

A Comparison of the Cultural Connotation of Chinese and Western Token of Love—Take Shakespeare's *Othello* and Kong Shangren's *The Peach Blossom Fan* as Examples

Wu Xiaoyun

School of Foreign Languages, Hunan University of Technology, Zhuzhou, Hunan, 412000, China

Abstract: Love tokens have existed in Chinese and Western societies since ancient times. This article compares the pledge of love in Chinese and Western cultures from the aspects of aesthetics and its connotation. The purpose is to explore how this easily neglected object affects people of different cultural backgrounds. The thesis excavates materials from historical events, ancient myth stories and poems and emphasizes the differences in the aesthetic design of specific tokens in the macro humanistic environment. Then it analyzes Kong Shangren's *The Peach Blossom Fan* and Shakespeare's *Othello* to understand further the cultural differences between the Chinese and Western love tokens. Through the analysis of the behaviours, characters, languages and plots of Li Xiangjun, Hou Fangyu, *Othello*, and *Desdemona*, the love tokens exist not only as proof and witness of love and lovesickness, more importantly, but also have a profound impact on the character's view of love and has a different degree of restraint and alienation on the characters' behaviours.

Keywords: Love Tokens; Contrast of Cultural Connotation; *The Peach Blossom Fan*; *Othello*

1. Introduction

As a particular part of traditional Chinese culture, the connotation of love tokens is gradually disappearing and being forgotten by the public. Contrasting with Western culture is necessary to arouse the public's awareness of traditional culture and enhance cultural confidence.

Nowadays, some Chinese cultural traditions encountering the impact of Western culture gradually fade away from people's awareness. By comparison, as the typical representative material objects, love tokens symbolize a part of traditional Chinese love culture. Associated with love tokens, ancient poetry, novels, and classic opera will be remembered and spread worldwide, thus strengthening the nation's culture of self-confidence. Also, researching differences between Chinese and Western culture is relatively less from this point of view. Moreover, there are few comparative studies about Chinese and Western love tokens. Therefore, the theme deserves further study, offering big room and value to research.

Love tokens have existed in China since ancient times, and there are descriptions of lovers giving love tokens in many poems. A piece of yupei, a sachet, a bunch of hair and even a piece of melon and fruit can be used to pledge love and express their demands for love. The Western love tokens also have a long history, including watches, jewellery, famous paintings, amethyst and sapphire, etc. In addition, the most unique and distinctive part of China's token culture is the use of half-and-half objects, such as yupei, hairpins, rouge boxes, etc. By comparison, the same tokens in China and the West are poems and rings. In addition, the differences between Chinese and Western pledges manifest in the object itself and its aesthetic connotation: love tokens in ancient China are aesthetically exquisite and belong to the beauty of freehand brushwork. Most of them are close-fitting objects. They are elegant, casual, romantic and secret. The Western love tokens pay attention to things in aesthetics, which belong to real beauty. Most of them are relatively valuable items, which are deliberately selected and will be performed in public. Like the Western open-world outlook, the emotion expressed by their love tokens is also enthusiastic and unrestrained.

The main content of the paper is to make a contrast between the aesthetic beauty of love tokens and their connotation between Chinese and Western culture. Concerning Chinese and Western cultures of love tokens, different love tokens convey additional messages and represent different connotations. And then, by analyzing Kong Shangren's *The Peach Blossom Fan* and Shakespeare's *Othello*, the author

further explains how "handkerchief" and "fan" as props promote the plots.

2. Different Love Tokens and Their Beauty in Chinese and Western Culture

2.1. Beauty of Material Objects about Love Tokens in Chinese Culture

In ancient China, the pledge of love includes agilawood, powder boxes, combs and jade ruyi. For example, Liu Xiang presents agilawood, while the lion with dried agilawood symbolizes good luck and romance. Combs also have moral meanings, such as "comb to the end, comb to the white hair and eyebrows, and comb to have many children and grandchildren". This contains good wishes to the family and the transmission of love.

A Hairpin, also known as "saotou", is a common love token for ancient women and also symbolizes the legal wife's dignity. Its connotation is expressed in *Yuefu Poetry Anthology*: "Thinking": The person I miss is in the south of the sea. What shall I give you? This is a hawkbill hairpin decorated with pearls and jade rings. I heard that he was disloyal to me. I was sad, so I tore the hawkbill hairpin apart. Destroy it, burn it! Burn it! The wind will raise dust! Henceforth, I will not miss you anymore. I will give up my love for you! The story describes a woman carefully making a Hairpin for a lover. After hearing that the lover has another lover, she burned Hairpin and expressed her determination not to be a mistress.

The beauty of jade is like the virtue of a gentleman. Jade was a symbol of a gentleman in ancient China. A gentleman pays attention to respect and peace, and his warm and distant love is in line with the moral of jade. Therefore, in ancient times, elegant and leisured gentlemen liked to use jade as a pledge of love, showing restraint and courtesy, neither worried nor estrangement.

Sachet is wrapped with silk thread, and various fine powders of Chinese herbal medicines with strong fragrances are put into the sachet. In the pre-Qin period, young people visited their parents, and elders should wear the compiled sachet to show respect. And because sachet is personal good, lovers often gave each other as gifts.

Sichuan pepper is a spice crop. Because it has many seeds, it contains the implication of having more children after marriage. Therefore, in Spring and Autumn period, men and women used Sichuan pepper as a pledge of love. *The Book of Songs* tells the story of a man who received a bunch of Sichuan pepper from a girl as a pledge at a dancing party.^[1] When they made up my mind, they promised to have many children in the future. The ancients sometimes were actually straightforward about love. The poem is written in the first person tone of a young man. The girl is the daughter of the Zizhong family. Chen State's countryside has a large area of high and flat land where dense white elm and oak trees are planted. At a wonderful time, the young girl and boy went there. The young girl danced gracefully, and the young man sang wonderfully. The flower of happy love is budding. In the eyes of a young man, inside, a girl is as beautiful as a sunflower. In the girl's mind, the young man is her hope and ideal. He should be given a bunch of Sichuan pepper to express his feelings.

[There are] the white elms at the east gate.
And the oaks on Wanqiu;
The daughter of Zizhong,
Dances about under them.
A good morning having been chosen,
For the plain in the South,
She leaves twisting her hemp,
And dances to it through the marketplace.
The morning being good for an excursion,
They all proceed together.
I look on you as the flower of the thorny mallow;
You give me a stalk of the pepper plant.

Another particular part of love tokens is the half-and-half object: breaking yupei into two halves and holding one piece each as a love token is also a common way in ancient times. In addition, the rouge box will be opened, the lid will be given to the lover, the mirror will be split in half, or the hairpin will be split in two. In ancient times, transportation was inconvenient. It took many years to go to Beijing for an examination. When people came back, things were still there, but men were no longer the same. Therefore, this kind of pledge is evidence to find children and identify people's relatives.

A true love knot has always been a token of ancient people's emotions. Tang Dynasty Poet Meng

Jiao's *Love about Knot* explains that a man and a woman fell in love with each other and formed a deep love. Couples tie each other's clothes together and hope the knot of this dress can hold the integrity and make the husband come back as soon as possible. The woman used to think that if she tied clothes tightly with her lover's clothes, the two persons would never separate. When the time of departure comes, she discovers that no matter how skillfully she tied them up, it would be better to tie their hearts together. It reflects the determination of love that the seas run dry and the rocks crumble. In short, it describes the psychological activities of exceedingly sentimental when a woman compiles a true love knot for her lover going on a long journey.

2.2. *Beauty of Material Objects about Love Tokens in Western Culture*

Foreign love tokens that people are familiar with include watches, jewellery or famous paintings, roses, etc. For example, the Rolex gold watch was given to the late President John F. Kennedy by the American generation Marilyn Monroe. The Duke of Windsor bought countless precious pieces of jewellery for the Duchess throughout his life. The jewellery became the witness of their love. In 2005, 20 sketches by Picasso, a master painter, were auctioned in France. These sketches, called "20 love letters", have been collected by Picasso's former lover Genevieve Laporte for 50 years.

According to Greek mythology, the goddess of love Aphrodite (equivalent to Venus in Roman mythology) once fell in love with a handsome man named Adonis. Later, when Adonis was killed by wild boar while hunting, hearing the news, Aphrodite ran to him. On the way, her skin was pricked by roses and blood flowed out onto the roses, turning the originally white roses red. This is the origin of the red rose as a symbol of love tokens.

Salzburg in Austria is the place of origin of the engagement ring. Before the 15th century, exactly in 1477, Archduke Maximilian fell in love with Duchess Mary. Maximilian gathered many people to offer advice and suggestions for him. Finally, some people suggested that a diamond ring could symbolize eternal love. So he found the hardest diamond in the world to make a ring and captured Mary's heart in one stroke. From then on, the tradition of the ring as a pledge of love spread.^[2]

Sapphire, which comes from the Hebrew "Sapphir" and means "perfect thing", symbolizes loyalty, firmness, love, and honesty. It is the 12-month birthday stone in September, so it is often used by Westerners as a wedding ring or pledge gift. A look at the British royal family shows that the pledge of the royal family is not a diamond ring, but the ancestral blue sapphire.

In 1981, Queen Elizabeth II visited Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan jewellery Bureau organized a special jewellery exhibition for the queen. The queen can choose any exhibit as a gift. The queen's eyes rested on a small box made of platinum. It's an 18-carat sapphire inside, full of flames and blue in color. It was the noble sapphire that captured the queen's heart, and then Sri Lankan President Richard gave it as a gift of friendship between the two countries.

Several years later, Princess Diana married into the British royal family. Diana likes sapphire very much because sapphire can foil her beautiful eyes. When choosing the engagement ring, everyone thought she would choose the largest one, but she chose the one she liked best, that is, the one Elizabeth chose in Sri Lanka. Now, this precious sapphire ring has been put on Kate's hand. The brilliant sapphire shows Prince William's infinite love for Kate and also testifies to their love for Eternity.

As mentioned above, the Duke of Windsor also ordered a 152.35-carat Blue Treasure Cheetah brooch from Cartier for his wife, which is the most cherished thing of the Duchess of Windsor. The love story of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor experienced a lot. Edward VIII, ascended the throne to marry his beloved woman when faced with the plight of the cabinet's threat. In Edward VIII's *Declaration of Abdication*, he wrote, "No matter how willing I am to fulfill the king's duty, I cannot shoulder this important task unless I get the support and help of the woman I admire." It is really an enviable love. "You know, my happiness will always depend on you." This is the duke's most emotional confession to his beloved woman.

For this reason, during the days they spent together, the duke specially ordered a large amount of jewellery, which was engraved with commemorative inscriptions. This 152.35-carat sapphire leopard brooch conveys the duke's deep love for the duchess. It is said that this brooch has a hidden mechanism. The leopard's head can turn left and right. When the duchess and the duke attend social activities and the lady wants to leave but it is not convenient to say so, she turns the leopard's head to the left, and the duke will understand it is time to leave. Such a sweet secret is really envious of others.

In Western customs, amethyst is February's 12-month birthday stone, representing honesty, nobility,

elegance, magnificence, good luck, and peace of mind. At the same time, since "Valentine's Day" is in February, amethyst has naturally become a gift for lovers to give each other as a token of affection and a symbol of lasting love.

2.3. Contrast on Beauty of Implication about Love Tokens

The pledge of love in ancient China pays attention to "love" in aesthetics, which is the beauty of freehand brushwork just like the aesthetic color expressed in Chinese landscape paintings since ancient times.^[3] Most of them are close-fitting objects. They are artistic, casual and romantic. They are kept secret so only men and women know that.^[4] They are integrated into daily life, modest and courteous. The feelings they express are also implicit and plain.

The Western pledge of love pays attention to "material objects" in aesthetics, which is the same as the aesthetic color expressed in Western landscape figure paintings and belongs to the beauty of realism. Most of them are relatively valuable items, which are deliberately selected and will be shown in public. Like the Western open-world outlook, the emotion expressed by their pledge is also enthusiastic and unrestrained.

It is not only a token, but also a kind of sustenance. As is seen in the poem, the pledge of love includes bracelet, arm-wrapped gold, ring, earring, sachet, yupei, a true love knot, hair clasp, hairpin and skirt.

What is the expression of my attachment? A pair of **gold rings** wrapped around my arm.

What can I use to express my sincerity? A pair of **pearls** worn on my ears.

What is my sincere expression? **Sachet** tied behind my elbow.

What is the expression of our closeness? A pair of **bracelets** on my wrist.

What is the connection between our feelings? **Yupei** decorated with silk ribbon.

What is the consolation for our parting? With **hawkbill hairpins** behind my ears.

What will connect our sadness and anxiety? With **white silk** sewn-in clothes inside.

By contrast, there is one object: ring, which is the same between China and the West. The ring is regarded as a token of love in both the East and the West. It can be seen in *Zhao Style Poetry by Love Lake*.^[5]

How to be diligent, refers to a pair of silver,
Ring love on your ring finger,
It is said that there are blood vessels leading to the heart,
On the token of the ring, the West and the East,
Showing a surprising tacit understanding,
Put on the ring and hold hands,
In this way, go bald in the snow.

In China, rings have been used for at least 2,000 years. Young men and women often express their love by presenting rings. The ancestors of the jade ring can be traced back to Qin and Han dynasty, the "jade ring" was very similar to the present "ring". In the Tang Dynasty, rings were widely used as tokens of commitment. Men and women loved each other and gave each other as evidence of a solemn promise.

There is an article---ring, handed over by Emperor Pu Yi after he was captured as a war criminal. It should be one of the tokens of love between Pu Yi and Wanrong. It shows that modern China was influenced by Western jewellery technology and fashion. The inner wall of the ring is engraved in English "I LOVE YOU FORGET ME NOT" (I love you and don't forget me). A little ring witnesses the last emperor---Pu Yi's love life.

3. Different Profound Connotations of Love Tokens in Works

3.1. Embodiment of Connotation in Kong Shangren's *The Peach Blossom Fan*

The Peach Blossom Fan,^[6] by means of the love story of Hou Fangyu and Li Xiangjun, shows the history of the downfall of the NanMing Dynasty, and summarizes the historical experience of the 300 years of subjugation of the NanMing Dynasty, showing the rich and complicated social and historical content. However, the whole story is still based on the love between the two persons as the main line, and the pledge of love "The Peach Blossom Fan" promotes the development of the plot.

First of all, Hou Fangyu said, "I have a Gong fan. I'll give you and make it the object of an alliance

forever. At the beginning of the story, Hou Fangyu wrote a poem on the fan and gave it to Li Xiangjun as a pledge of love. The fan and the poem thus became the witness of their love. Li Xiangjun also said, "I am married to Hou Lang. Will I change my mind? "Red Silk" of love poem fastens our hearts and is worth two thousand taels of Snowflake Silver." In the middle of the story, when Hou Fangyu was in distress and then fled, Li Xiangjun did not change his mind and kept loyal to Hou Fangyu despite the lure of thousands of taels of silver. She remained faithful to love and was not tempted by money. A servant said, "Tell the master, I went to the old courtyard to find Xiangjun. She refused to go downstairs because of her illness." After repeated courtship, Li Xiangjun still made excuses and refused to promise.

The procuress advised Li Xiangjun to marry Tian Yang, which is a good choice for her bright future and the rest of her life. But Li Xiangjun said, "Mom, on that day, Master Yang acted as a matchmaker, and I married Hou Lang. All the guests had already seen, I collected the pledge first. (Taking out Fan) Master Yang had read this love poem. Don't you forget it?" Li Xiangjun is firm that all the guests knew that she was married to Hou and that she still kept our pledge. In order to show her loyalty, she took out the fan and pointed to the poem on the fan and say that she had not forgotten it. At this time, the procuress's well-intentioned exhortation irritated Li Xiangjun unexpectedly. It is enough to demonstrate that Li Xiangjun 's sense of responsibility and obligation arising from her oath-bound her own behaviour.

Compared with Li's attitude towards love, Hou's attitude is the same, which can be demonstrated from his friend's point of view. A friend of Hou said, "This is the object of Hou's love tokens. He has **always treasured** it and **refused to show it to others**. It is probably because blood-spattered and hung here." From his friend's words, the two verbs: "treasure" and "refuse" are evidence of Hou's determined attitude.

Hou Fangyu said, "This is the fan I gave her. The peach blossom fan is **still** our love token. It is **always** in my hands. Remind of the old dream in the brothel." (He looks at the blood on the peach blossom side, I feel heartfelt! Thousands of languages are hard to speak.) According to Hou's words, two adverbs: "still" and "always" are about love token: fan, which is a powerful explanation of their love.

Between the two chapters: Song of Life and Entering the Tao, Xiang Jun experienced two awakenings of consciousness. One was when she experienced love from Hou, the other was when she was separated from love. Between the two awakenings, Xiangjun's life experience was in the most abundant stage and her consciousness developed quickly. In order to explore the opportunity of consciousness awakening during this period, I try to take the structural core of the whole play as a clue.

The Peach blossom fan is not only the theme of the story but also the symbol of Xiangjun's character and fate. Kong Shangren firmly grasped the three coherent details of writing fan, splashing fan and sending fan, depicted the development of Xiang Jun's character and pointed out the clue of the problem. In fact, in the plots of donating fan, splashing fan, painting fan, sending fan and tearing fan, except that the last tearing fan belongs to the promotion of the spiritual realm, the first four parts all mean the gradual change of Xiangjun's self-consciousness.

Giving fans is the beginning of Xiangjun's experience of love. In this chapter of Sleeping Fragrance, Hou Fangyu inscribed a poem fan as a pledge. The poem compares peach and plum with the extraordinary excellence of Xiang Jun. The fragrant peach and plum in the spring breeze are better than the equally fragrant magnolia, highlighting the attraction of Xiang Jun. When Hou wrote this poem, he was really only attracted by her beauty and talent. He only wrote poems to win her heart for love. However, to Xiang Jun, this is an important stage in her career as a geisha. Besides marrying a talented person, she also hopes to gain happiness in the future. The topic fan has become a ceremony, making a covenant symbolizing the love oath. Xiang Jun participated in it and witnessed her expectations for love. The ceremony gave Xiang Jun the acceptance of love and a solemn feeling in spirit. Xiangjun put the fan in her sleeve and then "treasured it and refused to show it to others". What she received was not only a token of love, but also her new feeling of life.

"Splashing Fan" took place in "Guarding the Building". Yang Longyou wanted to marry Li Xiangjun for Tian Yang. Xiang Jun took out the poem fan and questioned it. She vowed not to go downstairs and beat them with the fan. The significance of poetry fan to Xiang Jun lies here. It represents the witnessed identity and love and becomes the patron saint of this identity and love. When it is violated, she uses it as a weapon to fight back. In this blood-stained peach blossom drama, while feeling her strong emotions, it is necessary to examine this as an important part of her character development.

After writing the fan, Xiang Jun experienced love with a solemn consciousness. While Hou Fangyu was still addicted to beauty, she became more sensitive to life. So Yang Longyou took Ruan Dacheng's place and gave her a dowry. Li Xiangjun angrily pulled out her hairpin and undressed, and scolded him severely. She felt that her love had been defiled. In Ruan Dacheng's plan, her love turned into a political

tool of treacherous court officials. So Li Xiangjun suddenly woke up from the dream of love and began to enter another psychological process. After Hou Fangyu ran away, Xiang Jun refused the marriage first and then kept staying upstairs. Both inducements and robbery failed. Her attitude is firmer, from "would rather be widowed for life than marry" to being determined to keep loyalty to him, and would rather wait for him for one hundred years. When she was forced to marry, she took out a poem fan. However, the symbolic value of the poem fan was not recognized by the world, so she angrily used it as a weapon to defend herself. She showed her commitment to the oath by guarding the empty upstairs alone with her life, and she also resisted those unscrupulous counselors with her life. While the blood spattering fans, it is her strong self-affirmation and courage from moral conscience in the face of adversity, which is permeated with her loyalty to Hou Fangyu and loyalty to the nation.

Therefore, Xiangjun's character gradually matures in these plots. She is not always heroic. It is developed step by step. In this process, the fan plays an indispensable role.

3.2. *Embodiment of Connotation in Shakespeare's Othello*

Shakespeare used a handkerchief embroidered with a strawberry pattern as a small prop in his famous play *Othello*,^[7] which has been running through to the end since it appeared in the third act of the play. From this small prop, there are not only many vivid stories, but also many complicated entanglements. As Othello said, "This small handkerchief has magic power woven into it." The handkerchief is Othello's gift to Desdemona. Othello's lieutenant Iago desperately wanted the handkerchief in order to incriminate Desdemona's infidelity. Othello fell into the trap set by Iago and doubted his wife's infidelity. When Desdemona tried to bind his head with a handkerchief to cure Othello's headache and accidentally fell to the ground, the handkerchief was picked up by Amelia and handed over to her husband Iago, who threw it into Cassio's apartment to incriminate Desdemona's adultery with Cassio. Cassio saw the pattern on the handkerchief was very beautiful, so he let his mistress Bianca draw it down. Bianca refused. When she returned the handkerchief to Cassio, she was seen by Othello. Finally, Othello strangled his beloved wife Desdemona with his own hands, causing a tragedy. When he learned the truth, he drew his sword to commit suicide with regret and fell beside Desdemona.

Othello said: "The **handkerchief** was given to my mother by an Egyptian woman. She is a witch who can have an insight into people's hearts at any time. She said to my mother that when she sealed the **handkerchief**, she could get my father's favor. However, if she lost it or gave it to others, my father would hate her and his heart would find another new love. She passed it to me when she was dying, and I gave it to you, so you must be very careful and cherish it as you cherish your precious eyes. If you lose it or give it to others, you will inevitably encounter an incomparable disaster."

The following dialogue is excerpted from a dialogue between Othello and Desdemona during their first private meeting after Iago aroused Othello's jealousy in Act III and Act IV. Desdemona wanted to resume the talk about Cassio when they last met, while Othello wanted to find out if she had lost her handkerchief. However, Othello did not directly ask her if she had lost the Handkerchief. Instead, he used 20 lines of words to state the magic of the Handkerchief and the danger of losing it as opening remarks. No wonder Desdemona said, "I wish I had never seen this thing before." According to the context, Othello thought this was the first hint that she admitted losing her handkerchief, so he asked Desdemona to explain clearly:

DESDEMONA: Then would to God that I had never seen it!

OTHELLO: Ha, wherefore?

DESDEMONA: Why do you speak so startingly and rash?

OTHELLO: Is't lost? Is't gone? Speak, is it out o' the way?

DESDEMONA: Heaven bless us!

OTHELLO: Say you?

DESDEMONA: It is not lost, but what an if it were ?

OTHELLO: Ha!

DESDEMONA: I say it is not lost.

OTHELLO: Fetch't, let me set it.

For Desdemona, Othello's significant change was his tone. Because she did not know Othello's suffering since the last meeting, she was surprised to ask "Why do you speak so startingly and rashly?" Othello felt that it seemed Desdemona prevaricated his question, and his repeated questioning received the same response.

Desdemona did not understand why he attached such importance to one handkerchief and suspected

that he was manipulating the dialogue to avoid the topic of Cassio. Worried that Cassio's topic would not be mentioned naturally, she made up her mind to bring up Cassio again, but she did not succeed because both of them insisted on their own topic.

DESDEMONA: Why, so I can sir, but I will not now, this is a trick, to put me from my suit, I pray let Cassio be receiv'd again.

OTHELLO: Fetch me that handkerchief, my mind misgives.

DESDEMONA: Come, come, You'll never meet a more sufficient man.

OTHELLO: The **handkerchief** !

DESDEMONA: I pray, talk me of Cassio.

OTHELLO: The **handkerchief** !

DESDEMONA: A man that all his time Hath founded his good fortunes on your love, Shar'd dangers with you, ---

OTHELLO: The **handkerchief** !

DESDEMONA: I'faith, you are to blame.

OTHELLO: Zounds ! (Exit)

Only when Othello was determined to kill Desdemona in the second scene of act 5 did he answer her question and express his heart:

DESDEMONA: What's the matter ?

OTHELLO: That **handkerchief** which I so lov'd, and gave thee, Thou gavest to Cassio.

DESDEMONA: No, by my life and soul, Send for the man and ask him.

OTHELLO: Sweet soul, take heed, take heed of perjury, Thou art on thy death—bed.

In *Othello*, Othello believed that "She also gave the love tokens that I gave her to Cassio as a reward for his admiration and flattery. I saw it with my own eyes in her hand. That is a **handkerchief**, an old souvenir my father gave my mother." The handkerchief, as a love token between Othello and Desdemona, becomes the blasting fuse of the story. It promotes the development of the plot: Othello killed Desdemona personally and finally, he commits suicide. A sad ending but a beautiful love story produces. Othello believed Iago easily, Iago used Desdemona's enthusiasm, Cassio's kindness and regret, Othello's integrity and strong love for Desdemona to successfully deceive Othello. He aroused Othello's suspicion and hatred. Othello believed the slanderers, his eyes were "chaotic" and he lacked the minimum vigilance for the hypocritical and evil Iago in sheep's clothing. Othello failed to have a pair of "eyes", so in his heart, love and hate, trust and suspicion, honor and humiliation and so on produced fierce conflicts and collisions, which greatly distorted his character.

Othello's credulity is closely related to his inferiority complex. It was because of inferiority that he felt that he was not worthy of his wife. In his eyes, his wife was holy, but he was ugly. Therefore, he doubted that his wife would like Cassio, a white officer who was more handsome than himself. In fact, people with low self-esteem are generally especially sensitive, so don't say Desdemona interceded for Cassio and found Desdemona's handkerchief in Cassio's room. Even if Desdemona looks at other men, Othello may be angry and jealous. However, this kind of jealousy will slowly make him lose his mind, make him crazy, make him unwilling to listen to his wife's explanation, and make him finally extend his evil hand to a kind and innocent wife.

Meanwhile, Othello lacks confidence in marriage. Othello felt inferior to the Venetians for his dark skin. Othello has always said that he is black, but for Desdemona's hint, Othello would never have revealed his love. In addition, Iago seems to know how to evaluate Othello's thoughts and feelings about "our" Venetian women. Well, that's the problem. To be bold, how many people of the same country, color and class proposed to her? According to our opinion, if it succeeded, it would be a perfect match, but she turned a deaf ear to it. This is obviously against normal behaviour. Hey! From here it is an absurd will, a perverse habit and an inhuman thought from Act III. Othello acquiesced to this view. Othello accepted that his race was inferior and admitted that he was "black and ugly, lacking the gentle and elegant speech of gentlemen". In his eyes, Desdemona's reputation of "as bright as Dianna's face" was as "dark" as his face once stained with dirt. It is this inferiority complex caused by ideological understanding that makes him lack sufficient confidence.

3.3. Contrast of Love View and Constraints on Characters

In *The Peach Blossom Fan*, Li always thinks that they respect each other. Hou is her lifelong reliance. How can she change her vows? The fan has a poem inscribed on it. Even though waiting three years, waiting ten years, waiting for one hundred years, she still doesn't marry Tian Yang. Not only did Li Xiangjun not remarry because of Hou Fangyu's departure, but instead she has determined to wait for him,

which can be described that one poem, one fan, all life. Therefore, it can be seen that Li Xiangjun's character is also vigorous, resolute, and uncompromising.

In Xiangjun's mind, she has determined to keep faithful and doesn't care about food and clothing. She would rather endure cold and hunger and never go down the emerald staircase.

Love view is a reflection of an outlook on life due to the influence and restriction of different economic conditions, social systems, and ideological and cultural conditions. However, Li's concept of love has not been affected by any different history and has not continuously developed and changed with the development of society. Li Xiangjun will never give in just because of a few small mercies. Her view of love is that once a person has been identified and sworn to, she will not abandon him. Li didn't walk down the stairs. Confronted with vicious power, Li Xiangjun hit the wall with her head, and then her blood splattered on the poem fan. Her love view is firm and her love for Hou Fangyu is unswerving.

The concept of love also advocates "like-minded" love. About the right love view, one should put the same thoughts, common beliefs and pursuits in the first place, and regard a good heart, noble sentiment and psychological harmony as the first criteria for choosing a spouse. The lofty love between Li and Hou is based on one word: like-minded. Because their love can withstand the test of hardships and hardships and has been widely spread.

In the process of love, people should have more understanding, trust and tolerance, respect each other and make common progress. Love is the unity of mutual love. Both parties in love still have their own independent personality and spiritual world. Li did it! When she is solitary in Nanjing, she gives up the temptation of money decisively for the country's sense of honor. In the end, she chooses to become a Daoist for the national decline, giving up her love, which expresses her independent personality and spiritual world.

The love view of Shakespeare lies in that love is not a sweet word in the shade of a tree, not a sweet word in the peach garden, not a soft tear, not even a stubborn compulsion, but a spiritual communication based on a common foundation.^[8](It is the same as Kong Shangren's love view.)

As female characters, the two heroines: Li Xiangjun and Desdemona dare to pursue their love and break the tradition of women's love without autonomy in feudal society, which shows that men and women are equal in humanistic society.

In *Othello*, Othello is a frank, brave and generous soldier. Desdemona is naive and infatuated. She resolutely fell in love with him and married him regardless of family opposition and social discrimination. Although their love overcame racial discrimination, they did not escape Iago's conspiracy. Desdemona's attitude toward love is that her love is frank, clear and confident. Desdemona believes that the love she pays will get equal returns. Love is conceited and arrogant. She almost hasn't changed her mind in love view: consistent, faithful, and never suspicious of Othello. However, Othello's love cannot be mixed with even a little impurity.^[9] His Love is absolute and painful, and betrayal is not allowed. From the above, Desdemona and Othello have different love views. It can be seen that from the very beginning, the love between Othello and Desdemona is dancing on the cliff, and if they are not careful, they will fall into the abyss. Desdemona thinks that her love is solid, and she thinks that the person he loves is consistent with her. Her sorrow is that she does not see the changes in Othello after being overwhelmed by suspicion. (Othello's changes after alienation caused by the handkerchief.)

In *Othello*, a handkerchief plays the role of threading the needle, entangling characters, adding fuel to the flames, and combining the plot. Therefore, as far as the whole plot is concerned, this small prop is an integral part of the play and is the flesh and blood that constitutes the whole plot.

Analyzing the actual situation of Othello is necessary. It was because of secular racial discrimination that Othello doubted whether a black Moor and a person feared by ordinary people could really win the love of white girls. He gradually lost confidence and became inferior. From his firm belief in Desdemona's loyalty to his suspicion of Desdemona's chastity and motive of love, he finally completely denied Desdemona's love, and believed that Desdemona was a whore. Then he killed Desdemona and ended the holy love with his own hands. He gave up himself, on the one hand, he couldn't integrate into the social environment of Venice; on the other hand, he could only struggle in the pain of being "homeless" until he is finally destroyed.

From the first act of *Othello*, people would believe that if Othello and Desdemona could leave each other, then all the couples in the world would be untrustworthy and could leave each other. However, Shakespeare's greatness was that it only took five days.^[10] The story took five days. Othello killed Desdemona. Through the process of killing, it was found that Shakespeare's story had no scars or cracks.

It was really a genius and convincing. Under such circumstances, he would kill himself. He killed his wife not because of anything else, but because he only asked for 100% love. He asked for the purest love. He said that after I got married, I felt like a toad, unable to breathe in that damp cellar and distressed by a problem. What is it? Ah, these beautiful people, we take them as our own in honor, why can't we control their joys and sorrows? The instinct of love is infinite possession, and this infinite possession is absolutely impossible and can only be instantaneous. As long as you keep loving people, this kind of love will torment you. If all of us want to keep love, we need 70%, 60% and 50% of love. But Othello is different from others, Othello needs 100%, which will inevitably leads to his killing of his wife. It is his deeper description of love. Therefore, Othello has entered Shakespeare's four tragedies.

Othello and Desdemona's love is pure, beyond racial prejudice and enviable. However, Othello became sensitive, credulous, jealous and irrational due to inferiority, thus losing true love and ending his life regretfully. However, the fault is not entirely Othello, because his inferiority complex is a pattern gradually formed in his mind by society and experience, and it is a character characteristic beyond his control and change.

Othello profoundly reflects Lu Xun's statement that tragedy is to destroy beautiful things for people to see. Although he is not the most representative of Shakespeare's four tragedies, there is no doubt that his depiction of Othello is very successful. Aristotle believed that the tragic hero is certainly not a good model, but he must have a noble character, and at the same time he must be a person prone to make mistakes. The reason why he made mistakes was not because he knew nothing about things other than his own knowledge, but because of his jealousy. Therefore, Othello is a tragic figure, and his tragic fate is driven by profound and complicated social background, ethnic background and so on. At the same time, facing the deceitfulness and deception of Iago, the evil son who is as cunning as the devil and deeply hidden under the face of ordinary people, suspicion of human nature and inner weakness are also the important reasons that drive Othello to the end.

A Dream in Red Mansions, which is similar to *Othello*, inherits the tradition of using handkerchiefs to promote plot development. The plot of Bao Yu's gift of a handkerchief in the 34th time was a great turning point in Bao Dai's love. In *On the Two Old Handkerchiefs of Promise in A Dream of Red Mansions*, the article focuses on demonstrating the necessity of Baoyu sending Daiyu a pledge of love, the reason why handkerchief can become a pledge of love between the two persons, the role of sending handkerchief in their relationship and Daiyu's psychological changes after receiving handkerchief.^[11] To sum up, Baoyu gave her handkerchief as a love token, and Daiyu was at ease from then on. Compared with the pledge of mutual affection given by beauties and talented people, the old handkerchief given by Baoyu to Daiyu has added practical meaning besides showing love for each other.

Most of the images in Shakespeare's works have metaphorical functions, such as love poems, rings, and handkerchiefs, which is the same as Cao Xueqin's *A Dream of Red Mansions*. These images play an important role in elucidating the narrative theme, developing the plot and shaping the characters. The image of the handkerchief in *Othello* is integrated with the theme, characters and plot of dramatic narration. Handkerchiefs have a narrative function and promote plot development. The most direct fuse leads to the alienation of Othello's characters. It is the pledge of Othello's parents and the key objectives of Iago's stratagem.

4. Conclusion

Through the contrastive analysis on the love tokens in poems or stories of Chinese and Western cultures, a conclusion can be made that love token in the West is dominated by precious objects such as precious stones: sapphire, crystal: amethyst and so on, while China is dominated by personal objects with poetic flavor, which are not valuable but sufficient to fall in love with each other. Three types of tokens in Chinese and Western token cultures are similar: rings, handkerchiefs and poems.

Based on the above analysis, the thesis analyzes Kong Shangren's *The Peach Blossom Fan* and Shakespeare's famous work *Othello*, thus conclusions can be reached that the poem fan in *The Peach Blossom Fan* has a far-reaching influence on Li Xiangjun's view of love, affecting fate of the characters. It is consistent with Desdemona in *Othello* in the character's view of love: loyalty to one person, inseparable from lovers, the character: firm, resolute, not afraid of evil forces, not afraid of life and death, etc. Admittedly, when analyzing famous Chinese and Western articles, one should not only start from the historical background, but also pay attention to the details, such as the pledge of love, which is a small and inconspicuous object. People hardly realize that it has existed for thousands of years and has a long history. There are certain reasons and values for its existence, which we have always ignored.

References

- [1] Wang Xiumei. *The Book of Songs*[M]. Zhonghua Book Company, 2015.
- [2] Wang Yanxin. *The "Ring" Image in The Merchant of Venice*[M]. *Northern Literature*, 2014(19):2-6.
- [3] Wan Mingtian. *The Study for Tokens of Love in Chinese Classic Drama*[D]. Anhui University, 2010.
- [4] Wang Wenjun. *Love Tokens and Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*[J]. *Times Literary*, 2015(8):4-9.
- [5] Zhu Yizun. *Zhao Style Poetry by Love Lake*[M]. Zhejiang Ancient Books Publishing House, 2012.
- [6] Kong Shangren. *The Peach Blossom Fan*[M]. Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 2016.
- [7] William Shakespeare. *Othello*[M]. Macmillan Press Ltd., 1993.
- [8] Bassnett Susan. *Shakespeare: The Elizabethan Plays*[M]. Oxford UP, 2000.
- [9] Smith Bruce R. *Shakespeare and Masculinity*[M]. Oxford UP, 2000.
- [10] Karl F. Thompson. *Modesty and Cunning: Shakespeare's Use of Literary Tradition*[M]. University of Michigan Press, 1971.
- [11] Li Ling. *On the Two Old Handkerchiefs of Promise in A Dream of Red Mansions*[J]. *Cultural and Educational Materials*, 2015(5):2-4.