

Colleen McCullough' Contribution to Race Views in Australia with the Touch

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Abstract: with the Touch, Colleen Mccullough Explored the Historical Experience of Australia in the 19th Century and Explored the Major Issue of Racism. Racism is Again Becoming a Big Problem of the Australian Society. Cosmopolitanism is an Ideal Race View. Mccullough Took an Ideal Cosmopolitanism View in Observing the Different Groups of People in the 19th Century, Presenting Chinese People, British People, and Natives with Neutral Views. the Novel Challenges Racism by Reflecting on people's Opinions and with a Neutral Voice of the Author. Mccullough Contributed to Race Views in Australia with the Touch by Indicating That No Race Was Superior and Coexistence Was the Way.

1. Introduction

Published in 2004, Colleen McCullough's Novel Came into Being in a Society Which Abandoned Old Racism But Still Holds New Racism. People Are Ashamed of "Racism" in Their Daily Talk, But Deep in Some people's Consciousness, There Still Exists a New Form of Racism.

With *the Touch*, Colleen Mccullough Explored the Historical Experience of Australia in the 19th Century with Gold Mining and the "Infantile Petroleum Industry" as Mccullough Herself Explained in Her Autobiography in the Chapter "Col on the Writing of Her Books".[1] This Novel Mentioned "Chinese" for 177 Times, "Irish" for 13 Times, "British" for 39 Times, "Natives" for 2 Times, and "Americans" for 6 Times. It Definitely Deals with Races Issues. Mccullough Described Different Races in or Related to Australia in the 19th Century with Objective Views. Racism Was Fierce in That Time Period. the Readers Are of the 21st Century, Who Are Curious of the History and Should Be Reminded of It. McCullough's Objectivity Helps All People, of Different Races, to Reflect on the Racism in the 19th Century, to View Different Races from an Overall Point of View and Think Carefully Whether Their Own Behaviors, Policies and Mentalities Now Are Justified or Just Self-Centered.

2. Races Reality in Australia

Australia Has Been a Pluralistic Place from 1788, in Which Year 1530 British Convicts Immigrated Here. Racism Problems Accompanied Australia in Its Recent History and Still Exist in the Present. Racism Problems Here Refer to the Racism Reality Concerning the Major Races, British, Aborigines, Chinese, and Americans, in Australia from the 19th Century.

Australia Implemented White Australia Policy from 1901 to 1972, Only Allowing White People to Immigrate to Australia. for This Policy, Australia Had Been Refusing to Sign the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Afterwards, Pursuing a Good Image in the Asia-Pacific Region, Australia Improved Its Races Reality Greatly. It Signed the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination on Oct. 13, 1966. Australia didn't Get Its Ratification Until Sep. 30, 1975 Because It Had to Earn the Faith of the International Society. Before the Ratification and as an Effort to Implement the Duties in Australian Laws, on Oct. 31, 1974, Lionel Murphy Submitted a Bill on Anti-Discrimination, and Explained the Purpose of This Bill as to Illegalize Racial Discrimination in Australia and Provide an Effective Measure to Confront the country's Racial Discrimination[2]. in 1975, the Racial Discrimination Act Took Effect, Since When It Has Been Ensured That People

Are Equal No Matter What Races, Skin Colors or Beliefs They Are of. in 1991, Australia Signed the International Pact on Civil Rights and Political Rights, Allowing Individuals to Complain to the Un Human Rights Commission.

However, today, Australia's racial discrimination is arising again, remarkably concerning. [3]. Fatima Measham lives in the outer west suburbs of Melbourne, "where people have converged from places like China, India, Myanmar, the Philippines, New Zealand and South Sudan"; Measham wrote an article in 2018 expressing her observation of racism, "Politicians and commentators in Australia routinely characterise non-white Australians in terms that make them feel like they will never belong." [4] Some public figures are creating news racism, which abuses non-white people mentally.

In August 2018, a prominent columnist Andrew Bolt in Australia, published a column with the headline "The Foreign Invasion", arguing that "immigration is becoming colonisation, turning this country from a home into a hotel"; syndicated in many newspapers, this column was accompanied with a racist caricature; "Bolt's facts were wildly incorrect-yet it was just one of many examples of the mainstreaming of hate that has become routine in Australia." [5] The media are fanning new racism.

On Mar. 15, 2019, 50 worshippers at two mosques were killed by an Australian man. Horrible racism appeared. Just as Loewestein Australian, an investigative journalist, said "the increased tolerance for and encouragement of bigotry in the Australian media and in Parliament" is partly to blame. New racism is strengthening and public figures and media welcome it. [5]

Australian Senator Fraser Anning, said the killing was the fault of the policy allowing "Muslim fanatics to migrate to New Zealand in the first place" and Anning believed "We can win seats on social media." [5] Anning doesn't believe in equality. "One 2017 study found that 'racist reporting is a weekly phenomenon in Australia's mainstream media,' with hatred commonly directed at immigrants, Muslims, refugees, indigenous Australians, and other minorities"; just recently, a small but political party proposed DNA test for Aborigines if they want to claim welfare and many media accepted the statement. [5] New racism is becoming more and more frequent and anti-equality.

3. Cosmopolitanism as Ideal Race Views

Racism is again becoming a big problem of the Australian society. Many people are calling for fair views and fair treatment for all races in the country, like the above mentioned Fatima Measham and journalist Loewestein. Some people use stories and novels to help people reflect on their mentality of races and Colleen McCullough is one of them.

Fair treatment of races can be guided by international conventions and above that the principle of cosmopolitanism.

Cosmopolitanism is "a cultural, ethnic and political philosophical view that emphasizes greater understanding between people of differing religious, ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds and sensibilities from within a framework of universal human values." (Salem Press Encyclopedia, 2019). A framework of universal human values is the key. In the most liberal city-state of ancient Greece, the ancient Athens, Socrates and his student Plato spoke of "universal truths applicable to all humanity"; in the 3rd century B.C., the philosophical school Stoicism further popularized the idea of "a common humanity". [6] Evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins puts it: "All your ancestors are mine, whoever you are, and all mine are yours. Not just approximately, but literally." [7] With cosmopolitanism, it is fair in terms of races and nationalities. People don't despise other races and believe all men are equal.

As sociologist Ulrich Beck argues, "Cosmopolitanism, then, absolutely does not mean uniformity or homogenization. Individuals, groups, communities, political organizations, cultures, and civilizations wish to and should remain diverse, perhaps even unique. But to put it metaphorically: the walls between them must be replaced by bridges" [8] Cosmopolitanism respects difference and does not try to unify races or nationalities.

Cosmopolitanism has a long history and emphasizes human beings as a whole. In the present days, the whole world is becoming increasingly small and people of all races are relying on each

other. Such values and mentality should be complied with and advocated. Although moral education is hard to implement, novels can make a difference with pleasing ways.

4. How McCullough Views Races

McCullough embodied a cosmopolitanism view and she knew what the world as a whole believed. She lived in the world rather than just Australia and she had a wider audience in her mind than just the Australians. “I was an Australian who wrote novels set in and about Australian, but always with a wider audience in mind than Australians.” “Most of my books travel; if they don’t, I know it beforehand.” (See Chapter “Col on the writing of her books” in the autobiography) [1] Aiming at international readers, McCullough’s books are especially fair in terms of races. She acted as an objective and neutral observer and writer.

McCullough took an ideal cosmopolitanism view in observing the different groups of people in the 19th century and the main characters in *The Touch* took a quite advanced one. McCullough moderately presented the races without prejudices and indicated likelihood of co-subsistence.

4.1 Chinese

In the 19th century, gold rush dragged a great number of Chinese to Australia. Qiu Jianna explored the overseas Chinese identity in *The Touch*, in which she deconstructed the plight, loss and self of Chinese identity from the perspective of Imagology. [9] Distinctive from many other Australian writers, McCullough presented Chinese in objective views, presenting mostly their positive traits.

The social environment in Australia was not kind to the Chinese in the 19th century. White people hated Chinese people and tried to exploit them. A political figure Bede in this novel said, Chinese people “threatened the livelihood of every white Australian worker”. [10]P359 They did not want to compete fairly, they wanted to suppress the Chinese.

4.1.1 Low Rank

In the 19th century in Australia, Chinese people were looked down upon and hated. They couldn’t get equal chances for work. The half Chinese girl Jade first worked in a brothel before being a maidservant for Ruby and afterwards for Elizabeth. Chinese people couldn’t get equal rights for digging gold and while people hated to hire Chinese.

The Chinese “are extremely hardworking as well as frugal. But because xenophobia exists everywhere, those who look and sound like utter foreigners become the target for local men and women who either do not work hard or do not save what they earn. We Chinese are hated-it is not too strong a verb, believe me. We are beaten, robbed, even tortured, and sometimes murdered. British justice is not available for us, as the police are often our worst tormentors,” Sung explained Chinese people’s status quo to Alexander. [10]P124 McCullough presented the unfairness for Chinese. Hard work got despised. Chinese people got robbed and could not get system support. The present readers might find out that such hatred was based on competing for interests rather than fairness.

4.1.2 Beauty

In other Australian novels, Chinese low rank women in the 19th and first half of 20th century are slovenly and didn’t care about their outlooks. Even in McCullough’s own novel *The Thorn Birds* published in 1977, she described such images of Chinese women in a Chinese town. The Chinese wear Chinese style clothes and Maggie couldn’t tell females from males.

After 27 years in 2004, McCullough changed her perspectives. Chinese people played main roles in the novel and they were beautiful and charming with good character. Sung was handsome and charming. The most charming man in this novel was British and Chinese hybrid. Chinese people’s beauty was recognized. Elizabeth’s personal maid Jade, whose father is Chinese and mother Irish, “was ravishingly beautiful. Frail and willowy, a mouth like a folded flower;” “Her eyes were almond shaped, but were widely opened and possessed visible lids.” [10]P52 Chinese beauty was

sincerely admired in this novel.

4.1.3 Loyalty

In this novel, Chinese Characters were the reliable ones. They were loyal and willing to sacrifice themselves for their masters. They listened to their masters and did not question why. They protected the interests of their masters above their own.

Jade loved her little master Anna, helped Anna with acupuncture and massage and taught Anna to speak with great patience. She loved Anna so much as to use extreme measures. When the stewardess and Anna's first nurserymaid laughed at Anna's dysgnosia, Jade used a dagger threatening that she would kill anyone letting out the secret.

Jade found out it's Sam O'Donnel who seduced her mentally retarded Anna, so she revenged O'Donnel by seducing, humiliating, torturing and finally killing him. Jade cut O'Donnel's male organ. When the doctor saw the evidence, he "stared at Jade as if he had never seen her before, but she still looked what he had always thought she was: a loyal and loving Chinese servant." [10]P405 Everyone knew she was loyal and she had always been loyal.

Sung's people listened to him and followed him. They were bond to him. It seemed strange to the white people but was depicted in neutral voice by McCullough.

4.1.4 Honor and Bravery

After revenging O'Donnel, people were trying to help Jade to escape the hanging and taught her to withdraw the confession. Jade was convinced the revenge was rightful and accepted her death with calm, solemnity and a smile. She believed she was doing an honorable thing, protecting her master. She honored honesty more than her life. This was the Chinese style of priority and fair depiction by McCullough showed respect for the Chinese values.

4.1.5 Holding on to Their Identity

Some Chinese held on to the dresses and customs and some went British.

Just as McCullough described in *The Thorn Birds*, different nationalities held on to their identity and tended to preserve their traditions fiercely: the ethnic groups of Australia, the Chinese, the Italians, the Germans and the Scots-Irish.

"And many were unmistakably Chinese: long pigtailed down their backs, quaint little black-and-white shoes, hats like conical cartwheels, women and men in identical black or dark blue trousers and jackets." [10]P47Dresses represented their identity. Lee's pigtail was so attractive. Sung had "long-nailed hands". [10]P124 Sung built "a pagoda city in miniature-all glazed ceramic tile and brick in wonderful colors, with curled eaves and tiered towers." [10]P139With such efforts, the Chinese stuck to their identity and tradition. What matters is that such sticking to identity was not laughed at by the main characters in the novel, but was admired.

4.1.6 Great Cooks

Chinese people often appear as good cooks in McCullough's novels. In *The Thorn Birds*, the master of Drogheda Michael Carson had a Chinese cook who served until his death. After Marriage, Maggie came to a Chinese café for the first time, and the food was superb, although rumor had it that the Chinese food "was made of rats' tails and sharks' fins and fowls' bowels", which was different from western people's diet.

In *The Touch*, both the Kinross Hotel and Kinross House, the two most important places in the Kinross town hired Chinese cook and they constantly surprised the masters and customers.

4.1.7 Blind Loyalty and Women Being Inferior to Men

After knowing who seduced and raped Anna, Jade sacrificed herself for the revenge. She also hoped to be a concubine of the Chinese downfallen royalty, Sung. Sung had more than one wife, which was the representation of his status. This was not admired by McCullough because she was a famous women rights fighter. However, she depicted such bad traits also with neutrality. This is the spirit of cosmopolitanism.

4.2 British Immigrants

In this novel, McCullough focused on Chinese people's good traits mostly and British people's both good and bad traits, so the readers could find out that British themselves were not superior.

The Chinese girl Jade was one of the major characters. Her father was a Chinese chef in Australia and her mother an Irish, who eloped with a soldier leaving seven daughters behind. Jade's father and the seven daughters worked for their life and bore the duties on their shoulders. The Chinese stayed and stuck together.

British people tried to sustain their superior status. "In Sydney everyone I met was pretending to be English-not very successfully. How sad. This is just too far away to attract the non-British, so the city people have decided to cling to class-consciousness." [10]P101 British people wanted to sustain their superiority so they could get more interests and a sense of importance.

The races-dividing speeches of the public persons of the present as mentioned at the beginning have always been the tradition of Australia, probably partly due to the fact that such stance would win the votes. British people's superiority was called for and sustained loudly. "Even mention the word 'democracy' to a stout supporter of the British in Sydney, and he reacted like a bull to a red rag-arrant American nonsense! All men were not equal!" [10]P358 This was what Bede, a political person, thought in 1990. British people and the British immigrants to Australia believed in hierarchy. "True democracy" indicated all men, regardless of skin color, religion and nationality were equal. Most British people didn't believe in that. That indicated a sense of imperialism.

"Jesus!" said Nell on a gasp. "The Chinese are a damned sight better immigrants than the lazy, drunken lot who flock here from all parts of the British Isles!" [10]P356 The Australian standard was not for universal human beings. It was just for Australians. Nell's father and mother were all British. She cursed the absurd unfair treatment of the Chinese people. With Nell, McCullough reminds the British people to look at the good traits of the Chinese, who have always been and can continue to be positive contribution to Australia. Meanwhile, the British immigrants themselves should reflect on themselves because they themselves might not be performing well.

4.3 Natives

In McCullough's novel *The Thorn Birds*, which was set in the 20th century, McCullough described the white people and the Chinese and the novel was set in the whole Australian society. However, reading the novel, readers wouldn't get a clue of the native people, as if they didn't exist. This is true of the natives in Australia because they didn't get a voice and they still get little nowadays.

In *The Touch*, which was set in the 19th century, McCullough mentioned the "natives" two times. White people prevailed and the natives were driven out of their land or left to marginalized land.

"Only the natives can live down there," said Alexander when a big clearing gave them a particularly wonderful view of a vast canyon ringed with perpendicular orange cliffs." [10]P44 The natives are the original people in Australia. They knew this place best and suited the land best. Still, they were driven to some places and confined to some places where resources were rare. Such deeds were robbery.

"The other possibility was a group of natives, but they rarely if ever came close to white settlements in this area, and were afraid of the mine; there were so many hundreds of square miles of uninhabited forest that these far from populous people preferred to safeguard their tribal identity by avoiding the white man's corruption." [10]P264 The natives were frightened by the white people and their mines. They were suppressed. On the other side, they didn't recognize and admire the white people's way of life and principles. They avoid the white men's "corruption".

In *The Touch*, McCullough still used her cosmopolitanism view in describing the natives. In her writing, the natives were a group of people at a disadvantage because of strengths rather than of nature.

4.4 Challenges to Racism

Racism was fierce in Australia in the 19th century. Bede, a political figure in this novel, said in

1990, that “Australia had to be a white country, all other races excluded.” [10]P360 His excuse was that the nature of human species was exploitative and the difference between different races made exploitation existent. Bede represented the mentality of the white people. However, the contradiction was, if races meant inequality, why should some races be excluded, rather than others? Such mentality might still exist in some Australians’ mind. An objective view toward races might help. This is why McCullough’s *The Touch* is significant in the present time. It helps people to reflect on their racism behaviors or mentality.

“From what I’ve seen, they’re quiet, decent, mind their own affairs and harm no one. Unfortunately their capacity for hard work irritated many white Australians, who would rather not work terribly hard for what they receive. Also, they don’t care to intermingle and they aren’t Christians.” [10]P136 The novel made the excuses for hating Chinese clear. It presents the reasons so the white people of the present can think about it and reflect on their own mentality and behaviors.

“In January of 1881, an intercolonial conference had met in Sydney to discuss restricting Chinese immigration”. [10]P258 For such policy against the Chinese, Sung and several other prominent Chinese businessmen drew the conference’s attention to the fact that to antagonize the country is not wise for it inhibited the country’s development, the country’s reputation in the world will be hurt, and that such behavior hurt the flag of freedom. Such voices explaining the bad impact of racism in the novel are more likely to be listened to by present Australian people because they didn’t deal with the present world although the logic is totally applicable to the present days’ intense races relations in Australia. McCullough loved Australia so she gave the reasons. This is a mild way of convincing the prejudiced Australians.

In Nell’s letter to Ruby, when Nell was only a child, she discussed her tutor Mr. Fowldes, and complained that in “Mr. Fowldes’s book, the British are never wrong and the rest of the world is never right, especially the French and the Americans.” [10]P301 Such judgement which was pronounced by a child aroused little offense, challenged Englishmen’s accustomed mentality and reminded people of cosmopolitanism. People should not only think of their own interest and they should think of the whole world.

Kinross after knowing what Jade did, returned in person, hired a lawyer for her, brought Jade four letters from the family and a lock of hair of Anna, witnessed Jade’s hanging and buried her bone ash. Kinross valued Jade’s loyalty. He and Elizabeth hired Chinese servants in their family and didn’t allow any discrimination against Chinese in the house and in the town. The four boys accompanying Neil in her study performed excellently and Sung was great partner.

The family of Kinross, Ruby and her son, the main characters, and the town of Kinross behaved differently from other people in Australia regarding Chinese people. They understood the loyalty, hard work spirit, beauty, brilliant cooking and other good traits of the Chinese people. Their values and behavior and the wonderful Chinese and western hybrid Lee functioned as loud challenge to people’s ridiculous discrimination.

5. McCullough’ Contribution to Race Views with the Touch

McCullough viewed the races objectively with cosmopolitan views. The story is brilliant and the Chinese translator Li Yao said among the over 50 novels he has translated, *The Touch* was his favorite. [11] *The Touch* has been concerned for by Chinese scholars. Xu Mei and Liu Jiuming noticed the races harmony represented with such elements as “books” “studies” and “libraries”; in the new city of Kinross, Mr. Kinross encouraged children of all races to get education, stood against the policies suppressing Chinese and formed warm and mutual beneficial relations with Chinese. [12]

This novel served as a record of the races views of Australia in the 19th century and as a model of cosmopolitan mentality. This is the time when all people cooperate with each other and love each other. *The Touch* makes its voice in calling for universal love. As an influential writer, McCullough made her stance clear. This novel’s existence itself is a strong argument for cosmopolitanism.

As German sociologist Ulrich Beck stated, “What do cosmopolitanism views mean? World

consciousness, borderless consciousness. A kind of views that are common, that are alert and sober to history. Such views ...indicate much likelihood of self-subsistence and co-subsistence in multiculturalism.” (translated from the Chinese version).[13] McCullough did extremely well in recording and acknowledging history of racism and showing her cosmopolitanism stance.

McCullough views all races in Australia as people of Australia. In *The Touch*, McCullough depicted the races reality of the 19th century as precisely as historians. But her description was introspective. This reminds readers of the 21 century that people should be careful about their races views because the races history of the 19th century is not the part to be proud of and race harmony is what to pursue.

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