

Breaking an Eagle and Pick-Up Artists in a Chinese Context

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Abstract: In this paper, I analyse a thought-provoking 1986 novella concerning falconry from a contemporary perspective. *Breaking an Eagle* depicts a process during which a recalcitrant and adamant wild falcon is tamed into an acquiescent hunting tool through a series of manoeuvres that annihilate its willpower. I propound this is analogous to a phenomenon dubbed ‘PUA’ that is permeating every section of contemporary Chinese society. As a cultural import from the US, the terminology PUA (Pick-up Artist) in the Chinese context preserves its original meaning regarding heterosexual courtships and entanglements, yet more significantly, it constructs novel connotations pertaining to emotional coercion and exploitation in the workplace. Parallel to the mentally manipulated and physically abused falcon depicted in the novella, the confidence and assertiveness of victims of interpersonal and workplace PUA are extirpated, bombarded with perpetual censure and nefarious carrot-and-stick approaches.

Keywords: *Breaking an Eagle*, emotional coercion, workplace PUA, contemporary China

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1. Introduction

There is a civilisation where eagle worship among ethnic minorities in north China can be traced back to the prehistoric era.¹ The extant records of hunting facilitated by eagles can be attested in the poetry anthology 诗经 *Shi Jing* ‘Book of Songs’ cumulating poems composed in the Zhou (1046–256 BC) dynasty, as well as the narrative historiographical masterpiece 左传 *Zuo Zhuan* ‘Commentary/Chronical of Zuo’ of the Spring and Autumn (circa 770–476 BC) period (ACROSS CHINA 2012, ZHANG et al. 2018). As documented by a court scribe and astrologer Sima Qian (circa 145–90 BC) in the iconic

¹ JIANG 2013, MA 2013, SONG and ZHANG 2016.

classic 史记 *Shi Ji* ‘Records of the Grand Historian’ circa 90 BC (ALLEN 1981, KERN 2015), the prowess of eagle training was fully fledged during the Qin (221–206 BC) dynasty and the privilege of eagle hunting was enjoyed by the upper classes as a preponderant entertainment. During the Tang (618–907) dynasty, eagle hunting was particularly prevalent among the aristocracy, so top-rank trained eagles were deployed as tributes paid by the Jurchen ethnicity to the feudal Tang and the following Liao (907–1125) sovereigns (MA 2013, FAN et al. 2013), as recorded in an early medieval classic 北史 *Bei Shi* ‘The History of the Northern Dynasties’. Emperor Yang of Sui (r. 604–618) used to summon over ten thousand falconers, and since the Tang dynasty, there had been dedicated royal institutions nurturing and catering for various birds of prey, both of which indicate the popularity of eagle hunting in pre-modern China prior to the demise of the imperial Qing (1644–1911).²

The orthodoxy and ethos regarding falcon taming and falconry can still be attested among Manchus in Inner Mongolia and Jilin Province,³ the Naxi ethnic group in Yunnan Province (HE 2015, SONG and ZHANG 2016), as well as Chinese ethnic minorities in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (CAO 2013, ZHU 2018). For instance, the mysterious Akqi County, resided by the Kyrgyz, is dubbed ‘the home of falcons’ where extant four-millennia-old falcon-training customs and prowess still prevail;⁴ similarly, the Kazakh ethnicity has been hosting competitions for trained golden eagles, the entries of which entail predated hares, foxes and wolves.⁵

Eagle taming and falconry have been recounted by a myriad of fictional works such as 猎鹰 *Lie Ying* ‘Hunting Eagle’ (Chapter 6. MA 2010), 熬鹰 *Ao Ying* ‘Training an Eagle’ (LAOTENG 2015) and 鹰奴 *Ying Nu* ‘Eagle Slave’ (Chapter 16. FEITIANYEXIANG 2017), as well as documentaries and interviews.⁶

In this paper, I investigate a 1986 novella 熬鹰 *Ao Ying* ‘Breaking an Eagle’⁷ (trans. WU 1990), which has its setting in Inner Mongolia and as indicated by its title, concerns eagle taming and falconry. *Breaking an Eagle* (henceforward *Eagle*) was composed by a prolific Manchu writer and screenwriter 赵大年 (1931–2019) (ZHANG 2019), and was later compiled in his novel collection

² ZHENG 2007, MA 2013, SONG and ZHANG 2016.

³ ACROSS CHINA 2012, JIANG 2013 and CAI 2015.

⁴ AKQI TOURISM BUREAU 2018, HE 2018 and GUANGMING DAILY 2019.

⁵ LIU et al. 2017, XINHUA NEWS 2017 and ZHANG et al. 2018.

⁶ HOU 2010, ACROSS CHINA 2012, CAO et al. 2016, HE 2018 and GUANGMING DAILY 2019.

⁷ The animal in the novella is a 猎鹰 *lieying* (Lit. ‘hunting eagle’), viz. a falcon, yet the translator adopts an umbrella terminology 鹰 *ying* ‘eagle’. In this paper, I use both terminologies to denote the animal.

entitled 西三旗 *Xisanqi* in 1992. Being a Beijing-born ethnic minority and descendant of the Aisin-Gioro aristocratic clan (BEIJING EVENING NEWS 2019), a substantial proportion of Zhao's writing concerns Manchu bannermen from both ends of the social spectrum dwelling in this city, exemplified by an award-winning novel entitled 公主的女儿 *Gongzhude Nüer* 'Princesses' Daughters' (trans. mine) that chronicles the travails of late Qing princesses over three generations and demonstrates the bannermen's incompetence and degeneration, embedded in an elaborate and comprehensive depiction of Manchu precepts and ethos (RAO 2019). In terms of linguistic aptitude, Zhao exhibited an adept adaptation of Beijing vernacular in writing to characterise ancient Peking and its Manchu banner inhabitants in a humorous fashion, as well as innovative integration of colloquial expressions derived from both Manchu and Han dialects (HAO 2005, WANG 2017). I postulate that the salient attributes regarding the themes and language styles of Zhao's writing can also be indicated by a leading television serial 皇城根儿 *Huangcheng Genr* 'At the Foot of the Imperial City' to which he contributed as a screenwriter (GAO 1993), as well as the title of his compilation, viz. *Xisanqi*, a local area in Beijing named within the Qing framework of 八旗 *baqi* 'Eight Banners'. Therefore, Zhao's fiction is in a sense analogous to works such as 正红旗下 *Zhenghongqi Xia* 'Beneath the Red Banner' (trans. COHN 1981) composed by another iconic Manchu writer 舒庆春 Shu Qingchun (1899–1966) (WANG 1986), who was illustriously renowned for his pen name 老舍 Lao She and splendid literary prominence.⁸

2. PUA in China

PUA, an acronym for Pick-up Artist, denotes heterosexual men who are self-identified as dating coaches and their acolytes striving for sexual success with women (STRAUSS 2005, BAKER 2013) and cultivating a sexual work ethic in intimate enterprises (O'NEILL 2018: 1–23). Individual PUAs may be members of the highly organised Community of Practice (ECKERT and MCCONELL-GINET 1992, WENGER 1998), which originated in the US and which emphasises interaction and skills as the quintessential means of seduction, rather than physical attractiveness, social status or wealth, yet contains issues of im/politeness and in/equality (SPENCER-OATEY 2008, HAMBLING-JONES and MERRISON 2012). A preponderant ingredient of pick-up artistry lies in establishing confidence via fostering self-aggrandising conduct and recurrent practice (DAYTER and RÜDIGER 2014; 2016: 65, 2019), whereas PUA communities also harness purposely-designed imitation, personal

⁸ BICKERS 1994, LIU 2010, AUERBACH 2013 and FUSINI 2013.

narrative and success/failure vocabulary and frames to attain reverence, nurture expectations and preserve authenticity (DAYTER and RÜDIGER 2014; 2016, 2019). Cyberspace abounds in PUA movements propagating expeditious seduction and selling imposter identities, as well as detrimental PUA-owned and PUA-run businesses in diverse forms of marketing, the techniques of which are comprised of so-called ‘seduction scripts’ and rely on ‘misappropriating science’ to promote talk-in-interaction (DENES 2011: 414–418, O’NEILL 2018: 151–152). In addition to online platforms that mediate an array of functions such as exchange of experiences and phatic communication, self-proclaimed PUA gurus are active beyond the virtual realm: by means of initiating training in the form of face-to-face seminars, written materials and ‘sarging’ sessions, PUA practitioners successfully enrich the industry with a financial component (DAYTER and RÜDIGER 2019, RÜDIGER and DAYTER 2020).

The concept of PUA was imported into China in 2008 from the US, with an initial aspiration to facilitate Chinese males to establish interactions or relationships with the opposite gender by means of accumulating strategies and psychological tactics (GETCHINA INSIGHTS 2018). Nonetheless, in the following decade, it subsequently degenerated into to abhorrent conduct intent exclusively on sexual intercourse. Currently, the English-language acronym PUA refers to both this cohort of lascivious men and their persistent harassment and emotionally manipulative techniques such as secret photography, urging suicide and annihilating women’s self-esteem.⁹ Worse still, PUA has developed into an enormous, highly profitable industry, in which the widely permeated PUA programmes provide step-by-step guides to dominating women, endeavouring to capitalise on social and gender inequality and openly promulgating misogynistic remarks (LI 2019, LI and ZUO 2020). Nevertheless, given the fact that the PUA business is Internet-based (although a series of government crackdowns have been conducted) (DU and YUAN 2019), eradication of this illicit industry chain is gruelling (BU 2019, ZHAO and LU 2021b).

By virtue of the surging visibility of PUA, the English-language terminology has been adopted into the Chinese language as a neologism, the function and connotation of which have been adapted accordingly. Apart from heterosexual (and presumably homosexual) relationships, the construal of PUA has been applied to the field of interpersonal interaction to refer to emotional abuse in a broad sense; moreover, under occupational circumstances, PUA becomes synonymous with exploitation and suppression, dubbed 职场PUA *zhichang PUA* ‘workplace PUA’. Notwithstanding being newly coined terminologies,

⁹ XU and YAO 2019, ZHOU 2019, ZHAO and LU 2021a.

‘PUA’ and ‘workplace PUA’ are widely employed not only at the grassroots in oral and written communication, but also in online entertainments such as 奇葩说 *Qipa Shuo* ‘I Can I BB’ (IQIYI 2021a, 2021b), and even mainstream media such as the state-owned newspaper Legal Daily and China’s official state-run press agency, Xinhua News Agency (YANG 2020, ZHAO 2020a, 2020b). It is noteworthy that PUA can be used either under its initial word class as a noun, or alternatively, under a derivational category of verbs, as in Example (1) extracted from the entertainment show ‘I can I BB’.

(1) A: 不是, 他在PUA我。
Wait, he was PUA-ing me.

B: 听说过, 没见过。喔, 这就是PUA。
I’ve heard but never seen it before. Ah, this is PUA.

A: 你就是这样PUA完了别人, 然后就是甩身一走, 非常洒脱。
You’re always like this: you PUA others and walk away, freewheeling.

C: 我没有PUA你, 但是你扣帽子给我了。
I didn’t PUA you, but you put words in my mouth.

(*I Can I BB*. Season 7. IQIYI 2021a. Trans. mine).

3. Discussion

At the beginning of the novella *Eagle*, the protagonist in Lao Chen’s film script is subject to a prodigious amount of animadversions, rendering him physically and mentally fatigued, as shown in Example (2). The protagonist’s experience in the 1980s coincides with the phenomenon of workplace PUA pervading contemporary China. In the 2020 Chinese workplace, approximately 63.65% of employees have experience of being exploited and/or bullied in a PUA manner, ranging from degradation, abasement as well as suppression of entrepreneurial and innovative vigour, to unmanageable workloads, deprivation of time and resources as well as sexual harassment (GLOBAL TIMES 2020, ZHAOPIN 2020). On Weibo, a Chinese Twitter-like microblogging application with approximately 550 million monthly active users in the first quarter of 2020 (LAI 2020) and the most popular social media platform functioning as an interest-based social network, an ideological arena and a strategic tool for empowerment of grassroots advocacy by virtue of its robust attributes of spreadability, connectivity and civic engagement,¹⁰ a hashtag #职场PUA# *zhichang PUA* ‘#workplace PUA#’ had garnered over 670 million

¹⁰ HAN and WANG 2015; HAN 2016, 2019, 2020; HAN and JIA 2019.

views and attracted more than 78,000 posts by April 2021. In terms of the causes of workplace PUA, they lie in the expeditious economic surge and fierce competition in China, accompanied by relatively underdeveloped institutions and regulations (LI and ZUO 2020, ZHAO 2020a).

(2) 剧作家老陈终于累病了。他写的电影剧本一共经过九十九个人的审阅、挑剔、批评、讨论、协商、折磨、通过、否定、篡改、合作、复苏、再通过、又变卦、变脸、变戏法、再否定、告状、打官司、撕破脸、冷处理、热加工、否定之否定，历时三年三月零三天，大改小改二十七稿，编剧由一人增至六人，东南西北上下六方努力，最后才荣获批准，投入拍摄。然而老陈终于累病了，身心交瘁，躲到遥远的内蒙古大草原来换换空气，看看蓝天白云，自由翱翔的雄鹰，一望无垠的绿草。

The playwright Lao Chen was so tired that in the end he became sick. His film script, after having been gone over, picked at, criticised, discussed, consulted upon, worried at, passed, rejected, tampered with, cooperated on, resuscitated, passed again, reneged upon again, turned against, juggled, rejected again, indicted, taken to court, scrapped over, given the cold shoulder and sweated over by 99 people over three years, three months and three days, with 27 revisions, big and small, screenwriters increased from one to six, and combined efforts from north, south, east, west, above and below, had had the rejection rejected, finally been approved and gone into production. However, Lao Chen was so tired that in the end he became sick. Both physically and mentally exhausted, he went to recuperate on the remote Inner Mongolian grasslands. There he could get a change of air, and see blue skies, white clouds, soaring eagles and boundless stretches of green grass.

(*Breaking an Eagle*. ZHAO 1986. Trans. WU 1990: 132).

I posit that the neologism ‘workplace PUA’ is correlated with other newly-coined expressions exemplified by 打工人 *dagong ren* ‘gig person’ and 内卷 *neijuan* ‘involution’, both of which are listed among the ten ‘Words of the Year 2020’ released by the journal 咬文嚼字 *Yaowen Jiaozi* (CHINA NEWS 2020, SHI 2020). *Neijuan*, in particular, which is a multifaceted construal implying internal competition and conflict, substantially contributes to the all-pervasive PUA phenomenon in the Chinese labour market. Additionally, PUA in the workplace can be embodied by neologisms appertaining to job anxieties of victimised employees, such as 社畜 *shechu* ‘corporate slave’ borrowed from Japan as self-mockery, as well as ‘996’ that denotes a working hour system forcing employees to work from 9am to 9pm for six days per week, and its deteriorated version ‘007’.

In Example (2), Lao Chen resorts to Inner Mongolia for convalescence, in that he fantasises the less urbanised grasslands to be a utopia where he can attain healing through appreciating eagles soaring freely in the sky. Nonetheless, in stark contrast to his surmise, the supposed free, untamed predators fall prey to quasi-PUA falconry. The falcon training portrayed in *Eagle* is constituted of a series of indispensable manoeuvres. As illuminated in Example (3), the wild eagle is initially recalcitrant and adamant, and it is urged by biological need, viz. hunger, so is intransigent to abnegate the bait, which eventually leads to its doom. In terms of workplace PUA, frolicsome jobseekers and employees are enticed and thus harnessed in a way similar to the audacious yet innocent eagle. Furthermore, parallel to the hungry eagle, employees pressed for career prospects and income would be disinclined to resort to resistance or resignation, which further escalates PUA and gets themselves trapped in a vicious circle.

(3) 年轻的雄鹰上了一连串的当。先是它的双爪扣了环，爪趾上的鳞片又被麻线牢牢缠住，再也撒不开手了；按照它好强的性格和辘辘饥肠的实际需要，也决不肯撒手；提着大筐飞，真累人啊！更糟糕的是它看不见脚下的山川和草原，树木和村庄，不敢降落，只敢拼命往上飞...飞呀飞呀汗流浹背，气喘如牛，眼冒金星，口吐白沫，双翅与筐之间的气流是一种乱流、涡流、反流、对流、混流。请空气流体力学专家钱学森博士来也要研究三十年才能摸清规律，遑论一羽雄鹰乎！它的尾巴就失去了掌握平衡和方向的舵手作用，前途岌岌可危。

The young eagle had been thoroughly taken in. First, its feet were knotted up, and the talons themselves were tangled in the rope, so it couldn't let go. Besides, it was so stubborn and hungry, it wouldn't let go anyway. But trying to carry a basket aloft was really tiring. Even worse, it couldn't see the hills, prairies, trees and villages below, so it didn't dare descend, but could only go on desperately trying to fly upwards. It flew and flew, the sweat pouring off its back, panting like an ox, seeing stars before its eyes and foaming at the beak. The air between its wings and the basket included irregular currents, eddies, counter-currents, updrafts and mixed currents. Even if you had invited the air current expert Dr Qian Xuesen, it would have taken him 30 years to figure out the laws governing those currents. The eagle was failing. Once its tail lost the ability to maintain balance and steer, it was in great danger.

(*Breaking an Eagle*. ZHAO 1986. Trans. WU 1990: 133–134).

The following step of falcon taming is to extirpate the eagle's confidence and assertiveness. As expounded in Example (4), the eagle is deprived of not only freedom, but also sleep and food, which bears similitude with PUA. I propound that the trainer's barbarous conduct in Example (4) is intent on annihilating the falcon's 狼性 *langxing* 'wolfology', i.e. a terminology denoting a quasi-wolf trait and valour, which is dubbed by 姜戎 *Jiang Rong* in his award-winning fictional semi-autobiography 狼图腾 *Lang Tuteng* 'Wolf Totem' (2004).¹¹ With its setting on the steppes of Inner Magalia in the throes of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) and describing an interaction between humans and wolves, the novel *Wolf Totem* reflects on agricultural collectivisation and environmental sentimentalism regarding wildlife conservation.¹² Nonetheless, the ethos 'wolfology' is harnessed as a construal promulgating perseverance, venturesomeness and assiduousness by Chinese enterprises,¹³ and is even twisted into a manoeuvre to exploit employees (CHAI 2020). For instance, a technology enterprise in Sichuan bludgeons employees into submitting a 'voluntary' application to abnegate overtime payment and annual leave, which imposes overwork and hence physical and mental fatigue on staff (XIONG 2020, YANG 2020).

(4) 扎木林让它站在鹰架子上，拴住一只脚。这鹰架子就是屋里的两条麻绳吊着一根木棍，很像小小秋千。他不时地推一把，那秋千就晃荡几分钟。老鹰脚下不稳，再困也不敢睡觉，还得使劲攥紧木棍，用酸疼的翅膀扑楞着找平衡。入夜，扎木林把电灯挂到秋千旁边。老鹰悚然，害怕火烧羽毛，更不敢睡。正式的熬鹰开始了。第二天，老鹰的眼皮直打架，刚要打盹儿，扎木林的柳条鞭子就抽到了身上——雄鹰何曾受过这份儿窝囊气哩！立刻瞪圆了双眼，想跟柳条鞭子搏斗...第三天，鹰眼睛熬红了，原本饥饿的肚肠也熬到了忍无可忍的程度，开始啾啾哀鸣，张嘴乞食。

Zamrin put it on a perch, and tied one talon down. The perch consisted of a wooden stick hanging like a swing from two lengths of hempen rope in the room. He gave it a push very now and then, and it would swing back and forth for a few moments. Because it was not stable, the eagle didn't not dare to sleep, exhausted thought it was. Instead, it gripped the perch tight, and flapped its aching swings in an effort to balance itself. At night, Zamrin hung an electric light by the perch. The eagle was terrified, scared that its features would be burned, and so it dared even less to sleep. The real breaking in had begun. The next day,

¹¹ HOAD 2015, LI 2018: VIV–XI and WANG 2019.

¹² HE 2014, LEE 2014: 106, HUANG 2014, LI 2015, WANG 2015, ZHU 2016, DANG 2017 and ZHAO 2017.

¹³ AN 2006, ZHANG 2013 and HUNG 2020.

it couldn't keep its eyes open, but every time it dozed off, Zamrin lashed it with a switch of willow. The eagle had never been harassed like this before! It stared with wide-open eyes, wanting to take on the switch. On the third, day, its eyes were bloodshot and it was beside itself with hunger. It began to cry pitifully, and open its beak, begging for food.

(*Breaking an Eagle*. ZHAO 1986. Trans. WU 1990: 134–135).

Moreover, as shown in Example (4), owing to imprisonment and physical abuse, the eagle's self-determination and self-possession are impinged upon, undermining its self-confidence. I posit that the act of sabotaging the eagle's self-esteem is analogous to a contentious incident regarding workplace PUA, which was fiercely debated on Weibo in July 2020: a 28-year-old rapper and member of a popular girl group was anathematised by her manager in front of other employees for her inferior appearance, fashion taste and singing ability and hence responsibility for the company's declining performances, which provoked an intense backlash and ignited a firestorm among an enraged public against workplace harassment.¹⁴ Nevertheless, albeit illicit (LIN and YU 2020), such euphemised mind control and brainwashing is often disguised as diligence, perseverance and stamina and when accompanied by reverie it is barely distinguishable from justified and legitimate commitment for inexperienced employees (CHEN 2020, YANG 2020).

The final step to completely tame a falcon is a carrot-and-stick approach: the falconer integrates punishment conducted by neighbours and reward bestowed by himself, so as to induce the eagle's loyalty (Example (5)). Similarly, in the workplace, PUA-oriented employers deploy censure and personal attacks to strengthen their own authority and make staff labour under the illusion that they would be unemployed elsewhere, while simultaneously they forge pious hope by means of promising promotion, permanent contracts, career prospects, material benefits, etc, so that staff voluntarily stay disadvantaged (ZHAO 2020a, 2020b).

(5) 扎木林的邻居出面帮忙了。他拿来一个鸡蛋大小的麻线团, 浸了香油喂老鹰。饿鹰饥不择食, 一口吞下, 谁知线头儿还牵在人手里。过了片刻, 这位邻居便开始往外拽麻线绳, 哎呀呀, 老鹰揪心扯肝的难受啊, 疼得直翻白眼, 那条麻线把它肠胃里的油和血都刮出来了。鹰眼认人。这位邻居再喂兔肉它也不敢吃了。于是, 换一位邻居来, 喂的又是麻线团, 吞了之后又往外拽...事过不三, 老鹰开始绝食斗争, 谁喂什么也不吃了。直到这时, 扎木林才亲自出面, 掰开鹰钩嘴, 塞一些带血的羊肉进去, 味道鲜美而又不往外拽

¹⁴ JIANG 2020, JUNG 2020, LI and ZUO 2020, WANG and WU 2020.

什么心绞痛式的麻线绳子。老鹰毕竟大脑欠发达，它给上帝磕了三个响头，淌着热泪认准了自己的救命恩人。

A neighbour of Zamrin's came to help. He took a ball of hemp string about as big as an egg, soaked it in sesame oil and fed it to the eagle. The starved bird didn't care what it ate anymore, and swallowed it right away. However, one end of the string was still in the neighbour's hand. After a moment, he started to draw the string out. Ow! The eagle's eyes rolled white with the gut-wrenching pain as the string clawed the fat and blood out of its innards. Eagles can distinguish people. When that neighbour came to feed it again, it didn't dare eat. A different neighbour came, but fed it a ball of string again, and pulled it out again. After a few repetitions, the eagle began to refuse food no matter who tried to feed it. Only at this point did Zamrin take the stage, parting the eagle's beak and stuffing a piece of bloody mutton in. It tasted good and there was no excruciating pulling out of hemp string. Eagles are not over-intelligent, so it gave thanks to God, and tearfully recognised its saviour.

(*Breaking an Eagle*. ZHAO 1986. Trans. WU 1990: 135).

The aftermath of the training is that the eagle becomes devoted to, and only devoted to, its falconer, and it has lost itself and any aspiration for freedom, as in Examples (6–7). Additionally, the eagle fails to perceive its own competence and value, degenerating into a dependent and acquiescent tool.

(6) 扎木林天天骑马架鹰去打猎。他豢养的这只猎鹰非常凶猛，不但能抓野兔、狐狸、黄鼠狼，而且还能用它的利爪抓破黄羊的眼睛。老陈感到纳闷的，是这只雄鹰为啥不飞走？抓获了猎物自己不吃掉，而是回家之后等待着扎木林喂食呢？“我喂的食，它为啥不吃呢？”老陈问。“熬鹰熬驯了呀！”扎木林得意地回答。

Zamrin rode his horse out hunting everyday, talking his eagle with him. His hunting eagle was very ferocious. It could not only catch hares, foxes and weasels, but also claw out the eyes of Mongolian gazelles. What puzzled Lao Chen was why the eagle didn't fly away. And why didn't it eat its prey once it caught it? Why did it wait to be fed by Zamrin after coming home? 'Why won't it eat the food I offer it?' asked Lao Chen. 'It's broken in!' replied Zamrin proudly.

(*Breaking an Eagle*. ZHAO 1986. Trans. WU 1990: 132–133).

(7) 从此, 年轻的野鹰被熬成了又一只驯服的猎鹰, 天天跟着主人扎木林出来抓兔子、狐狸、黄鼠狼。它越饿越要赶快飞回家——只有主人喂的食物才不是麻线团!

From then on, the young wild eagle was broken in as a tame hunting eagle, following its master Zamrin out to catch hares, foxes and weasels everyday. The hungrier it got, the keener it was to fly back home, because only the food master gave it was not a ball of hemp string.

(*Breaking an Eagle*. ZHAO 1986. Trans. WU 1990: 135).

At the end of *Eagle*, the aged falcon is fully exploited – even its corpse is made into a specimen and sold, yet fortunately, Lao Chen comprehends through the taming process (Example (8)), and the author leaves the novella open ended suggesting that Lao Chen might take action to address the PUA deeds in his own career after returning to work.

(8) 不久, 原先那只衰老的猎鹰老死了。它被制成动物标本卖给了什么展览馆。剧作家老陈的病好了之后也若有所悟, 离开了辽阔的大草原。

Soon, the old hunting eagle died and was sold to an exhibition hall as an animal specimen. Once he was better, Lao Chen the playwright also seemed to have understood something, and left the vast grasslands.

(*Breaking an Eagle*. ZHAO 1986. Trans. WU 1990: 135–136).

4. Conclusion

Although *Eagle* concerns falcon training in the grasslands in the 1980s, the taming strategies bear similarity to interpersonal and workplace PUA in a contemporary context. Derived from a terminology that originated in the US to exclusively appertain to heterosexual courtships and entanglements, PUA in China evolved into a neologism denoting mental abuse and emotional manipulation in a circumlocutory manner, and it is applied to social interaction in a broad sense. More significantly, PUA in the workplace triggered by competition is prevalent and conspicuous. Spiritually and physically exploited employees can be compared to the previously recalcitrant and adamant eagle that is deprived of self-esteem and self-possession by virtue of perpetual animadversions and reveries as well as nefarious carrot-and-stick approaches. Nonetheless, owing to lack of experience or financial independence, employees consciously or subconsciously resign themselves to workplace PUA, analogous to the tamed eagle depicted in the novella.

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