

Ancestor Roots in a Seemingly Rootless “Les Lieux de Mémoire”: Reading Pangs of Love in the Light of Memory Theory



Xiao Zhao

School of English Studies, Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai, China

The debate about ethnicity in Pangs of Love never ceased since it was published in 1991. Some argued, instead of focusing on the impact of ancestor roots, it diluted ethnicity, depicting a rootless “Les Lieux de Mémoire”, expressing the shared dislocation and alienation in modern society. Some justified David Wong Louie as a Chinese-American Writer. Re-reading Pangs of love in the light of memory theory, this paper decodes the hidden writing intentions of Louie in writing it, concluding that in Pangs of Love, Louie seems to describe a rootless world, but the ancestor roots are always invisibly present like ghosts in this short story collection. On the one hand, its invisible and ghost-like presence explains the dilemma of the second and following generations of Chinese Americans in constructing cultural identity in terms of memory studies. On the other hand, ancestor roots in different memory transmission media and containers provide a practical way for Chinese Americans to overcome immigration post-memory ghosts, complete their cultural memory, and reconstruct their cultural identity. Besides, Louie’s writing shows a double movement of dilution and reinforcement, trying to find the balance in disorders and dynamic cultural identity for Chinese Americans, which provides new wisdom for the subsequent development of Chinese-American literature and the construction of Chinese-American ethnic cultural identity.

Key Words: ancestor roots; memory theory; cultural identity; Pangs of Love; David Wong Louie

Biography:

Xiao Zhao, a PhD Candidate from School of English Studies, Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai, China. Research Interests: Australia Literature; English Literature; Postcolonial Studies