

Flowing Culture: A Study on the Literary Representation of the Yangtze River from the Perspective of Immigrant Culture

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Abstract. Traditional human beliefs hold that culture is a product created by humanity through long-term social practice activities. The subject of culture is people, and it has a two-way interactive relationship with the economy. With the rapid economic and social development in the Yangtze River Basin of China, both push and pull factors have strengthened, leading to increasingly frequent population movements across national borders, regions, and between urban and rural areas. The migration along the Yangtze River has given rise to diverse cultural forms. This paper, using the literature of the Yangtze River as a medium and adopting the perspective of immigrant culture, bridges Chinese and foreign contexts to explore the new narrative characteristics and attitudes of Yangtze River culture. It aims to enrich the content of Yangtze River culture, preserve its spirit, enhance its openness and shared nature to the outside world, and stimulate the creativity, imagination and vitality of the Yangtze River Basin.

Keywords: Immigrant Culture, Yangtze River Culture, Immigrant Spirit

1. Introduction

Culture is a resource and a close integration of tangible material resources and intangible spiritual resources. Its position and role in economic development are becoming increasingly prominent, drawing high attention from regional economic geography research. The new economic geography is showing a new trend of “cultural turn”, asserting that economic life is not only economic but also social and cultural. Similarly, the economic process is also a socio-cultural process. The development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt is one of the key regional development strategies in China’s new era. At the symposium on the development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt, Chinese President Xi Jinping has particularly emphasized the need to protect, inherit and promote the Yangtze River culture. It is essential to preserve the cultural relics and heritage of the Yangtze River, conduct in-depth research on the cultural connotations of the Yangtze, and promote the creative transformation and innovative development of its outstanding traditional culture. Therefore, enhancing the vitality of the Yangtze River culture and continuing its cultural heritage will help promote a virtuous cycle of economic and cultural value in the Yangtze River Economic Belt, giving it socio-cultural rootedness.

Humans and culture are inseparable, both possessing a strong social nature. Humans play an important role in the creation, development and transmission of culture. Simply put, culture in a

broad sense refers to “big culture”, which is the “humanization of nature”, whereas culture in a narrow sense refers to “small culture”, which is the product of human intellectual activities. The Yangtze River connects the coastal areas with the inland from east to west, covering over one-fifth of the country’s territory and a population of approximately 600 million people. It encompasses a vast cultural space, laying the foundation for the formation of “subcultures” across different river basins. The various branches within the Yangtze River culture exhibit certain characteristics of individuality and flexible production. However, these different “subcultures” share interconnectedness and consistency, and their relative commonality forms the basis of the Yangtze River culture. It is precisely this consistency that gives each “subculture” its distinct connotation.

Furthermore, the Yangtze River culture possesses a collective nature. It is an amalgamation formed by countless individuals, and no single person can constitute it. American anthropologist John Omohundro has proposed that culture is the learned, shared understandings among a group of people about how to behave and what everything means. With the rapid economic and social development in the Yangtze River Basin, both outward push and inward pull forces are strengthening simultaneously, leading to increasingly frequent cross-border, inter-regional and rural-urban population movements. American economist Thomas Sowell mentions in his book *Basic Economics* that sometimes economic progress depends on whether people in a particular culture are seeking progress, rather than being contented with doing things the way things have always been done [1]. As a unique group, the Yangtze River migrants have refused to “freeze” the Yangtze River culture. Instead, they have actively nurtured diverse cultural forms and revitalized it with new cultural vitality, playing a significant role in the processes of cultural “confucianization” and “acculturation”.

2. Chinese heritage colors, embellishing the Yangtze River sentiment

Overseas Chinese literary writers, represented by Hualing Nieh Engle and Hong Ying, among others, employ a cross-cultural perspective to understand the global status and national characteristics of China’s Yangtze River culture. This approach holds profound significance for the dissemination and promotion of Chinese culture in the contemporary era. Hualing Nieh Engle and Hong Ying are quintessential children of the Yangtze River, both born in major cities along its banks. Their cultural understanding of the Yangtze is both “explicit”, characterized by a conscious awareness and the ability to perceive and articulate it themselves, and “implicit”, marked by a subconscious influence. In their creative works, they are profoundly shaped by the ineffable, often imperceptible cultural undercurrents of the Yangtze River.

Hualing Nieh Engle, a renowned Chinese-American writer, was born in Wuhan, the city at the confluence of the Yangtze River and the Han River. Wuhan owes its existence to the Yangtze River and has flourished along its course. The Yangtze River nurtures a unique affection and warmth in the hearts of Wuhan’s people, fostering a distinct connection to the river. In the documentary film *One Tree Three Lives*, she remarked that when she first moved to her home in Iowa, she could see the river from her study—the very spot where the Iowa River “meets” the Yangtze River, and that is her home. It is evident that for Hualing Nieh Engle, the Yangtze River holds profound symbolic meaning, and the land along its banks carries a special significance. Hualing Nieh Engle once described herself as a tree, with her roots in mainland China, her trunk in Taiwan, and her branches and leaves in Iowa. She reflected that her life had not been easy, yet it had always been intertwined with the notion of being an “outsider”. In a way, this concept of “outsider” aptly captures the marginalization and othering experienced by the Chinese diaspora within social structures. The German psychologist Kurt Lewin first proposed the term “marginal man”. Initially, “marginal man”

was a concept in the field of psychology. In simple terms, the “marginal man” is characterized by uniqueness and self-identity, adopting a closed-off approach to interpersonal interactions. They often possess distinctive ideas, live within their own isolated spaces, and pursue the ideal state of the “id, ego and superego”. However, the “marginal man” discussed in this paper focuses more on its social aspect, broadly referring to individuals who do not fully participate in either of two social groups, existing between groups. Immigrants are included among marginal individuals and may even represent a third group existing in a third space, exerting influence beyond their own community. Chinese diaspora writers carry the dual identity of immigrants and writers. “Exteriority” is a characteristic of writers—they need a sense of distance, to observe the “inside” from the “outside”, often allowing them to experience more wonders of life. Similarly, their perspective on the Yangtze River also requires stepping out of familiar scenes and examining it from a certain distance. In the documentary, Hualing Nieh Engle mentioned how she moved from one place to another, never settling, always on the road. The spiritual anxiety caused by a lack of identity made her feel that being an outsider is not a very happy experience. So why does she write? Because emotions need to be expressed, and memories need to be written down. In her works, the depiction of the Yangtze River often carries a cold and gloomy tone, as seen in novels such as *The Lost Golden Bell* and *Mulberry and Peach*. These stories are closely linked to her painful memories in Wuhan. In her view, her writings are “an expression of thoughts and emotions during a certain period of time” [2]. During the Sino-Japanese War, her experience of fleeing to the upper reaches of the Yangtze River further intensified the element of “unhomely illusion” in her writing, reflecting an indescribable sense of insecurity and uncertainty. Her portrayal of the Yangtze River reveals Hualing Nieh Engle’s indirect experience of the spiritual realm and her most intuitive understanding of life.

Hualing Nieh Engle is a Chinese soul close to the world, imbued with a deep sense of responsibility and mission. Chinese writer Mo Yan once remarked that the core of her character differs from that of Westerners; she carries a chivalrous spirit within her. Hualing Nieh Engle has been hailed as the “architect of world literary organizations” and the “mother of world literature”. She was jointly nominated as a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize by over 300 writers from various countries around the world. The couple founded the “International Writing Program”, inviting writers from different countries and regions to engage in conversations. These writers brought diverse life experiences, including more than 50 from mainland China after the reform and opening-up. At Hualing Nieh Engle’s home, writers from the Yangtze River basin and other countries freely discussed the cultural development along the Yangtze River region. This exchange has expanded the domestic and international dissemination of Yangtze River culture and enhanced the radiating influence of Chinese culture.

Another noteworthy figure is the renowned British-Chinese writer Hong Ying, who enjoys a high reputation in the global literary world. She was born in Chongqing. Like Hualing Nieh Engle, she is a woman of small stature but immense energy. Hong Ying has said that her source of inspiration still lies on both sides of the Yangtze River. Thus, for her, the Yangtze River holds not only geographical significance but, more importantly, serves as the inner driving force of her creativity and the destination of her genuine emotions. There seems to be a predetermined affinity between Hong Ying and her hometown. In an exclusive interview with the “This is Chongqing” column, she has said that through continuous learning and growth, one comes to understand who he or she is and what kind of world he or she sees, and that for this reason, Chongqing plays the most important role in all her works and in her life.

Hong Ying’s world is intimately connected to the Yangtze River. In the textual universe of her writings, the individual and the river merge into a highly unified entity, possessing vigorous vitality

and carrying her profound reflections on the meaning of life. For instance, in *Daughter of the River*, she writes about the upper reaches of the Yangtze River, while in *K: The Art of Love*, it is the middle reaches. She once mentioned that the river gave her life, and in return, she endowed the river with humanity. It is known that all phenomena in the natural environment are imbued with life by a soul possessing vitality. The Yangtze River, as a creation of nature, is rich with immense vitality and creativity. On the banks of the Yangtze River, Hong Ying retrieves the deepest memories and the most profound roots. Representative elements of the Yangtze River become important imagery in her works, such as the sound of steam whistles, the calls of boat trackers, ferries, cableways and old boatmen along the river. These elements connect the spiritual and emotional ties between people and their homeland, forming a lyrical quality with distinct hometown characteristics, as seen in literary works such as *Peacock Cries*, *Daughter of the River* and *Rome*. In her works, Hong Ying affectionately imagines her distant hometown and the Yangtze River from her memories, blending recollections of her native land with exotic elements. Her novel *Rome* is a prime example, vividly depicting the fusion and collision of Roman and Chinese cultures, as well as the interplay between Roman elements and those of the Yangtze River. From a young age, Hong Ying loved listening to stories about the Yangtze River. When she visited the French Naval Barracks and saw the tomb of a French captain, she was reminded of her father, who had been a helmsman on the Yangtze River and often told her stories about it. Later, Hong Ying has passed down these stories of China, the Yangtze River, Chongqing, and her own experiences to her daughter, ensuring the cultural legacy of the Yangtze River is transmitted across generations and fulfilling its role in cultural continuity. Deeply influenced by the shamanistic culture of the Yangtze River basin, Hong Ying has noticed that literary resources related to Chinese myths and legends are often overlooked. As a result, she embarks on writing about distinctive regional cultures. In her children's fantasy novel *The Girl from the French Fort*, she incorporates anecdotes of the Yangtze River, merging reality with the river's shamanistic culture. The protagonist, Sangsang, begins his journey of fantasy from the Yangtze River, embarking on an adventure through a magical world. Additionally, the novel captures the three-dimensional essence of the mountainous city of Chongqing and the spatial sense of the Yangtze River basin, portraying it as a distorted, expanded and surreal version of Chongqing.

As Hong Ying says, "Childhood memory is like a magical box—if I use an inch, it grows ten inches; if I dig a hole, it becomes an abyss, forever unfathomable". For Chinese diaspora writers like her, the emotional memory of the Yangtze River is a "Pandora's box"—but not an evil one. In most cases, it is benign and positive, possessing a butterfly effect that triggers a cascade of interconnected memories. This illustrates how writers immerse themselves in the Yangtze River while integrating the river into their most fundamental emotions and experiences. More importantly, the Yangtze River serves as a prominent symbol of their nostalgic longing for their homeland. In the novels of Chinese diaspora writers, the narrative perspective on the "Oedipus complex" and "cultural Oedipalism" is often feminine, even feminist. To put it another way, metaphorically speaking, the Yangtze River is the mother river of the Chinese nation. By personifying the Yangtze River, the writers' depictions of the rivers in their hometowns can also be seen as a form of cultural Oedipalism. The "river's heart" of the Yangtze refers to the central part of the river, as opposed to its banks. From this concept, the idea of "hometown's heart" can be derived, meaning that Chinese diaspora writers continuously write about the central and core areas of their emotions. This reflects the kinship between people and the land, people and the river, and people and nature, embodying a kind of topophilia, which is an inheritance of the simple spirit of the Chinese nation. In fact, most Chinese diaspora writers utilize emotional memory and topophilia to express their attachment and longing for their homeland through words. They often speak of their hometowns and the Yangtze

River in connection with their own life experiences, closely intertwining these narratives with their personal life signs and living conditions. However, the difference lies in the fact that Chinese diaspora writers need to seek their homeland in foreign countries, which may result in fragmented memories. This creates a contrast between two states of memory: memory loss and the updated state of memory after revisiting the homeland. Because distance can generate a particularly intense tension, their perspective of the Yangtze River is often seen as a process of introspection and self-awakening, as well as a more concealed retrospective process. Broadly speaking, the universality and cosmopolitan nature currently observed among immigrants tend to be diluted. However, as the commonality among Chinese diaspora writers continues to strengthen, this trend will increasingly exhibit reinforced characteristics. The agency and mystical power of the Yangtze River reveal the inner interaction between the writers and the river itself.

Overall, overseas Chinese-language writers generally regard the Yangtze River as a river landscape that serves as both a geographical and cultural marker of their homeland. The significance of the river as a geographical landscape lies not only in its role as a geographical symbol of the homeland but also as a cultural one. The increased incorporation of Chinese cultural elements, particularly the depiction of the Yangtze River as their homeland, in the works of Chinese diaspora writers since the 1980s reflects the growing confidence in Chinese national culture from a different perspective. This also underscores the contemporary value and practical significance of studying Yangtze River culture. As Nietzsche's "Two States of Life" suggests, the two states of life are symbolized by Dionysus and Apollo—the Dionysian state represents ecstasy, symbolizing the surging flow of life, while the Apollonian spirit embodies tranquility, symbolizing the restraint of life. In fact, the Yangtze River also possesses these two fundamental states: absolute motion and relative stillness, within which immigrants seek their own state of being. Immigrants play a significant role in the culture of the Yangtze River. The diverse characteristics they carry enable them to act as inheritors, interpreters and disseminators of culture. In a sense, the dual identity of immigrant writers may produce a synergistic effect where $1+1>2$. They engage in literary mapping, using their writings to depict the cultural and artistic forms of the Yangtze River Basin as remembered and experienced in reality. They and the iconic elements of the Yangtze River illuminate and interact with each other. For both the Yangtze River and the writers, this relationship is profoundly important, reflecting the collective and individual memories of generations of its people.

3. Voices from afar, elegantly appreciating the charm of the Yangtze River

Chinese diaspora writers in the Yangtze River Basin exhibit characteristics of "outward migration", while Yangtze River literature also includes writers or their characters "moving inward" from abroad, arriving in the Yangtze River Basin to engage in literary creation. This dynamic process of "inward and outward" movement essentially breaks away from the unidirectional nature of Yangtze River migration, gradually making it more comprehensive and multidimensional, thereby forming the characteristic of "two-way migration" in Yangtze River culture.

Peter Hessler is an American journalist renowned for his nonfiction trilogy about China. He "presents contemporary China as he sees it with a journalist's acuity and literary expression" [3]. His representative work, *River Town*, serves as a robust springboard for the world to rediscover and understand Chinese culture, particularly the culture of the Yangtze River. It details Hessler's experiences, observations and reflections during his two-year stint as a Peace Corps volunteer teaching in Fuling from August 1996 to June 1998. Fuling, a small city by the Yangtze River, is one of the districts of Chongqing Municipality. It is located in the central part of Chongqing, deep within

the Three Gorges Reservoir area, at the confluence of the Yangtze and Wu rivers, and lies at the intersection of the Yangtze River Economic Belt and the Wu River Mainstream Development Zone. Therefore, when Hessler came to China and lived briefly by the Yangtze, it was not a true migration, yet he formed an inseparable bond with the river. In the eleventh chapter of *River Town*, classic traditional elements of the river are depicted, such as the convenience of Yangtze River shipping, tourist attractions like the Three Gorges scenery, the lighthouses of navigation markers and various types of vessels on the Yangtze.

River Town fully embodies the meaning of life within the Yangtze River culture—it grants life's power to anyone in the world needs it and offers them reflection on the value of life. Hessler, without any biased lens, authentically and objectively subverts the West's established preconceptions about the stories of the Yangtze. In his book, he vividly depicts the unique vitality and wit belonging to the Yangtze River basin. For example, the practice of adapting to local conditions along the river vividly illustrates the region's culture of grain fields and farming. Furthermore, Hessler strives to capture the multiple personalities of the Yangtze River, depicting both its majestic aspects and its tranquil moments. The novel mentions, "The Zhonghua moves toward the shore, its horn booming, gradually bringing the dock closer. The boat draws southward until it is out of the main current of the river, until the great force of the Yangtze has been left behind, and then it docks" [4]. In fact, Hessler himself disembarked during the boat journey and found a new life for himself in Fuling. Fuling is precisely the kind of city on the edge of transformation—on one hand, it holds firmly to its old traditions and culture, while on the other hand, it embraces the novelties brought by the outside world. The two forces contend and blend with each other. In Fuling, Hessler is both an observer and an integrator. As an observer, he examines the people and events around him from a foreigner's perspective, delving into the essence of things through details and gaining insight into the fabric of Chinese society. As an integrator, he has spent two years in Fuling, allowing him to regard this small city by the Yangtze River as his second hometown, forming a deep emotional connection with it. At the same time, he is also a reflective thinker, constantly pondering the similarities and differences between Eastern and Western cultures based on his experiences. His reflections implicitly carry the values of a shared future for humanity.

Although *River Town*, a documentary work, is written by a foreigner about China, it does not adopt a condescending perspective. Instead, it approaches the subject with a humanistic touch, capturing the ambiguous interactions that arise when East meets West, ultimately leading to mutual tolerance, patience and understanding. The two years of teaching were an incredible encounter in Hessler's life. As an outsider, he glimpses into the hearts and behaviors of local people during the era of reform and opening-up, presenting us with a spiritual and cultural portrait that stands apart from contemporary Chinese depictions. In the blending of Eastern and Western cultures, *River Town* has made a significant contribution. With a sense of curiosity and adaptability, Hessler depicts for Western readers an ancient and mysterious Eastern nation, as well as the richly profound Yangtze River culture, which remains unfamiliar to many in the West. In doing so, he provides a favorable opportunity for the friendly encounter between Chinese and foreign cultures.

In a sense, Hessler embodies Zong Baihua's view on comparative literature: "Grounding oneself in China, returning to the roots while forging new paths". His novel does not reflect the cultural shock often seen in Western writers' depictions of China. The cultural shock he initially experienced in his immediate living environment and his subsequent cultural adaptation, to some extent, reflect the acceptability, receptivity and adaptability of the Yangtze River culture. That is to say, in the early stages of immigration, their identity as observers outweighs that of participants. Gradually, after passing through the adaptation period and entering the integration phase, their identity as

participants often outweighs that of observers. Therefore, during the process of immigration, this shift in identity may also signify a transformation and sublimation of their non-material aspects, such as culture. This contradicts the notion that “the onlooker sees the game best, while the participant is lost in the scene”, because the experiences of those who are integrated are often more authentic, fitting and immersive than those of observers. Thus, it should be that “both the participant and the onlooker see clearly”. Hessler possesses a sense of ownership, abandoning the “sentiments” of an outsider and writing from the position of a “Chinese”. His subjective consciousness in writing incorporates both overseas and Chinese values, as well as literary ideologies. Works about migration do not merely present events; they inevitably point to history and humanity. The stories of migrants always possess rich dimensions of interpretation—culture, gender, religion, war and more—precisely because of the complexity and depth of human nature itself. In short, writers represented by Hessler offer a way of viewing Chinese culture that differs from the traditional Western perspective. It is a comprehensive and ecological viewpoint—one that places fundamental value on the wholeness of existence, ensuring cultural equality without supremacy. By discarding the rigid and stereotypical impressions held by Westerners, they proceed to depict the culture of the Yangtze River as a harmonious and equal network and chain of relationships.

4. Blending east and west, carrying forward the spirit of the Yangtze River

Spirituality is a fundamental characteristic of culture, meaning that culture must be related to human spiritual activities. The Yangtze River spirit is an important component of Yangtze River culture, and the immigrant spirit draws wisdom from the Yangtze River culture, nurturing the contemporary character of the Yangtze River era. It is primarily manifested as the strong humanistic spirit formed by immigrants during their migration process. The migration culture of the Yangtze River embodies a unique spirit of “prioritizing the greater good, self-sacrificing for the public, uniting of purpose, and working hard in pioneering endeavors”, along with contemporary characteristics such as “openness, inclusiveness and forward-thinking”. Through long-term historical accumulation, the cultural aspects of migrants’ lifestyles and architectural forms across the Yangtze River Basin have evolved into cultural symbols deeply embedded in local customs and traditions. As the scale and pace of migration in the Yangtze River Basin continue to expand and accelerate, the types of migration are becoming increasingly diverse and complex. The migration along the Yangtze River is primarily categorized into project-induced migration, ecological migration and poverty-alleviation migration. These correspond to the exceptional qualities and migrant spirit of sacrificing individual interests for the greater good, harmonious coexistence and hard work. These spirits are interdependent and mutually influential, integrating with the national spirit centered on patriotism and the contemporary spirit centered on reform and innovation.

The Spirit of the Three Gorges Migrants is a prominent representation of the broader Yangtze River migrant spirit, originating from the Three Gorges Hydropower Project. The novel *Que Ga Fei* (Little Sparrows Flying), written by Chinese local author Peng Xiaoqin, is a full-length work centered on the theme of Three Gorges migration. It tells the story of project migrants who were swept into the processes of urbanization and modernization, and how they united, supported one another, and worked hard to establish themselves and thrive in their new settlements. The novel celebrates their dedication to sacrificing individual interests for the greater good, as well as their unwavering perseverance and resilience. It portrays “little sparrows” from the Three Gorges region who, as they adapted to their new environment, forged a bond of mutual reliance and trust. Supporting each other in the isolated circumstances of a foreign land, they eventually took root in this new soil and cultivated a genuine sense of belonging. In the novel, the character Chunhua Chen

proactively seeks ways to resolve the employment issues faced by the immigrants. She joins everyone in negotiating with the immigration bureau, and after their success, she assists those immigrants who struggle to pay taxi deposits. Eventually, everyone finds employment. Thus, “20 new cars and dozens of people gathered around a beaming Chunhua on the stage, together rewriting the history of Pinghu Steel Casting Factory into a new chapter” [5]. This novel avoids grand historical backdrops and sweeping historical narratives, instead depicting the images of immigrants through local experiences and showcasing their invaluable spirit during the immigration process.

After the independence of the United States, immigrants continuously pour into the country, writing American history under diverse immigration environments and backgrounds. The Westward Movement, which took place from the late 18th century to the early 20th century, was a migration of residents from the eastern United States to the western regions. It is a significant historical event encouraged by the nation to pioneer the wilderness. This movement not only expands the territory of the United States but also contributes to the formation of the American character. Throughout the Westward Movement, the immigrants demonstrated resilient, optimistic and equality-seeking qualities, which organically constituted the pioneering spirit of the western frontier and the American spirit.

O Pioneers! and *My Ántonia* are masterpieces by the renowned American author Willa Cather, celebrating the spirit of pioneers and immigrants. Inspired by her youthful experiences and observations on the vast prairies of the American Midwest, these works depict the arduous lives of Eastern and Northern European immigrants struggling against nature on the expansive Nebraska plains during the first generation of the Westward Movement. The stories are marked by authentic, intricate plots and deeply moving, nuanced emotions. Through her portrayal of the hardships faced by early immigrants, Cather extols their pioneering spirit—their diligence, courage, optimism, resilience and self-reliance. “She was there, in the full vigor of her personality, battered but not diminished.” [6] The character of Ántonia, a Bohemian immigrant, vividly embodies the image of female pioneers. Despite enduring a life full of hardships and challenges, the land rewards her abundantly. She becomes deeply rooted in the soil, merging with the unyielding land and emerging as its very symbol of strength and perseverance.

During the period of the American westward expansion, many Americans and even people from various European countries came to the West with a longing for wealth and success to participate in the pioneering movement. In the process of developing the West, they encountered unforeseen hardships and obstacles. While overcoming these difficulties, they gradually formed the nation’s unique “American spirit”. This spirit is not only a selective inheritance of European culture by the American people but also a product of the vast and racially diverse environment of the American West. This “American spirit” embodies qualities such as self-reliance, independence, individualism and a belief in the future. Throughout the westward expansion, this spirit was fully demonstrated and played an immeasurable role, significantly contributing to the economic and cultural development of the western regions.

The spirit of the Yangtze River immigrants, in the context of the new era, demonstrates characteristics of “modernity”, while the American pioneering spirit of the West carries certain “archaic” traits, including the pristine natural landscapes and resources of the western prairies. In the process of encroaching upon and plundering the resources of the West, the settlers drove the Native Americans to the brink of extinction, and the ensuing racial conflicts plunged them into a tragic plight.

Furthermore, the spirit of the Yangtze River immigrants shares remarkable similarities with the pioneering spirit of the American West. Both emphasize the perseverance and optimism of the

people. However, the spirit of the Yangtze River immigrants places greater emphasis on collective unity, highlights an ecological mindset that respects nature and protects the environment, and strengthens people's rational and wise ecological awareness and conviction. The pioneering spirit of the American West emphasizes autonomy and individual freedom. Affirming personal value and encouraging self-realization are the most mainstream spiritual directions in American society, prompting immigrants to value equality and privacy, and to pursue the life they desire with independence and courage. Prominent individualism has given rise to a strong pursuit of freedom and equality. For the American nation, the concept of equality has driven immigrants to seek their rights and desired lives in a new land, daring to struggle for survival, forging a spirit of self-reliance among the American people, and giving rise to American pragmatism.

5. Conclusions

This paper attempts to analyze the immigrant culture of the Yangtze River from the imagery level to the cultural level and then to the metaphysical level. Based on the expansive perspective of culture, it conducts comparisons between China and foreign countries, reflects on China's discourse power, and reconsiders Western discourse and attitudes. This expands the scope of social concerns and constructs a new platform for the study of immigrant culture. The vibrant immigrant culture and the rich spiritual connotations of immigrants should become highly regarded aspects of Yangtze River culture and public psychology. The rolling waters of the Yangtze River, following the pattern from turbulent torrents to gentle streams and finally merging into the sea, metaphorically reflect the process, pace and footprints of immigration. On the basis of protecting the cultural ecology, the demand for developing the cultural opportunity belt, cultural advantage belt, cultural integration belt and cultural prosperity belt within the Yangtze River Economic Belt should not be underestimated. It is essential to promote the Yangtze River culture, inherit the spirit of the Yangtze River, and, based on the distinct "cultural characteristics" of the various cultures along the Yangtze River Basin, create a Yangtze River "brand culture" and a "premium Yangtze River cultural cluster". The so-called "Yangtze River cultural cluster" refers to a series of directly related cultural elements of the Yangtze River that form an integrated whole, making it a valuable asset for the Chinese nation and even human society. This cluster generates value beneficial to the development of human society and facilitates external dissemination on the basis of establishing effective self-protection isolation mechanisms. By telling the story of Yangtze River culture well, it promotes cultural exchanges between China and other countries. People must not only increase the "depth" of Yangtze River culture by continuously exploring and enriching its profound connotations but also reduce the "barriers" to its global dissemination, thereby expanding the international influence of Yangtze River culture. This will help achieve the state of existence described by Fei Xiaotong: "Appreciate one's own beauty and that of others, and let diverse beauty coexist, so that ultimate harmony will prevail in the world."

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