



# EON

Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Volume 01: Issue 04, September 2023

Original Research Article

## LITERARY REVIEW OF *INTO THE DESERT*

Dr. Hsiu Ling Robertson<sup>1</sup>

Received: 08.08.2023

Accepted: 20.08.2023

Published: 12.09.2023

### Abstract

Xuemo's novel is set in the Gobi Desert in western China where Xuemo himself grew up. One of the first authors to write about the lives of farmers in the dessert, he has already produced a considerable body of recognized works, including, *Desert Trilogy* 大漠三部曲 (2013), comprised of three novels, *Desert Rites* 大漠祭, *Desert Hunters* 獵原 and *White Tiger Pass* 白虎關 -- considered an iconic work of contemporary literature on western China. The changing culture of the Desert in Western Chinese is described in detail in Xuemo's works. He not only describes the farmers' poor and harsh life and offers reflections on traditional agriculture and civilization, but also presents the crises and challenges people faced in the transition from traditional lifestyles to modern industrialization. In the process, ordinary people's farming, eating, marriage bartering, cheating, quarreling, coping with illness and feeling grief over death and over an empty life are revealed in detail as well.

**Key Terms:** Contemporary Literature, Iconic Work, Traditional Agriculture and Civilization

Xuemo's novel is set in the Gobi Desert in western China where Xuemo himself grew up. One of the first authors to write about the lives of farmers in the dessert, he has already produced a considerable body of recognized works, including, *Desert Trilogy* 大漠三部曲 (2013), comprised of three novels, *Desert Rites* 大漠祭, *Desert Hunters* 獵原 and *White Tiger Pass* 白虎關 -- considered an iconic work of contemporary literature on western China. The changing culture of the Desert in Western Chinese is described in detail in Xuemo's works. He not only describes the farmers' poor and harsh life and offers reflections on traditional agriculture and civilization, but also presents the crises and challenges people faced in the transition from traditional lifestyles to modern industrialization. In the process, ordinary people's farming, eating, marriage bartering, cheating, quarreling, coping with illness and feeling grief over death and over an empty life are revealed in detail as well.

*Into the Desert* was co-translated by well-known Sinology translators Howard Goldblatt and Sylvia Li-Chun Lin. It is an excerpted from Xuemo's third novel of the *Desert Trilogy*, *White Tiger Pass*, which vividly depicts the life of farmers in the Gobi Desert. *Into*

<sup>1</sup> Northwestern University

*the Desert* focuses on two female characters, Lanlan and Ying'er, who are unwilling to give in to the forces of the outside world and keep struggling against their fate. The rich, well organized story explores the essential issues of women's lives, existence and dignity. In this regard, Xuemo's novel is similar to French Nobel Prize-winning writer Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio's novel *Désert* (1980), which depicts the leader of desert nomads in Africa organizing resistance to cruel colonial invasion. Through the life experience of Lala, a nomadic girl who escapes marriage to the metropole of Marseille, Le Clezio presents her helpless struggle against an unjust world. Thus, both novels serve to bring the attention of readers to the existential crisis of disadvantaged groups and cultures.

In addition, both novels also focus on the pursuit of dreams, and on finding a "way out" from the context of the times. Le Clezio brings readers not pessimism and despair, but unquenchable hope. In his story, under the idea that freedom has no limit, the tribe of the "Blue-faced People" continues to move forward until finally the survivors of the ordeal embark on the road that will take them back to their hometown. The female character, Lala, who was born and raised in the desert, initially full of fantasies about Marseille, the French metropolis, witnesses the hypocrisy and ugliness of modern civilization. She longs to return to her soft, singing, and sunny hometown. Her successful return signifies the inheritance of life and the rebirth of the immortal desert.

In contrast, the characters in *Into the Desert* are forced to participate in the industrialization of the countryside. Farmers encounter subversive challenges to traditional moral and ethical concepts. Such pressure on traditional ways of life is one major themes of the novel. The tragedies of the two women Ying'er and Lanlan tell readers that it is impossible to cope with the demands of contemporary life. Nevertheless, they still follow the traditional path. For example, Ying'er says to Lanlan: "...Who doesn't suffer in life? You take what they give you and try to hold on to your dignity." (p. 9) On the other hand, they stubbornly fight against their fates. For example, on another occasion, after anxiety regarding a snake-attack makes Ying'er cry, Lanlan says, "Don't cry. Tears won't buy you freedom...Come on, let's keep at it. We can't suffer the fright for nothing. Don't be afraid, they're small." (p.20) yet, no matter how hard they fight, "hope" is a luxury and there is no escape from their fate.

Xuemo's works about the desert are comparable to Le Clezio's in terms of exploring themes such as reflections on urbanization, greed, and the existence of a sense of crisis. *Into the Desert's* portrayal of the two female characters Lanlan and Ying'er is even more moving. Their lives are always described around the difficult, closed and backward situation, sometimes thrilling, sometimes touching, and sometimes making readers extremely sad and indignant.

The plot reflects these themes: Ying'er and Lanlan are bartered into marriage because their families are poor. Ying'er marries to Lanlan's older brother, Hantou, who dies soon after the marriage; Lanlan was married to Ying'er's older brother Baifu and had to endure merciless whipping by her husband Baifu. It is stated that "Baifu beat her with a bullwhip like beating a donkey. Red and purple streaks of blood were all over her body." "(He) sprinkled salt on the wounds, saying it was to prevent infection, because treating it would cost his family money." Unable to bear the violence of Baifu, and learning that her daughter, Yindi, has died after being abandoned by her husband in the desert, Lanlan flees back to her natal home. Because this kind of bartered marriage is a transaction between families, the Bai family asks the widowed daughter Ying'er to return to her natal family and remarry a butcher

to recoup the loss caused by her daughter-in-law Lanlan's escape. Lanlan and Ying'er decide to break free from their marriages and pursue their dreams. Lanlan tries to find spiritual comfort in her religious beliefs, while Ying'er fantasizes about getting emotional comfort from the affair she had with her beloved brother-in-law, Lingguan. Finally, both Lanlan and Ying'er realize that their dreams of spiritual comfort are only illusory and only economic independence can change their destinies. Therefore, they choose to run away together, and set off for Salt Lake, a place infused with a symbolic meaning of unyielding destiny. During this hazardous trip, they overcome and survive many perils but come to realize that they are still ordinary mortal women who can be pushed around without mercy by others. They have to admit that against their wills, they and many other women are powerless and must submit to their predestinated fates.

The story is full of romanticism, with nature as background. It uses exaggeration and metaphor to emphasize Lanlan and Ying'er pursuit of their dreams. The story is a typical romantic text. Xuemo uses an exaggerated style of writing to describe the vigorous and brutal vitality contained in the desolate and boundless yellow sand. In the desert, there are reeds, the rushing desert wind, wild animals including snakes and even more terrifying jackals. During Ying'er and Lanlan's journey to the Salt Lake, they are constantly stalked by packs of jackals. At night, a giant snake gets hold of Ying'er's pants while she is sleeping. Even worse, they lose the camel that was carrying their critical water supply leaving them in danger of fatal dehydration. However, their determination to survive and succeed is not stifled by the cruel but thrilling desert; on the contrary, the dangers made them stronger and more determined to pursue their dreams. The arduous and brave journey symbolizes Ying'er and Lanlan's longing for survival and rebirth. They have transcended the experiences and limitations of ordinary peasants. Subjects with this temperament are characteristic of romantic literature.

Xuemo also uses metaphors with ingenuity. He uses the image of the Salt Lake and the flower to represent the things women desire in the depths of their hearts. Salt Lake is a symbol of vitality in the vast expanse of desert region in western China, and is closely linked to survival in such an environment. Before industrialization camel-equipped salt teams would go to the salt lakes to collect salt in the spring to trade for other necessities in the fall. In order to make themselves economically independent, Ying'er and Lanlan make a long, hard trek with a similar hope to earn money by collecting the white, sandy crystals of salt. As they move on, they see the towering, salt-encrusted mountains in the distance. "The sun shining down on a brilliant white, like a crystal palace." (p. 180) Doesn't the pure and dazzling white symbolize the holy life crystals that Lanlan and Ying'er desire? For every soul that approaches it, this Salt Lake symbolizes peace and purity far away from the hustle and bustle of ordinary life. At the sight, even their "camel cried out spiritedly." (p.180)

In the story, the faiths of Ying'er and Lanlan are also full of symbolic meaning. Ying'er loves her brother-in-law, Lingguan, deeply. But he leaves her and goes to the city. She can only sing the folk songs of the "flower tune" to express her longing for him:

*"A wolf bays three times in the ravine. A tiger runs out of the forest.  
I call your name three times. My heart nearly leaps from my chest.  
At Jiayu Pass, thunder claps. By the yellow River, the rain falls.  
I cry so much my eyes are swollen. When I see a stranger, I think it is you." (p.143)  
"A white peony falls into the water gray. Fish it out quickly or it will float away.  
Make sure to enjoy life in this world. Hurry up, before you grow old one day.  
The little chicks are chirping away. Fighting over kernels of rice in a tray,*

*Do not be fooled by my silence amount others. I think of you no matter what they say.  
Reputation is nothing but an empty word. It all depends on how you wish.  
Would you come to my little room? Will talk to our hearts' content, free as fish." (p. 25)*

The flower-imagery conveys Ying'er faith in love. It is this faith that has rekindled her hope of life when she was in despair; it is this faith that gives her the courage to fight against the jackals when faced with the threat of death. It also this faith that allows her not be tempted by money and be able to reject the marriage proposal of a wealthy businessman. However, she also believes that her love for Linguan is unethical, and socially unacceptable. Ultimately, Ying'er, who once wept and sang of flowers ends her flower-like life. Lanlan, on the other hand, has pinned her faith on religion. She hopes the power of religion will grant her peace of mind as she continues to walk on the road of life. When she finally abandons all distractions and decides to practice her religion, her practical life in the real world does not leave her any chance to breathe fresh air. In the end, her wishes come to nothing, and she still has to return to the world and continues to endure a life that will eventually drag her down.

The two young women have both experienced rough and unhappy marriages. The rose-like faces they once had are short-lived and last only briefly, wilting like a flower. In the vast and boundless desert, they drag their dying bodies like walking corpses searching for their dreams in bright sunlight. Seeking and searching, they can't imagine where the desert ends. It seems that their destination, the Salt Lake, is remote and unattainable. What's even more frightening is that they believe that "women are born to suffer" (p.22) and "everyone thinks this is women's fate". All this means that there is something more terrifying than poverty in women's lives, and that is the dignity of women's existence being completely ignored. Their youth was corroded and destroyed by living in a difficult environment, staying in a marriage without love and respect at immense psychic cost.

Le Clezio's Nobel-Prize winning novel, *Désert*, describes how the Blue-faced People, a nomadic tribe in the Sahara Desert of Africa, migrate from south to north in search of an ideal homeland a century ago. Both their men and women are massacred by Christian soldiers, and they suffer exhaustion, thirst and hunger on their way through the Western Sahara, but they do not stop and never lose hope. They believe that "under the sky of the plateau, there are still stars shining." Their desire for, and belief in, freedom as a source of happiness, let them climb mountains without stopping, and keep walking to "where the sun rises." Lala, the heroine, in the story is a descendant of a Blue-faced man who left her Moroccan hometown alone to find happiness in a big French city. Her disappointment and then return to her hometown and the story of her return vividly reproduces the living conditions of the nomadic African people and their pursuit of freedom.

Xuemo's novel, *Into the Desert*, describes a similar trek but into a different desert by a different people in a different era, the twenty first century, and the results are also different. The people living there "cannot see their way out" to freedom and happiness. Lanlan is tortured by her husband in various ways and his behavior was no different from that of "man-eating" jackals. Such violent crimes are still frequent in these remote areas. In January of this year, a brutal video came to light: A householder was found dressing and feeding the children, while his wife was chained around the neck and tied to the dilapidated shake next to the main house. It was stated that she has been subjected to this treatment for 20 years and she has given birth to 8 children during that time. The local temperature was reported close to zero degrees Celsius. Her clothes were shabby, her teeth were missing and her food was terrible. The official account of this case has changed several times, but it is generally

believed that she was kidnapped and abused from other places to carry on the family line. In June of this year, a beating occurred at a barbecue restaurant in Tangshan. Surveillance footage shows that four women were punched and kicked, and beaten with chairs and wine bottles by a group of vicious underworld figures. Such incidents are not uncommon annual occurrences. It seems that social dysfunction continues to ferment in remote areas, and social norms continue to regress.

The China that many foreigners understand is to a large extent the China that is widely publicized in popular media: China with socialist characteristics, China with the “Chinese Dream”, China with excellent culture, China with high economic growth and development, China with cutting-edge technology, and China with advanced military weapons. However, in reality, there are several Chinas. China with highly developed Eastern coastal areas, high living standards and beautiful natural scenery but also a China with poverty-stricken mountainous areas. Although China’s economy has advanced by leaps and bounds since the implementation of the reform and opening up policies, there are still a series of problems that need to be solved urgently, such as poor education, the low quality of medical care, and so on. In the barren northwestern region, a historical center of underdevelopment, farmers are at the bottom of society and women live at the mercy of men as the ultimate victims. Xuemo’s touching novel *Into the Desert*, describes this suffering and, in so doing, stresses that it needs to be alleviated, especially among the rural women now being trampled on repeatedly, by reforming the way of life currently from generation to generation. This subject is one that may expand readers awareness of other Chinas that are urgently crying out for long-awaited attention.

雪漠作品《沙漠的女兒》(*Into the Desert*) 書評

西北大學 林秀玲

雪漠小說的創作背景是西部大漠，這是他本人生長的地方。他是中國少數寫大漠與人之關係的作家之一，《大漠三部曲》(2013)包括《大漠祭》《獵原》《白虎關》等三部小說，被認為是當代西部文學的標誌性作品，寫盡了21世紀初西北沙漠地區農民貧困且嚴峻的生活現狀，並對傳統的農耕文明進行反思，更呈現出農民在傳統與現代工業化轉型期中所面臨的危機與挑戰。雪漠真真實實地寫盡了正在變化著的西部，其中老百姓種地、吃飯、換親、偷情、吵架、看病、感受死亡的悲嘆與虛無的生活面貌，鉅細靡遺地被揭露出來。《沙漠的女兒》(*Into the Desert*)一書是由知名漢學翻譯家葛浩文(Howard Goldblatt)和林麗君(ylvia Li-chun Lin)合譯，其內容摘錄自雪漠長篇小說《白虎關》。書中雪漠生動地描繪了戈壁沙漠上農民的生活畫面，尤其把核心女性人物蘭蘭、瑩兒不甘屈服，不停地與命運抗爭的生活形象刻畫得淋漓盡致。在結構緊密，細節飽滿的筆下，作者深入探觸女性生活、生存以及尊嚴的本質問題。值得一提的是法國作家勒克萊齊奧(Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clezio's)2008年10月問鼎諾貝爾文學獎，其小說《沙漠》(*Désert*, 1980)是他獲得諾貝爾文學獎的重要因素。《沙漠》描繪了非洲游牧民族首領帶領族人反抗殘忍殖民者的侵略；更通過女主角，一個游牧女孩拉拉，在大城市的生活際遇，描述了她與不公正世界進行的孤立無援的搏鬥。這兩部描寫沙漠的作品，都揭示了弱勢文化和弱勢族群的存在危機和矛盾心理，企圖喚起人們對文化衝突的關注。

另外一個主要共同特徵是對理想的追求。在時代背景下尋找“出路”成了共同的主題。在勒克萊齊奧筆下，帶給讀者的不是悲觀和絕望，而是絕望中不滅的希望。在自由沒有終極的理念下，藍面人繼續前行，最後倖存者踏上了回歸之路，重返家鄉。女主角拉拉出生成長於沙漠，曾對法國大都馬賽市充滿幻想，但目睹了現代文明滋生的虛偽和醜惡後，她渴望回到那溫暖，有歌聲，有陽光的家鄉，歷盡艱辛後終於達成了願望。這結局正意味著生命的傳承和不朽沙漠的重生。而《沙漠的女兒》(*Into the Desert*)一書則在探討正邁向工業化的中國西北地區，女性農民在走出傳統與世代因襲的生存方式時所面臨的困境。作品中瑩兒和蘭蘭一方面深知身為女性，只能忍受折磨，別無選擇；另一方面她們也頑強地抵抗，決定出走，另尋生路，但最終還是無法擺脫命運的安排。

雪漠有關沙漠的作品，對城市化的反思、對金錢的貪婪、對危機感的存在等主題的探討，其文學價值與勒克萊齊奧的作品《沙漠》不分軒輊。而《沙漠的女兒》(*Into the Desert*)一書在描寫主要女性人物蘭蘭和瑩兒的遭遇卻更令人動容。她們的生活始終圍繞著艱苦、封閉和落後，隨著情節的開展，讀者情緒也起伏不定，時而驚心動魄，時而為她們的境遇感到悲憤，更時而被感動得熱淚盈眶。

《沙漠的女兒》(*Into the Desert*)的情節反映了主題：瑩兒與蘭蘭因雙方家庭窮困而被迫交換婚姻。瑩兒嫁給蘭蘭的哥哥，熬頭，結婚不久就亡故；蘭蘭則嫁給瑩兒的哥哥白福。蘭蘭婚後不時承受著丈夫白福無情的鞭打。「白福掄著牛鞭，跟捶驢一樣，捶了她一頓，紅的紫的血道兒織了一身」(《白虎關》，頁19)，「身子就叫鞭子織成血席子了。然後呢，他又抓了碾面的鹽，往傷口上灑，他說是怕感染---感染了，家裡又得出錢」(同上，頁341)。蘭蘭不堪丈夫白福的重拳嚴打，加上女兒引弟被丈夫遺棄在沙漠致死，在忍無可忍之下逃回娘家。白家白家於是要求守寡的瑩兒改嫁，以收取一筆可觀的財富。蘭蘭和瑩瑩決定衝破婚姻，追求自己的理想。蘭蘭試圖在宗教信仰裡得到心靈的寄託，瑩兒則執著於對小叔靈官的愛情，並從中得到情感上的慰



藉。但最終她們都意識到自己理想的虛幻性，進而體認到只有經濟獨立才能改變自己的命運，於是她們選擇一起出走，向坐落於沙漠的鹽池出發。她們的沙漠之行，儘管克服了重重驚濤駭浪，到頭來，她們發現自己還是一個凡人，還是一個任人擺佈的女子，還得服從命運的安排。

故事中瀰漫著濃厚的浪漫主義色彩，以大自然為背景，運用誇張、比喻的手法，強調蘭蘭和瑩兒對理想的追求。蘭蘭和瑩兒的故事是典型的浪漫主義文本。雪漠以誇張筆法描述著荒涼無邊的黃沙中既蓬勃又殘暴的生命力。沙漠裡有抵禦風沙的蘆葦草，也有疾颯的漠風，更有野兔、巨蛇，以及可怕的豺狼等野生動物。蘭蘭和瑩兒行走在狂風飛揚的大漠風沙中，時而忍受烈日的烘烤，時而狂風襲來，沙粒飛揚，在天昏地暗中迷失了方向。此外，還不斷受到兇殘的豺狼群集進攻，夜晚巨蛇鑽入睡的瑩兒的褲筒，駱駝走失使她們面臨斷水危機，這種種死亡威脅並沒有扼殺她們的生命力；相反的，一次次的險境，讓她們更加執著，更加堅強地在大漠中追尋她們的夢想。勇敢拼搏的艱辛旅途象徵著她們對生存的渴求以及強烈的重生慾望。蘭蘭和瑩兒的經歷以及所忍受的極限已超越一般農婦，她們所具備的氣質，是浪漫主義文學的特性。

雪漠也巧妙地運用比喻象徵手法，諸如鹽湖的意象、花的意象，來刻畫她們心靈深處的追尋。鹽湖是中國西部黃地帶地區生命力的象徵，與生存息息相關。未工業化以前，每年春季駝鹽隊伍到鹽湖去採集鹽巴，秋季用鹽巴換取各種物品。瑩兒與蘭蘭為了實現經濟獨立的理想，一路艱辛跋涉，一次次地與死神搏鬥，就是為了去採集那白色的風沙結晶體--鹽。當她們繼續前行時，遠遠地看到了高聳的鹽殼山。照在她們身上的陽光散發出菱鏡反射的光線。目光所及之處，都是一片耀眼的白色，宛如一座水晶宮。這純淨耀眼的白不正象徵著蘭蘭和瑩兒聖潔的生命結晶體嗎？這遠離塵囂的鹽湖感化著每一個接近它的靈魂，連她們的「駱駝都興奮地大叫」（同上，頁 431）。

故事中，瑩兒和蘭蘭的信仰也極具象徵意義。瑩兒深愛著他的小叔靈官。可是靈官離開了她，去了城市，她只能吟唱著西部民歌曲調“花兒”來寄託對靈官的思念：

白紙上寫一顆黑字來，黃表上拓著個印來；  
有錢了帶一個笑臉來，沒錢了掛一匹布來；  
有心了看一回孛妹來，沒心了辭一迴路來；  
活著了揸一封書信來，死了著拖一個夢來。（同上，頁 152）

瑩兒藉著吟唱民歌來傳達她對愛情的信仰。就是靠著這種對愛情的信仰，讓她在絕望時重新燃起生命的希望；也就是這個信仰，讓她在面對死亡威脅時，有了和豺狼搏鬥的勇氣；更讓她不受金錢誘惑，得以拒絕富商的求婚。即便如此，她也深知自己對靈官的愛，是一種不倫的愛情，在現實生活中不可能實現。這信仰曾經支持著她的希望，但也是這信仰，讓曾經如泣如訴唱著“花兒”民歌的女人結束了她花兒般的生命。而蘭蘭則將信仰寄託在宗教上，希望藉助宗教的力量獲得心靈上的平靜。當她決定拋棄所有雜念立志修行時，塵世的生活還是不留給她任何喘息的機會。最終她的願望還是落空了，她還是不得不回到塵世，繼續忍受終將被拖垮的生活。

《沙漠的女兒》(Into the Desert) 故事中兩個年輕女子，歷經坎坷的婚姻，她們曾擁有的玫瑰花般的臉容，短暫得恰是曇花一現。在廣闊無邊大漠裡，在光天化日下尋夢的旅途中，她們行屍走肉似地拖著垂死的身子，步履維艱地走在灼熱且一望無際的黃沙世界，儘管渴望到達那象徵重生之處的鹽湖，卻是尋尋覓覓、覓覓尋尋，根本想像不出哪裡才是黃沙的盡頭，似乎那理想之境是那麼渺茫不可得。更可怕的是，她們

相信「女性就是生來受苦的」、「誰都覺得這是命，女人只是磨盤上的螞蟻，都得認命」(同上，頁 29)、「村裡哪個女人不是苦命人」(同上，頁 345)。凡此在在揭示，女性的生活存在著比貧窮更可怕的東西，那就是女性生存尊嚴被徹底漠視。她們的青春在沒有愛情也不被尊重的婚姻中被腐蝕了，被摧毀了，女性寶貴的靈魂更被徹底摧殘。

勒克萊齊奧作品《沙漠》敘述了一百年前非洲撒哈拉沙漠游牧部族藍面人為了尋找理想家園，集體從南向北方遷徙的經歷。途中男男女女遭到基督教士兵的血腥屠殺，他們在撒哈拉沙漠途中，受盡疲倦、乾渴和飢餓的煎熬。但他們沒有停下腳步，沒有失去希望，他們相信在高原的天空下，仍然有星星在閃爍。憑著對自由和幸福的渴望和信仰，讓他們永不停息地翻山越嶺，一直走到太陽升起的地方。故事中的女主角拉拉是藍面人的後代隻身離開非洲家鄉，去法國大城市尋找幸福的種種失望和回歸的經歷，形像地再現了非洲人民的生存境遇和對自由的追求。最終，藍面人和拉拉都找到了出路，實現了他們的理想。

然而，二十一世紀二十年代的今天，生活在大漠地區的社會邊緣人，卻仍看不到他們的出路。《沙漠的女兒》(*Into the Desert*)，白福對女性的種種摧殘，其行為和“吃人”的豺狼並無差別，這種暴力犯案事件即使在偏遠地區的現實生活中也很頻傳。今年 1 月一個殘酷視頻曝光：屋主在房中給孩子穿衣吃飯，他的妻子則被鐵鍊綁著脖子，拴在家中大房子旁的破屋中，據說已達 20 年之久，並生了 8 個孩子。當地氣溫約攝氏零度。她衣著破敗，牙齒零落，食物糟糕。這宗案件官方說法變更了好幾次，不過一般人相信她是從外地被綁架來當作生育工具以傳宗接代的女子。另一事件是今年 6 月發生在唐山一家燒烤店的打人事件，4 名婦女被一群惡勢力組織拳打腳踢，還用椅子、酒瓶毆打。諸如此類事情，整年下來不在少數，似乎社會黑暗面繼續在偏遠地區發酵，社會文明繼續在倒退。

外國人了解的中國很大程度是大外宣的中國：有中國社會主義特色的中國，有「中國夢」的中國，有優秀文化的中國，有經濟高度起飛、高度發展的中國，有尖端科技、先進軍事武器的中國。然而，今日真實的中國也有好幾個中國，有沿海地區生活水平高度提升的中國，有自然風光美麗如畫的中國，也有山區落後不發達的中國，雖然中國自實行改革開放政策以來，經濟發展突飛猛進，但是仍有一系列問題亟需解決，比如教育問題，醫療品質問題等等。在貧瘠的西北地區底層的農民，尤其任男人擺佈的女性，就是最終的痛苦承受者。透過《沙漠的女兒》“*Into the Desert*”這部感人肺腑的作品，如何改進農村女性一再被踐踏的現象，如何重構世代因循下來的生存方式，這或許也是讀者急需質疑並思考的主題吧！

#### 作者簡介：

林秀玲曾任教於台灣東海大學中文系，美國麻州 College of the Holy Cross，波士頓哈佛大學 Harvard University 訪問學者，後來長期任教於伊利諾州 Northwestern University，於 2020 年退休。著有《現代文學女性身影》(里仁書局，2004) 與《鼓動生命的翅膀》(女書店，2003) 二書。另外，還編導了一部電影：九份山上的外籍新娘。此影片曾在美國 Ohio 州及英國 Sheffield 舉辦的電影節放映。