

The Poison of Polygamy: Genre of the English Translation

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When the Chinese-language *The Poison of Polygamy* was translated into English, some critics identified the work as *picaresque*. Skeptical of this conclusion, the author of this paper broadens the field of inquiry to suggest classification in an emigrant sensational genre. Briefly, the first two plots of the multi-strand work unfold the adventures of Chinese emigrants travelling by sea and land to Melbourne's Gold Mountain. Interestingly, we are also afforded a glimpse of emigrant miners' cooperation regardless of race and colour when a mine disaster occurs. The work provides sharp recognition of migrants' dilemmas, such as marriage, before tackling the bigamy issue, the gender war, the fallen lifestyle of the female protagonist and so on. As the work unfolds, further shocking tales of murders and indulgence are revealed. Unlike the picaresque's episodic style, the translated *Poison of Polygamy* is coherent, realistic, serious and critical, and completely lacking in both sarcasm and playfulness. To investigate the appropriateness of assigning the work to the picaresque genre, the paper compares briefly with representative Spanish picaresque works such as *Lazarillo* and *Gusman* and English canonical *Moll Flanders*, watching carefully for commonalities. However, *The Poison of Polygamy* would seem to resonate more with Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, a sensational fiction which shocked the English world in the 1860s. The contexts of both novels are close, mid-Victorian and Edwardian, where the latter is a continuation of the Victorians. The author is further enlightened by research results of literary translators who advocate that a text, once translated into a target language, becomes a canon of that culture and is cherished as such by its readers—as in the case of Shakespeare being revered as a German poet when read in translation. From this experiment the paper deems that cross-lingual comparative literature is not only possible but significant and resourceful.

Keywords: Australian Sinophone Pioneering Novella, *Poison of Polygamy*, *Picaresque*, Emigrants' Sensational Fiction, *Chinese Times* (*Jindong Xinbao*), Huang Shuping, Ely Finch, Gold Mountain (Jinshan), Melbourne, *Lady Audley's Secret*, *Moll Flanders*, *Lazarillo*, *Gusman*, *Translating Literature*

I. Opening Remarks

In my paper "Australian Sinophonic Pioneering Novella, *The Poison of Polygamy*" (Gong, 2021, pp. 358-377), I tentatively classified this novella as a romantic story. Critics of the same novella, Zhong, Huang and Ommundsen, identify it as picaresque (Zhong & Ommundsen, 2016). Since due to time constraints I did not have time to check the genre's origins and development nor make further clarification, I felt a bit unsettled. The Organising Committee of the "First Conference on the Transmission of Chinese Classical Fiction" extended an

invitation to me last December. I seized this golden opportunity to make my preliminary research and clarifications. Unexpectedly, the amount of work involved went well beyond my initial estimation. A draft was completed nonetheless and delivered to the audience via Zoom in April 2023 at Ji'nan University in Guangzhou. Editors David and Doris of *Literature and Arts* have given me a great deal of encouragement and a generous offer of publishing the paper in their e-Journal. Some omissions in the original Chinese-language paper have been restored here so that English readers can have a fuller picture of my view.

Owing to its rather limited circulation, the novella *The Poison of Polygamy* is not known to a wider readership. First of all, let me briefly introduce it as follows. The novella was written by Huang Shuping (Williams, 2019, pp. 3-10), a prominent community leader in Melbourne, and was serialised in *Chinese Times* (*Jingdong Xinbao*) of Melbourne from 6th June, 1909 to 10th December, 1910. The discovery of this important novella is a major event in the circles of researchers of Chinese fiction. The novella criticises social ills and advocates for radical revolution. With a closely knitted structure and skilful techniques, it deserves recognition as a pioneering canon. The novella was rendered into English in 2019 by Ely Finch. It is hailed in its blurb by Professor David Walker of the Deakin University English Department as an important and exciting work that deserves to be carefully studied in both Australia and China.

Preliminary responses from the public have been as follows. The work has been staged in Brisbane as well as Sydney; Ely Finch and Michael Williams travelled to the Siyi region in Guangdong province to perform fieldwork; Guo Mei-fen has carefully checked archival records in both Australia and Taiwan; and Luo Haizhi has meticulously outlined the development of early Australian Sinophone fictitious writings. This team deserves congratulations on their research into the novella's multifaceted background and the challenging task of rendering the text into English.

II. The Nature of *The Poison of Polygamy* and Its English Literary Counterparts

Among Sinophone readers, the Chinese text of *The Poison of Polygamy* will never be viewed as belonging to the genre of picaresque, and at most it can be classified into the romance genre. In fact, the first part of the novella (the first plot), can be construed using Maia McAleavey's term "arranging plots", and thus we have terms like arranging bigamy events¹. There is no doubt that the novella vividly depicts the bankruptcy of the countryside and the emigrants of Siyi, Guangdong going abroad for gold in the gold fields of Melbourne (Jinshan), forming an adventurous narrative of the arduous journey of emigrants. The emigrants travelled long distances, ran out of water and food, and had to beg villagers for food. Emigrants who settled in Victoria lived on their own labour or wisdom and no longer begged once they had settled.

The second plot portrays the emigrant's life, and although the author does not think it is an independent plot, he says the novella consists of two parts. He mentions this superficially without providing further clues. He keeps on appealing to his readers to patiently pay attention to his elaborations and social criticism before pursuing the storyline of a shocking familiar murder in the third plot. He implies that his so-called "second plot" started only when the protagonist Huang Shangkan returned to China with his second wife Qiaoxi. I have gone through the

¹ According to the theory on arrangement of events in bigamy stories, my observation is that the bigamous novel has several plots such as the colonial return plot, bigamy plot, murder plot, etc. See Maia McAleavey, 2015, *The Bigamy Plot: Sensation and Convention in the Victorian Novel* (hereafter cited as *The Bigamy Plot*), pp. 172-184. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

novella a couple of times but disagree with the author's subconscious view of his own plotting creativity on this point. He talks more about the life and incidents in gold mines symbolising an ideal aspiration where harmony and cooperation and mutual assistantships prevail, regardless of race and religion, showcasing a paradigm of utopia. A glimpse of Australian urban environments and individual/family lives are intended to juxtapose with the China's lawlessness, impoverishment and backwardness in almost every aspect as grounds for advocating a radical revolution. This is the author's main subtext.

The novella also mirrors the Chinese community's marriage and ethical problems, in the dimension of the Chinese community in Melbourne. Due to spending such a long time away—and especially when, during a short sojourn at home, he discovers his wife's youth is fading—the protagonist Huang Shangkanthinks of taking a new wife upon returning to Australia. There is a contrasting marital problem in the case of Mr. Gong, an aged single gentleman who has difficulty in getting a life partner. Although intermarriage was possible in Australia at that time, due to racial economic disparity and differences in life style Mr. Gong does not try hard for a Caucasian spouse. He resorts to arranging marriage by match making with a young woman named Qiaoxi in China. However, his intended bride rejects such an old man at first glance, on the grounds of his short sustainability. Mr. Gong's case may represent the dilemma that hundreds of single migrants encountered where the ratio of male to female in the Chinatown community was extremely out of proportion. When Qiaoxi arrives in Australia from China and discovers her fiancé is elderly, she loses no time in declining the marriage by screaming and crying. This short episode highlights a crucial migrant problem; and despite its brevity, it also moves the story forward by linking it with Huang Shangkanth's bigamous life.

Let us return to Huang Shangkanth's bigamous event. When Mr. Gong is rejected by Qiaoxi, Huang Shangkanth grabs hold of this perfect opportunity to make his own proposal. Clearly Huang Shangkanth is a relatively better alternative in terms of age and security. Under the coaxing of match making, flattery and suggestions for future livelihood, Qiaoxi accepts albeit somewhat reluctantly.

Although Qiaoxi does not understand English, she learns some legal practices from the Salvation Army and from daily life in Melbourne; she knows what "actual" freedoms and equality are but also picks up some negative styles from the mainstream society. Her manners are not appropriate and are indulgent to the extent that her home is turned into a brothel-like residence, and as such she is severely criticised by her female compatriots in Melbourne's Chinatown, making it difficult for her to continue. Meanwhile, Huang Shangkanth serves as an agent for his clansman's carpentry business. Due to his addiction to opium, he cannot concentrate on business management and the enterprise declines drastically. Neither can he control Qiaoxi's conduct and appears effeminated. He loses the trust of his clansman, and although there is no intention to defraud, his improper management in the volatile business environment compels him to escape with Qiaoxi to his native land. (As a side note here, he has a child by Qiaoxi, which is not elaborated in the novella due to space constraints of the genre.) Shangkanth's settled life for a number of years in Melbourne is in practical terms unlike the precarious homes or homelessness of the picaresque. Equally, though, the migrant return episode is unlike many Victorian canonical portrayals endowing riches and honour, or indeed the traditional happy ending in Chinese novels. It is a realistically grim fact of life, mirroring some migrants' failure. It must be said however that upon returning, he is better off than his village counterparts as he can afford to build a villa to live in.

The unusual migrant return episode is unlike most English Victorian novels such as Magwitch in *Great Expectations* or George in *Lady Audley's Secret*, where such events tend to be downplayed by sketchy mention. On the contrary the event here forms the gist of the novella and the return is not graceful but involves further tragedy. Initially the protagonist does not harbour an intention to defraud. But due to his addiction to opium smoking, he is distracted from his duties. He loses control of Qiaoxi's conduct and also neglects the management of the business which spirals downwards. In order to escape his responsibility, he flees with his dependants to his native Guangdong, China. In other words, the flight was not a conspiracy of the couple, quite different from the picaresque's regular and habitual cheating and episodic first person confessional narrative style.

The third plot is the episode of the migrant's return. When met by the volatility of Australian business, the migrants in the story return home. Qiaoxi's Australian lifestyle remains unchanged and she continues to practice it in China, which creates more conflict with the elder wife. She seeks for equality and is at odds with Huang Shangkan's first wife in this regard. She plans how to inherit the property as she deems that she is more entitled to benefit since her marriage was registered legally in Australia. She takes advantage of the fragility of Huang's first wife after delivering a baby, drugs her food with poison and claims her life. Then, as Huang Shangkan's enjoyment of opium means he is not watchful enough, she suffocates the baby to death soon after its mother is poisoned. After that she conspires with notorious robbers and leads a fallen life. Her unpardonable crime arouses public anger. As the Manchu government officers are corrupt and irresponsible, the villagers take the law into their own hands and Qiaoxi meets her poetic justice. Horrified when she is about to be drowned in a pig cage by the villagers, she experiences some remorse. Seeing this, the villagers relent and decide to let her throw herself into the river instead.

The three plots of the novel are interconnected and form a complete novel from beginning to end. The tightly interwoven plots create a full-fledged novella that belongs to an emigration genre with bigamy as its main plot. To identify its genre as bigamy fiction is acceptable, although more accurately it is migrant bigamy fiction. Based on authentic people, the fiction is at once realistic, shocking, sensational and thrilling.

2.2 The Counterpart of the Translated version of *The Poison of Polygamy* is *Lady Audley's Secret*

Lady Audley's Secret by Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1835-1915) was initially identified by critics as belonging to the bigamous genre when it first appeared in 1862. The cause of bigamy was long separation of the two parties. There were males and females who took the initiative to commit bigamy and most of these marriages ended tragically with arson or murder. There are 270 novels in total in this genre (McAleavey, 2015, pp. 172-182).

The contents of these works of fiction are very similar to the *Poison of Polygamy* and they can be used as reference for its research. Mary Braddon is almost a pioneer of this genre and she enjoys wide acclamation although there were in fact 15 titles contemporaneous with hers. Braddon's work is not only the most popular of these, but has been recognised among the canons of English literature.

Before the protagonist in *Lady Audley's Secret* marries Sir Michael, she is married to George. She decides to leave George as he has suddenly become poor without the financial support of his family and it has been three years since his departure. By law, she can remarry on grounds of being abandoned, especially when she receives no news of George after his emigration to Australia for a new livelihood. Three years later George returns with

riches, but the female protagonist, Helen, changes her name to Lucy. Changing her name is changing her identity and has a similar effect and function as cross-dressing—to hide her authenticity. The protagonist has proclaimed that Helen is dead and fabricated a tablet with the wording “The Tomb of Helen” as concrete evidence. She does so with an intention to cover up the truth. Being smart, witty and brisk, she eventually attracts the attention of Sir Michael Audley and becomes his wife. As Lady Audley she enjoys an affluent, materialistic life with high social status. Through much searching George Talboys confirms the whereabouts of Helen and attempts to have dialogue with her. While attending the encounter, Helen take the chance of his being unalert to push him into a well in order to ensure her survival and material wellbeing. (George is not drowned and later emigrates to New York, readers are briefly informed by the narrator.) Coincidentally Sir Michael’s nephew Robert is a friend of George, and the sudden disappearance terrifies him. In the pursuit of justice and to rescue a close friend, Robert, a lawyer, traces the case relentlessly, and obtains sufficient evidence to confront Lady Audley. Helen feels that she is threatened and further plots to burn him to death while he sleeps in a hotel. Helen’s actions arouse public anger and condemnation. The author gives Lady Audley a chance to defend herself and she claims she has the right to do so. Critic Lynn M. Voskuil quotes excellent comments as follows (Lynn & Voskuil, 2001, p. 625):

All decisions (including marriage and assassination premeditation) are based on the concept of an inner self, not a transcendent self. She said to Sir Michael, “You and your nephew, who have been rich all your life, can totally despise (me), but I know how poverty affects life, and I have a morbid fear of such an affected life!” She admits her intention is to build a wonderful marriage to escape the horrors of poverty!

Lucy (Helen) found escape in George Talboys (George was not poor at first), and in Sir Michael as well. Her faith in marriage is not based on love, or even affection, but on the alleviation of financial needs, and her confession reveals her brazenness: refusing to believe that marriage is constructed out of love. “I would have been your truly wife until the end of time.” She repeatedly said to Sir Michael, “Although I am surrounded by a group of seducers, the madness of what the world calls love, has never had anything to do with my madness.”² As she admitted, she performed acts of marital affection under the cover of Lady Audley, which she never felt in her heart, and instead she pursued material comforts, aimed at escaping the poverty of birth.

Thus, Helen admits her cultural construct is based on a happy marriage so as to get rid of the destitution of poverty. In the person of George, she finds an opportunity to escape; her belief in marriage is not based on love nor on sentiment but on whether it can alleviate her economic constraints. Her frankness reveals her shamelessness as she refuses to believe that marriage is love based. In her marriage to Sir Michael she uses her title “Lady” as a camouflage to role play and display the concept of love and marriage, but never has she really experienced and felt love. On the contrary, her pursuit of material enjoyment is for the sake of breaking away from her born poverty.

The critic adopts theory of role playing to throw light on Helen’s views of love and exposes her hypocrisy of being deeply in love with Sir Michael. I deem that this purpose of role playing put into practise by Helen is merely a purpose of existentialism. Therefore, I make some adjustments in my analysis to suit the logic of existentialism, seeing that Lucy in *Lady Audley’s Secret* is somewhat similar to Qiaoxi in *The Poison of Polygamy*.

² The revisions of the English Matrimonial Causes Act were very limited, only clauses on adultery were added so as to restrict/control the rights of inheritance for children born outside the wedlock.

The most similar is the “colonial return”. This event in Mary E. Braddon is almost abstract and sketchy, rather than substantial (Victorian canons usually adopt this mode, for instance Dickens’ *Great Expectations* where Magwitch’s journey to Australia and return to England are given scant mention.) The viewpoint is in the third person with an omnipresent narrator, and we do not see any irony, teasing nor crafty satire; we see more of male anger and tension. The author of *Lady Audley’s Secret* is not strictly realist, she tends to be a little sentimental to draw from her readers not merely empathy but also sympathy. Scholars of the history of British fiction have classified the work as sensational, especially McAleavey, who uses the perspective of plot arrangement as a criterion for classifying genres. According to her thinking, the author arranges bigamy plots one by one according to cause and effect. Judging from this point of view, here we have a bigamy novel; and because the effect is terrifying, the final classification is bigamy sensation, and the English translation of *The Poison of Polygamy* should also be identified correspondingly.

The author of this paper believes that the novel is realistic and reflects the hypocrisy of the times. *Lady Audley’s Secret* illustrates the confrontational tension between the genders, the conservative versus the radical in a fairer way. The novel in fact caused public anger, horror and trepidation in British society at the time. In the following decade, bigamy novels climbed to a peak, 74 titles in total, even drawing the attention of the British Parliament. There was a fierce debate in Parliament, and the *Matrimonial Causes Act* was slightly amended as a result (McAleavey, 2015, p. 168). Scholars were happy that social critique of the novel was effective. Over the next decade, the number of such novels decreased, but there were still 53 titles produced in the 1890s. This subgenre of English novels serves as a standard reference, and at least 30 critical reviews appeared from 1900 to 1909 (Sieber, 1977, pp. 53-54), demonstrating that the creation of fiction in this subgenre had not stopped. And certainly, marital issues still remain unresolved. Although the number of such novels created in Sinophone countries during the same period is unknown and needs to be surveyed, in Melbourne, where the Chinese culture was marginal in an English dominant environment, the appearance of *The Poison of Polygamy* in 1909 somewhat echoed *Lady Audley’s Secret*. These two novels come from different language families but under somewhat similar social and cultural milieus, each brilliant within its own tradition and generating enthusiastic response among scholars.

2.3 Moll Flanders is not a Corresponding Text for *The Poison of Polygamy*

Defoe (1660-1731) published his novel *Moll Flanders* in 1722. Although meanly born in Newgate Prison in East London, as a child the female protagonist aspires to be a gentlewoman. In the 36 years of her life, apart from her childhood, she was a prostitute for 12 years, was married five times (including once with her sibling), was a pickpocket for 12 years, and was imprisoned in North America for eight years. Eventually she repented and led a normal life, becoming rich and self-fashioned as a gentlewoman (Sieber, 1977, pp. 53-54). Harry Sieber postulates that the nature of Moll Flanders is due to her desire for survival and anxiety for security (Sieber, 1977, p. 54), thus he says Moll’s crimes and her identity as a criminal have to be redefined. For instance, Moll prostitutes herself because she knows that by doing so she can get monetary rewards and enjoy a comfortable life. The criteria of her morality are based on benefits and material comfort. Later making a living as a pickpocket, Moll commits a serious crime and is put in prison where she coincidentally meets her former husband. Both are deported and exiled to Virginia in North America for hard labour reform. Fortunately, Moll is able to save the

money she earns from her labours and invest it in plantations, thereby gaining social status and security. Her ultimate return to her homeland is showcased as the British “success” story, in great contrast to the emigrants’ return in *The Poison of Polygamy*.

Judging from the mode of creation and the linguistic style of the novel, there is quite a difference between the two works, also not surprising given that the distance in time is actually 140 years. One is the pursuit of unscrupulous means for material ends, and the other is full of idealised passion to reconstruct his native land.

III A Historical Perspective on the Fiction of the Homeless

Let us now take a retrospective look at the origins of the picaresque novel, and its development in English literature. As explained in the introduction to this paper, the picaresque novel originated in Spain. For expedience, I have mainly used the interpretation published in the Chinese Wikipedia (based on my experience and reading materials on this topic, *wiki*’s analysis is basically credible), supplemented by study of the monograph *The Picaresque* by Spanish expert Harry Sieber (Sieber, 1977, p. 54) and using the pioneering picaresque classics *Lazarillo de Tormes*³ and *Guzman* as examples, to provide an overview of the features of the picaresque genre.

In 1492, Columbus discovered the new world and hence Spain had chances to plunder wealth to satisfy the consumption of its upper class, but agriculture and handicraft industries of the lower strata declined slowly. During the time of Carlos II (reigned from 1665-1700), there were 50,000 picaras and picaros out of a population of 5 million. These were people who would sleep in the street and beg for a living, sometimes resorting to robbery, causing severe security problems. But some took the initiative to seek for upward mobility; however, despite their subjective aspirations and efforts, they lacked chances for development. Early representative works of this genre are *La Vida le Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Guzman de Alfarache* (hereafter cited as *Lazarillo* and *Guzman*). *Lazarillo* was published in the 16th century and the earliest extant copy was published in 1586. The major plots are as follows.

In *Lazarillo*, the protagonist left his poverty-stricken home when he was very young to trek from Salamanca in the west of Spain to Toledo in the centre, on which journey he encountered many setbacks and frustrations. Initially he worked as a guide for a blind man, later he served a stingy priest, but his employment with this priest was terminated when he stole the priest’s bread. His subsequent masters included a penniless gentleman, a fraud who sold sin-redeeming coupons and lastly a civil servant. All these masters were greedy and cunning, and Lazarillo learned from them the skills of swindling. He begged for survival, occasionally using his wits but never committing any serious crime. He was even willing to be cuckolded for the sake of enjoying an affluent life, by allowing his wife to commit adultery with the priest.⁴ His wisdom was intended for his survival, thus Harry Sieber says his stealing is different from that of a criminal and hence his criminality needs to be redefined (Sieber, 1977, p. 54). *Lazarillo* is one of the origins of the picaresque; a second origin is *Guzman*, authored by Mateo Aleman (1547-1614). This fiction is divided into two parts: Part I was published in 1599 and Part II in 1604. The

³ *Xiaolaier*, a Chinese translation of *Lazarillo* by Yang Jiang in her publication *Selection of Spanish Picaresque*, 1997. Beijing: People’s Literature Publishing House. Yang did not specify which version her translation based on. Harry Sieber says that the extant English translation was published in 1586; whether it is a faithful translation or not has yet to be verified. *Guzman* has no Chinese translation, but there is an English translation available online. The author of this paper is handicapped in Spanish.

⁴ See *Wikipedia* (Chinese version).

novel adopts the first person viewpoint, narrating the bildungsroman adventures of the protagonist and intending to preach. It boldly reveals social evils and was popularly well received.

The hero Guzman receives a good education, joining a university specializing in theology, is proficient in Greek and Latin, and is also good at rhetoric. (See Guzman's own explanations for his readers in a sort of foreword.) He is well versed in the *Tract of Doctrine*. The character is sculpted as a person of extensive experience: his wandering journeys took him across the whole of Spain and even extended to Rome. This contrasts with Lazarillo's trips which were confined to a corner of South Western Spain, that is, just from Salamanca to Toledo.

Part of the plot in *Guzman* is derived from *Lazarillo* and has been reworked and expanded. According to Francis Rico's version published last century, the expanded version covers 820 pages compared with *Lazarillo*'s 78 pages. The more than tenfold increase lengthens the work to a novel. *Guzman* covers a wide range of subjects reminiscent of an encyclopaedia, ranging from witty discourses to esoteric epigrams. This book is full of Italian fictional episodes and satires on money, honour and justice. It is also full of scorn on personality types such as women, judges, doctors, bankers and fake beggars. Guzman focuses on the theme of original sin. Critic Maurice Molho hails the epic with the conclusion that if this novel does not exactly mirror the lives of picaresques, it depicts their souls. It can be termed a confession, focusing on and developing from the Roman world as a Center of Pilgrimage. Harry Sieber says this point cannot be overemphasized. He quotes J. A. Jones in saying that although this novel intends to draw the attention of readers to show more concern for the conflicts and tensions in life, it also attempts to care for individual and social needs with sincere and responsible actions. From this angle, Molho concludes that the novel uses linguistic violence to denounce capitalism, and gives voice to anti-money, anti-finance and anti-commerce sentiments of 16th to 17th century Europe. In this case Molho is correct. The picaresque is a product resulting from poverty in conjunction with values; the crimes committed by the protagonists are due to their being born to a mythical world where they intend to construct and sustain honour. But right from the beginning they are losers and are doomed to ultimate failure.

The English picaresque is to a certain extent inherited from the French picaresque and not directly from Spain (Sieber, 1977, pp. 56-58). William Pistons (c.1571-c.1609) first translated *Lazarillo* in 1568, but reprints appeared as late as 1576 and 1586; the latter edition is extant and represented in sketches or in travels. The English picaresque's foundation was thus firmly established, with reinforcement provided by translations in the 17th century of German as well as Dutch picaresque novels.

The most noted English picaresque novels are *Moll Flanders* as mentioned above and Smollett's *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748) (Sieber, 1977, pp. 56-58). Due to time constraints and my personal limitations I will not analyse these works here. English literature went through a short-lived Romantic period, after which its fiction developed along an anti-Romanticism direction. Its literary mode blends elements such as detective, mysterious, epistolary and Gothic to become uniquely British.⁵ Due to the progress of technology and the rapid advancement of the British economy which has provided material comfort, the values of the public appear to be more materially inclined and not so much on the dimension of religion and ethics. For instance, the Victorian novel *Lady Audley's Secret* which mirrors the reality of 1850s England reflects in fact a hard truth;

⁵ See *The Guardian*, 2/3/23, Katie Lumsden, "How the Victorians Created the English Novel" (Via Dutton).

regardless of its values being right or wrong, or whether male chauvinistic conservatism or radicalism are correct or not, the novel authentically demonstrates the antagonism and social tension of the era.

IV Conclusion

Translator expert Susan Barnet says in her edited book entitled *Translating Literature* that there is a tradition in the English speaking world that foreign works, once translated into English, are regarded as English Literature. In a similar way, the Germans regarded Shakespeare as a German poet (Bassnett, 1997, pp. 1-10; Kuhiwczak, 1997, pp. 80-84). Authors of translated works in the target language are regarded as nationals and their works correspondingly as works of the national literature. *The Poison of Polygamy* is a Sinophonic canon, but after being translated into English, it automatically acquired its British canonical status. If the genre of the English translation of *The Poison of Polygamy* is not properly identified and it continues to be branded as picaresque, readers of this English translation will associate it with the nature and structure of the English picaresque such as *Moll Flanders*, and hence be misled to inaccurate expectations. Classification of genre serves as a useful guide for readers, so rectifying the genre of *The Poison of Polygamy* is crucial and timely. That is why the author of this paper, despite his personal handicap in Western languages and cultures, boldly takes up the challenge and concludes that it is more properly classified in the sensational genre, and restores its accurate nature and generic identity as a work of sensational bigamy. Maia McAleavey deduces the generic fiction comprising 270 titles and confirms it as a subgenre of sensational fiction. From the angle of creation, she works out their common creative modes and structural paradigm to confidently establish this subgenre. This is an innovative contribution and deserves our heartfelt appreciation. Through this humble experimentation, we can conclude that the Sinophonic *Poison of Polygamy* is a work of emigrant sensational fiction. From this comparison, we discover the possibilities of abridging Sino-British literary terminology.

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