Even the bad guy Big Big Wolf went to catch those last two butterflies afterwards. Finally, it is also Beautiful Sheep's tears saves the butterflies (Figure 10). There is a clear connection among the tears, fragility, butterflies, and beauty. It also indicates everything beautiful is fragile.



Figure 7





Beautiful Sheep's crying scenes (Figure 8)

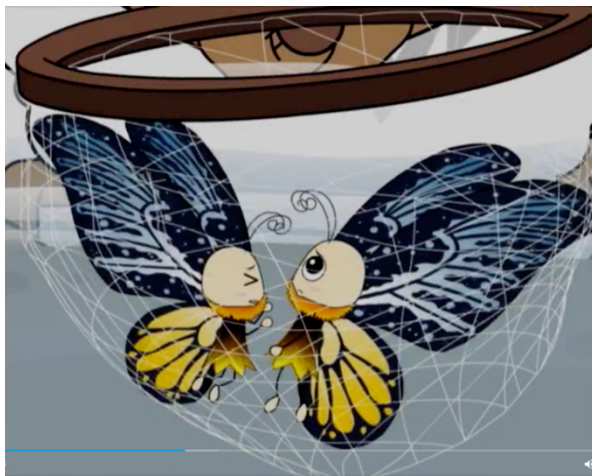


Figure 9

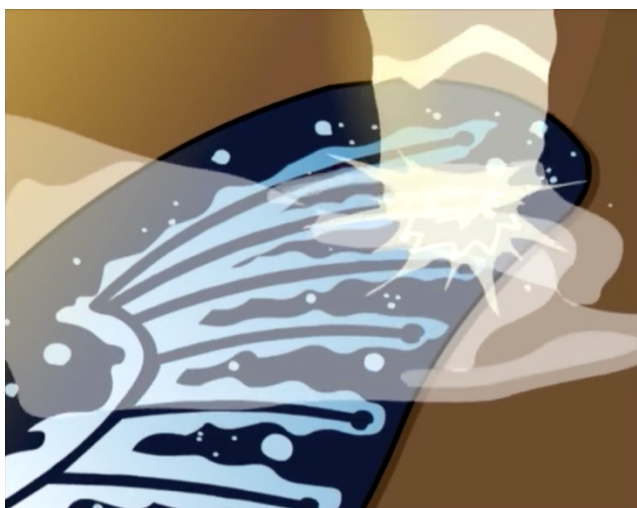


Figure 10

Red Wolf

Ambivalent Dialectic: Red Wolf versus Hollie



Red Wolf from *Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf*, 2005



Hollie from *Mr. Wolffy, Mr. Right!* 2017

The term “ambivalent dialectic” raised by Ono & Vincent means that there are two opposite stereotypes and people shift from one to another. Thus, there is no middle point between those two visual extremes. Here, rather than reconciling the modern female images presented in *Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf*, the images of Red Wolf and Hollie are trapped in two extremes. In other words, the two female images are just like two sides of a coin. On the one hand, the

image of Red Wolf represents a modern Chinese wife and eligible mother. On the other hand, Hollie (whose archetype is Red Wolf), the main female character from *Mr. Wolfy, Mr. Right*, represents a gentle, soft, considerate, and affectionate non-married modern Chinese white-collar woman. Even though the two opposite images seem to be separate from each other, they in fact work together to reinforce the gender stereotypes of Chinese women as housewife and their dependence on male.

The comparison between the image of abusive and overdemanding Red Wolf from main storyline of *Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf* and the image of affectionate and considerate Hollie from *Mr. Wolfy, Mr. Right!* 2017 exposes the traditional gender role of Chinese women as housewives. Before getting married, the considerate and affectionate woman like Hollie is every male co-worker's "goddess" in the company. After getting married, such a sweet woman will eventually turn into overdemanding housewife Red Wolf. In other words, an eligible housewife and mother must be rude, violent, and hot-tempered due to her burdensome tasks of housework and childcare responsibility at home.



versus



After getting married, many Chinese women will quit their jobs. Here, Red Wolf is a representative of domestic housewife in contemporary China. Before getting married, she was a very popular singer and dancer in wolf society. After getting married to Big Big Wolf, she became a full-time housewife, taking care of their son Little Grey Wolf, which further reinforces

the traditional gender role of female as housewives. Modern Chinese white-collar women imagine and hope their future husband is just like Big Big Wolf. No matter how they abuse their husband and ask money from him, their husband will tolerate everything about them. Therefore, the images of Red Wolf advocates for getting married to a good man like Big Big Wolf since that would be a huge relief for women who feel pressured about the competitive working environment.

In *Mr. Wolf, Mr. Right!* 2017, Hollie (whose archetype is Red Wolf) is a sweet, warm, weak, and obedient female secretary in the advertising company. Here, Hollie was very popular among other male employees. She is even called “workplace goddess” in the show by those male characters. When she has her birthday, all of the other male co-workers gave her their expensive gifts. Therefore, compared to main storyline of Big Big Wolf, this short web video series better exposes the hidden gender ideology that is actually related to the real human beings.

In the contemporary time, Zhou Yanhong’s song “If Marry then Marry to Big Big Wolf” echoes well with the previous Ma Shouzhen’s two orchid paintings. From their perspectives, Chinese women are both visually and acoustically depicted as weak flowers and, therefore, need to depend on male’s protection, waiting men to save her from the trouble (Figure 1). In Zhou’s song, “woman is like a weak flower cannot afford storms.” Here, women with “a little thorn and rose incense” can refer to Red Wolf while women as “weak flower” can refer to Hollie. On one side, Red Wolf is abusive, horrible, domineering by hitting her husband repeatedly throughout the seasons. On the other side, Hollie is a weak girl who needs men’s help in the workplace. For example, every time when Hollie has some problems at her work, Mr. Wolfy is always the first one who will always stand in front of her and help her to solve the problem by becoming a wolf-like superman (Figure 2). In Episode 16, Hollie cannot find the boss’s USB and so became

very anxious and sad. To prevent Hollie being fired, Wolffy finally succeeds to find the missing USB. In Episode 24, Hollie shows her affection toward Wolffy by saying “even though you are not the most handsome man, you are the most hardworking one all the time; you are not the smartest, but you are the cutest man.” Hollie needs the man like Hufei who is willing to bear all the burden of hard work for women.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Conclusion

Altogether, compared with the diverse male character images in *Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf*, female characters are confined to two gender stereotypes: beauty and fierce wife. Since all of the characters are completely animalized in the show, the female animal characters employ a more elusive approach to make the gender inequality much more imperceptible to the audience.

The paper discusses three female characters: Flower Sheep, Beautiful Sheep, and Red Wolf. Firstly, it argues that there are issues of ageism and objectification embedded in the images of Flower Sheep. Secondly, the images of Beautiful Sheep expose the gender ideology that Chinese beauty can gain power while remaining their feminine weakness. However, due to their intrinsic mental fragility, the beauty with a superpower will also be more likely out of control and even become a controlled female spy who will threaten the whole society's safety. Therefore, it further exposes the men's fear of the females gaining power. Last but not least, the two opposite images of Red Wolf and Hollie depict modern Chinese women both as fierce and demanding and as sweet and affectionate. Rather than seeing these contrasting stereotypes separately, the two images work together and reinforce each other with the same goal, reinforcing the traditional gender roles of Chinese housewife and female dependence on males.

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Sources of Artifacts

Ma Shouzhen, Ming Dynasty, 兰竹石图 *Orchid, Bamboo, and Stone*, hanging scroll, ink and water.

Ma shouzhen, Ming dynasty, 竹兰图 *Bamboo and Orchid*, a folding fan, the Palace Museum, China.

Zhou Fang. Ladies Wearing Flowers in Their Hair. Handscroll, ink and color on silk. Liaoning Provincial Museum, Shenyang province, China.

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Songs

“If Marry then Marry to Big Big Wolf”, Yanhong, Zhou, 2011:

“If marry then marry to Big Big Wolf, this man is a role model, a woman is like a flower can not afford storms, at most with a little thorn and rose incense. If marry then marry to Big Big Wolf, this kind love is right, you are my wall to shield wind and frost, I am your treasure for a while life”.

Zhou’s song clearly expresses modern women’s eager to have a good husband like Grey Wolf who is hardworking, tolerant, and adore to his wife. Grey wolf is an ideal male image in contemporary women’s hearts. As Jia said, “Big Big Wolf is no longer the representative of evil, it carries the beautiful expectations of modern women” (Jia, p.732). The man like Big Big Wolf is a shelter and reliance for women.

Appendix

Introduction of Sheep Characters from Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf

Happy Sheep (Weslie) 喜羊羊:



He is the leader of the sheep. He is always the first sheep to detect danger and see-through Grey Wolf's traps. He is very smart, observant, and positive. He is a typical hero character. He likes receiving gifts and offers from Beautiful Sheep. He wears a blue ribbon with a small yellow bell around his neck.

Slow Sheep (Slowly) 慢羊羊:



He is the elder in the sheep village. He is very intelligent, functioning as the only adult in Green Green Grassland. He is the head of the sheep and also the school master. When he thinks too hard, his top of head will begin to grow leaves. He holds a brown crutch and wears a pair of black glass.

Lazy Sheep (Lance/Paddi) 懒羊羊:

He is very lazy and likes to sleep all the time. Although he likes to sleep, he is one of the smartest of all the sheep. He is always the first one caught by Grey Wolf due to his laziness. He wears a yellow drool bib.

Beautiful Sheep (Tibbie) 美羊羊:

She is a female sheep in Green Green Grassland. She is very sweet and kind to other sheep. She always wears pink bows on her head, pink shoes on her feet, and a pink scarf around her neck. She likes making up herself and dressing up beautiful clothes. When she is in danger or trouble, she is always crying out. Her beauty is attracted by many other animals in the animation, and so she is being liked by lots of characters, including Boiling Sheep. Her skin color is bright and white.

Boiling Sheep (Sparky) 沸羊羊:

He is very good at sports and is the strongest sheep in Green Green Grassland. He is the only dark-skinned sheep. He has a romantic interest in Beautiful Sheep. He wears two pieces of blue sports ribbons around his two arms.

Warm Sheep (Gentty/Jonie) 暖羊羊:

She is very docile and friendly female sheep in Green Green Grassland. She is sensitive and sometimes talkative. She has a small pink heart-shaped satchel, wears a pink ribbon, and wears red shoes.

Flower Sheep (Stacy) 花羊羊:

She wears pink flowers and paints her horns pink. She also wears pink shoes and choker.

Beautiful Sheep is a little bit jealous of her because Flower Sheep is more beautiful than her.

Flower Sheep has a very sweet, soft, and beautiful voice.

Introduction of Wolf Characters from *Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf***Red Wolf**

In the *Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf* 2005, Red Wolf is very narcissistic, over-demanding, and abusive wearing in a red robe and having two hoops on her feet. She has red lipstick. She is always hitting her husband Grey Wolf by her flying pan. She resembles Chinese wives and always gets some laughs from the audience.

Grey Wolf (Wolffy/Big Big Wolf) 灰太狼



Grey Wolf is Red Wolf's husband and the 250th generation grandson of Wu Dalang, the ancestor of the wolf clan. He is the king of the wolves of the Green Green Grassland. He wears an orange cap with a yellow patch and has a scar on his face. Although he is abused and hit by Red Wolf most of the time, he shows complete faithfulness to his wife. Therefore, he is also a respectable cartoon character by the Chinese older generations. The character of Big Big Wolf is an ideal husband and hardworking male character favored by modern Chinese society since he can do all the house chores for Red Wolf. In the Chinese short web videos called *Mr. Wolffy, Mr. Right!* 嫁人就嫁灰太狼, an animated series created in February 2017, Big Big Wolf becomes the archetype of the human character Wolffy 胡飞 (Hu Fei).



Hufei

Yummy 香太狼



She is Red Wolf's younger cousin. Just like Red Wolf, Yummy is also abusive to her husband.

Pinker 粉红太狼



She is Big Big Wolf's grandmother. Like Red Wolf, Pinker also hits her husband all the time.