

Personality, Struggle and Destiny: Feminism in *Lucia Lucia*

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Abstract—Recently there are an increasing number of female writers who have achieved great appreciation all over the world, or at least in their mother land. Adriana Trigiani is one of those popular writers good at women's fictions. As her magnum opus, *Lucia Lucia* is a miniature of the western society's feminism in the era of 1950s. On *Lucia* we can find quite a few virtues and characteristics that were reflected during the fight with prejudice and injustice of traditional mores, and which also have determined her labyrinthine-like life and a happy ending. Having a good knowledge of Lucia's temperament and thinking is helpful for readers to understand the story and the feminism theories better. With the guidance of an old-timed but advanced woman, we are much easier to see a woman's firm personality to promote society's development and progress.

Index Terms—feminism, personality, destiny

I. INTRODUCTION

According to USA Today, Adriana Trigiani is one of the reigning queens of women's fiction. She is beloved by millions of readers from many countries for her hilarious and heartwarming novels. At the same time, Trigiani is a playwright, television writer and documentary filmmaker who has won various awards. She has also written the screen adaptation of *Lucia, Lucia*.

Trigiani grew up in a traditional Italian family in a small coal mining town in southwest Virginia, and now lives in New York City. She chose her hometown for the setting of her most critically acclaimed and bestselling novels. However, as a nostalgic and tender tale imbued with ambition, romance and heartbreak between family, career and love, *Lucia, Lucia* is set in the glittering, vibrant New York City of 1950. Though New York City was not so prosperous at that era, it had originally presented some characteristics of the young America.

It is an enchanted story of a determined young woman with passionate enthusiasm towards life who decided to follow her heart and feeling to live changes her life forever. The following comment is directly from Trigiani's official website which includes all of her works and also it is quoted by amazon website. "This wonderful period piece is set in Greenwich Village with the central family, the Sartoris, a very large Italian family with four sons and one daughter, bound not only by blood but love and tradition. The family owns business. All the sons work with their father, Antonio, in the Groceria in Greenwich Village. Lucia Sartoris is the beautiful twenty-five-year-old daughter of the prosperous Italian grocer. She follows after her grandmother with her exceptional sewing abilities and eye for design. The postwar boom is ripe with opportunities for talented girls with ambition, and Lucia becomes an apprentice to an up-and-coming designer at chic B. Altman's department store on Fifth Avenue. Engaged to her childhood sweetheart, the steadfast Dante DeMartino, Lucia is torn when she meets a handsome stranger who promises a life of uptown luxury that career girls like her only read about in the society pages. Forced to choose between responsibility to her family and her own dreams, Lucia finds herself in the midst of a sizzling scandal in which secrets are revealed, her beloved career is jeopardized, and the Sartoris' honor is tested. Throughout the novel, Lucia is surrounded by richly drawn New York characters, including her best friend, the quick-witted fashion protégé Ruth Kaspian; their boss, Delmarr, B. Altman's head designer and glamorous man-about-town; her devoted brothers, Roberto, Orlando, Angelo, and Exodus, self-appointed protectors of the jewel of the family; and her doting father, Antonio." (<http://www.adrianatrigiani.com/lucia.html>. accessed 26/01/2016)

However, critics from several famous newspaper such as Washington Post, New York Times and People have described "Trigiani's novels as "tiramisu for the soul", "sophisticated and wise", or "dazzling." They agree that "her characters are so lively that they bounce off the page", and that "her novels are full bodied and elegantly written." Perhaps one popular book critic said it best, "Trigiani defies categorization. She is more than a one-hit wonder, more than a Southern writer, more than a woman's novelist. She is an amazing young talent." (www.amazon.com. accessed 26/01/2016) Her books are so popular all over the world that *Lucia, Lucia* was chosen as the best seller of that year 2004 in Britain.

Trigiani feels like writing women who dares to revolt against old traditional mores and to dominate her own destiny. The protagonists appearing in Trigiani's books are mostly similar to her. She likes independent women, and she is one too. She always feels she has to make her own way and make her own living. She does not matter if someone calls her racial feminist. "Being able to take care of yourself" is her hope and motto to women. "The essential feminism element presents in her every book. In general, the term feminism can be used to describe a political, cultural or economic

movement aimed at establishing equal rights and legal protection for women.”(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page, accessed 26/01/2016) Feminism emanates from America and then spread to Europe. Feminism has greatly changed predominant conceptions in a wide range of areas within European and American society, scoping from culture to law. Take Lucia, Lucia as an instance, its background is the period of time between the first wave of feminism movement and the accelerating second one. At that time, women worked, made their own money, and many went to college, while in light of the 1950s, lots of them were sent back to the kitchen in frilly aprons. Trigiani was intrigued by this and wrote Lucia, Lucia.

As is known to all, narrators of a novel are very important to the truthiness and development of the plot. Choosing what kind of narrator stands for from which perspective the writer look at the whole incident to some degree. The book begins with Lucia as an relatively elderly and seemingly nonchalant woman, reciting the story of her whole life to a young neighbor girl. The character, Kit, is a endeavoring playwright living in Greenwich Village who has courage to the apartment of the aged but elegant "Aunt Lu" one day and has afternoon tea while listening to her story, which is the fundament of the book. The way the writer deals with the plot easily motivate readers to wonder questions such as “what will happen to Lucia next? Will she marry the handsome young Italian boy that she is so familiar with or will she choose the sophisticated rising business man?” The plot development, while a little obvious in some places, is nevertheless solid. This clear plot allows Trigiani to bring the novel into full circle and offer a relatively satisfying conclusion within a reasonable book length.

There are more viewpoints to be taken into account in a novel than in other genres. Among the three main viewpoints, Trigiani first created Kit to play the role of a third-person narrator, who is not a character in the main fictional world, and then she turned into heroine Lucia to tell her own experience, namely a story within a story. With strong first-person character development, Trigiani draws the reader into the story quickly and firmly. I-narrator may assure readers that what they are reading is truthful and authentic, and further gives the action a sense of directness and immediacy in that the reader shares Lucia’s experiences. (Hu: 2007, p.224) We have found that both of them are females, which indicates Trigiani have more trust and favor on women. She thinks women are more reliable and dependent, so she chose them to be the narrators.

The story talks about the loyalty and responsibility to family that has been taken for granted by Italian tradition all the time. All the family interactions happening there are so perfectly described, even as for the attitudes and social daily customs. It is very easy to feel the emotional impact of the characters in the story. No other can write about Italian families as well as Trigiani. She grew up in such a family and all her writing seems to come straight from the experience. Everything from places to gadgets of clothing, and everyone she describes is near to perfection, all the characters being almost fleshed out. Her adjectives are always right on with the perfect meaning. Whether it is joy or sorrow, Trigiani lets the reader feel all the emotions to their heart. Both as a female and a minority member, she can virtually sense the weak position where Lucia is.

As a minority, Italian Americans are the fourth largest European ethnic group in the United States. In America and some other western nations, Italians have the stereotyped as perpetual foreigners in a lower class, only restricted to blue collar jobs. They have been wrongly stereotyped working as construction workers, beggars, chefs, thieves, plumbers, and in other working class jobs. Nevertheless, glamour is Lucia's story. Trigiani lets you desire to be part of her Italian-American family and experience the 1950s New York. Her readers actually feels for Lucia at each moment. It is also interesting to read Italian-America literature, as it is almost always about African Americans. The Sartori family is from Venetian, so there is a very colorful chapter set in Venice. The novel's nostalgic atmosphere is delicately woven to inspire and touch your heart. As a member of the inferior female and minority group, Lucia is a new woman who isn't completely obedient. She has strong temperament and new ideals, which shows feminism absolutely. Lucia has a relatively satisfying life, not affected by the identification as a female and a minority member, thanks to her personality and never-give-up spirit to struggle.

II. LUCIA’S PERSONALITY

Lucia is beautiful and tender, but at the same time, the first impression she left readers is her pursuing equality, under the guide of her ideal and desire. Maybe for an old-time traditional woman, husband is much more important than her own career and business. Many girls would rather stay at home, being a qualified housewife. Though from her childhood Lucia was instructed “to be decent, to have morals, to have standards, to be responsible and to be destined for a nice Italian boy”, she has never given up her principles and baseline: she craves for her economic independence and freedom. She doesn't like to depend on somebody. She is proud of making a living by herself. Dante, the son of the local baker, Lucia's fiancé first appeared when Lucia described her thoughts “I guess I am lucky. I'm engaged to a nice Italian fellow, whom I've known all my life. My parents like him. Even my brothers don't mind him.” Dante is properly a good husband, but he is also a good son listening to his mother's advice, that's the reason gives rise to their broken relationship. Lucia did not submit under the oppression of Dante's family, the representative of old tradition. She insisted she should not quit her job and stay with Dante's parents, even it meant she would lose her intimate fiancé

A. Considerate to Friends

Lucia is loyal and considerate to her friends. Lucia is happy when she works with her friends, Delmarr and Ruth.

They struggle for their common ideal by hard working. They four women often have gatherings, having a meal with others and telling their secrets at the same time. Both the first meet with John Talbot and having sex with him were whispered to Ruth, because Lucia trusts her and is willing to pour out her thinking. After all trust is the primary condition of a friendship. On the eve of Ruth's wedding, "Ruth and I stay after hours in the Hub to finish the buttons on her wedding gown...Delmarr was sweet enough to leave us the key, so we can let ourselves out through the employee entrance on the main floor." Also at this night Lucia and Ruth had a dispute argument if they should abandon their original career goal to devote into a marriage. Lucia reminded Ruth of things she had to discard if she married. Ruth felt sorry to disappoint Lucia, but she loved her fiancé Harvey. Then Lucia comforted her in the return, saying "Thank you, Ruth, for at least saying you wanted to open a shop with me." In the truth, at this moment Lucia wondered what would become of her. "Ruth is being kind by offering a shop with me, but that's only a dream. Once she's married, she'll work for a while, and then she and Harvey will have a baby, and she'll quit and stay home to raise her family." (Trigiani, 2004, p.107) Although clearly knowing the current situation, Lucia chose to tell a white lie.

B. *Filial to Family*

Lucia is filial to her family, not only to her parents and brothers, but also even to her sister-in-law, Rosemary. Lucia is lucky to have wise and sensible parents always respecting her decisions. Even when she disrupted the engagement dinner, Papa did not put the blame on her, but encouraged her to pursue her life and happiness bravely. Thus, Lucia was so feared upon hearing her father falling down in the grocery and during the last days of her father, Lucia sadly said if anything happened to him, she would die too.

Among all the children, Lucia's parents like her most. Due to her mother's stroke, Lucia gave up her dream to go to California. She had to stay and take care of her mother. "It was sweet of Delmarr to say we'd make our plans at a later date, but we both know the truth. I'd never going to California, I'm never going to work for Helen Rose (a famous clothes designer), and I am never going to sew the costumes of the stars. I'm going to stay here at 45 Commerce Street and take care of my mother for as long as she needs me. When that duty is done, and I hope it won't be for many years, I'll think about my life and what I want. For now, I am the daughter my parents raised, and I will put my family before anything and anybody else, including Delmarr, Helen Rose and a glamorous life in Hollywood. I must find a way to be here, to take comfort in doing my duty." (Trigiani, 2004, p. 301)

Lucia is the youngest child of her family, but she is the strongest. She took the duty as a child when her brothers escaped from it. Lucia's kindness was most obviously presented on her sister-in-law. Due to the unexpected pregnant, Roberto and Rosemary have to marry, so other members were all indifferent to Rosemary when she entered into Lucia's family at first. Only Lucia was enthusiastic to her and helped her adapt to a new family life. Afterwards when the baby Maria Grace died just 2 weeks old, Rosemary was mournful, telling Lucia that she was the only Sartoris member to have embraced the baby and that she thanked Lucia for her cordiality and kindness forever.

C. *Devotional to Lovers*

Lucia ever loved two men-Dante and John. She believes in true love, no matter how many times she was hurt. Once fallen in love with John, Lucia dedicated all her emotion and possessions to John. On account of John being Delmarr's acquaint, Lucia has never asked about his financial issue. She saved 8988.78 dollars during all these years' hard work and gave all of them to John, in order to let John know she was half of this team. She never went on vacations other than the ones with her family, or splurged on jewelry or a car. She made most of her clothes, and the things she couldn't make she bought at Altman's sales with her employee discount. She would keep five hundred dollars in the savings account as a little emergency fund and the rest she put into the down payment for the construction of their dreaming house in Huntington Bay. According to Sartoris tradition, a girl should not have sex relationship with men before marriage, but Lucia gave herself to John ascribed to love. Though Lucia is a little vainglory at times, the shortcoming is pittance comparing to her virtues.

Above all, Lucia is remarkable for feminism about the position of woman in the mid-20th century. Lucia exposes ills of female economic dependence, racial barriers to marriage. She also protests the cultural constrictions that deny women's demand for their energies and intellectual abilities. Trigiani put exciting feminism into Lucia. Trigiani called on all the women "the amelioration of our condition depends on ourselves."

III. LUCIA'S STRUGGLE TO UNFAIRNESS

"Filled with the warmth and humor that have earned Adriana Trigiani hundreds of thousands of devoted readers with her Big Stone Gap trilogy, *Lucia*, *Lucia* also bursts with a New York sensibility that shows the depth and range of this beloved author. As richly detailed as the couture garments Lucia sews, as emotional as the bonds in her big Italian family, it is the story of one woman who believes that in a world brimming with so much promise, she can-and should be able to-have it all." (www.amazon.com, accessed 26/01/2016)

Lucia Lucia is a vivid depiction of female's desire. During a rather long period in the history, women's body has been imprisoned by the social standard. There were a variety of means to constrain their own way of living and limit their freedom, no matter in the East or in the West. Although these methods made women more glamorous and attractive in some degree, at the same time they imprisoned women's body and strengthened their dependence on male power

society. Therefore, in the past rather long years, the female history was a distorted desire-oppressing history. Social order and moral ethics put forward the qualification of elegance, civility, tenderness and consideration etc. According to these requirements, women's real selves have been buried under the magnificent appearance. After women accepted the regulations that their freedom was limited deliberately, their power would gradually shrink and be forgotten. Women were far away from living for their own selves.

For such a lone time, women are located in a relatively inferior position both on the biological meaning and on the social meaning. They were confined at home, giving birth to and bringing up children, providing service for their husbands and doing housework. They do this without even a little payment. They belong to their husbands privately, as well as their possessions. It was advocated that wives and daughters were shameful to work outside and contrary to the traditions. However, the truth is that husbands were expropriating their wives' ability to achieve economic dependence in order to control them and further became the tamed vassal and doll throughout their life, which reminds me of *A Doll's House* by Ibsen. (Wu, 2005, p.71) A new woman should not completely obey the old regulations but to struggle for a independent and brand-new life.

A. *Change of Family Name*

"In the western countries, a married name is the family name adopted by a person upon marriage. In many cultures it is common practice for a person to assume the family name of his or her spouse; this new name typically replaces the maiden name. Brides adopt the last name of the groom. Until the 1970's feminist explosion, few questioned this. Legal documents in various states show most women (roughly eighty-five percent) continue to change names upon marriage. A smaller percentage defer to hyphenation. But why do brides do this? The feminist contingency urges abstention for identity, financial and individualist reasons with scant information explaining why or where this tradition originates." (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>. accessed 26/01/2016) It is one of the symbols that men have a superior position in the marriage, just like a child following their father's surname. In a scene of Chapter 2, Lucia and Ruth had a fierce dispute on the family name changing problem.

Ruth did not like her future family name Goldfarb and did not want to change hers. Delmarr said she should persuade Harvey to keep her name, Ruth answered, "Fat chance. I could never even bring up the subject. I'm his girl and I'm going to take his name, end of story." This displays Ruth still looked herself as her husband's afflict. In Lucia's mind, Ruth is a brilliant artist, she can draw anything, she has excellent taste and an eye for what works. Delmarr believes she'll be a great designer someday. But all this talk of Harvey and babies makes that seem like a faraway dream, so Lucia is pitiful to lose a talented partner. She feels claustrophobic listening to Ruth talking about children and names. Though we can still sense the helplessness and loneliness of women at that time, Ruth assures Lucia Dante is the kind of guy who would let her to keep her family name. In the inner mind of Lucia, she longed for equal love, but she did not want to lose her right to keep her favorite family name. From then on, Lucia made a determination to marry a man who would allow her to have the right to do what she wanted to do.

B. *Whether to Be a Housewife or Not*

The tuning point of both Lucia's story and the book is the first dinner DeMartinis and Sartoris had, at which they originally planned to discuss about the wedding details. However, it turned into a broken relationship at last. As they began to eat, the chatter was warm and friendly, but when it came to wedding church, there appeared divergence. Lucia wanted to Our lady of Pompeii Church, where she was baptized, while Mrs. DeMartino suggested St. Joseph. The situation became worse when Mrs. DeMartino required Lucia to live with them and help her at home, namely Lucia might become a housewife. She claimed Lucia could sew from her new house instead of having a job. What a ridiculous idea seen from contemporary's prospective! However, this is a normal opinion at the middle of 1950s. "Claudia, my daughter is a career girl. That doesn't mean she won't take care of a home... She has been trained. But she isn't like me and she isn't like you. I have tried to make her realize that a woman has enough to do at home without running to a job... I know it wasn't that long ago that marriages were arranged." (Trigiani, 2004, p.30) Even if Lucia's mother supported daughter's decision and said, she belongs to the advanced women, not the common ones, so she permits her daughter to make the necessary adjustments in her life. Lucia also shouted out women's aspirations of that era, "Things have changed. We want to determine our future. We want a partnership, not a dictatorship."

C. *Defense for Women in Shotgun Marriage*

Moreover, Chapter 3 further indicates how weak and powerless women were, and even are nowadays. Everyone was astounded to hear Lucia's brother Roberto was going to get married with an unknown girl carrying his child. Mrs. Sartori judged it was Rosemary Lancelatti trapped her son because of their family's wealth and reputation. The fact is that Rosemary was too young and innocent to trap anyone. When a girl gets pregnant, the public are intend to accuse her of profligacy. Lucia described Rosemary's helplessness like this, "I've always been taught that gloves are a sign of a true lady, but the bride isn't wearing any. She has no idea what she's in for. Wedding are supposed to be the beginning of new life and love, but I can't see it here. Rosemary was too young to know what she is getting into." (Trigiani, 2004, p.69) During the whole process of wedding, no one paid sympathy on Rosemary except Lucia. Lucia gave her sister-in-law all the carefulness she could give. Afterward when their baby was born, all the family became happy and proud for Rosemary. There is nothing like the moment Maria was born, a new face and hope to Sartoni family. After so

many incidents, Rosemary was accepted and obtained the respect she should own at last. In Lucia's opinion, she wanted to preserve the moment so rare and beautiful, because she knew that the birth of the first child of her eldest brother was an once-in-a-lifetime event. "We go on, I think to myself. We go on and on and on." It was a step in feminism conception.

D. *Shouldering More Duty as a Daughter*

In the last chapter, we can find that some time Lucia did not live a good life. Kit complained that was not fair for her to take care of their mother and that the family should have thanked her or repaid her somehow, but Roberto didn't look at it in that way. A daughter's duty in those days was always to her family. Then Kit asked about Rosemary, Lucia said, "she wasn't in the immediate family. And she's a woman too. I don't believe my brother left anything to her-just the order that the children take excellent care of her. Besides, she had her own mother to look after." When Kit stood and paced, fuming at the injustice. Lucia expressed the sounds of the modern society, "You're of a different generation. These were the rules. I don't like them but I understand them. It all goes back to Italy and the way property is passed down in a family. It's not a good deal for the women, but that's the way it is." (Trigiani, 2004, p.312)

IV. LUCIA'S DESTINY

There are some helpful and feasible theories that can be used to analyze Lucia's personality and destiny, as one of them, Global Feminism is a feminist theory closely associated with postcolonial theory and postcolonial feminism. It considers itself mainly with the forwarding movement of women's rights on a global range. Global feminists proclaim that every woman is faced with all kinds of connections between oppressions during her daily life. In addition, they also emphasize that the oppressions women experience all over the world are connected with each other. As far as a global feminist is concerned, global is local and vice versa. What a woman does in the US affects women's life of other countries. To compensate this, what other countries' women do influence this woman's life too. (Tong, 1998, p.333) Thereby it is meaningful to study about Lucia's personality, efforts she has made and the inevitable direction for her destiny

"Another theory Cultural feminism developed from radical feminism. It is an ideology of a "female nature" or "female essence" that attempts to revalidate what cultural feminists consider underestimated female attributes. It is also a theory that commends the difference of women from men. Its critics assert that because it is based on an essentialist view of the differences between women and men and advocates independence and institution building, it has led feminists to retreat from practicing public politics to a focus upon individual "life-style". (www.kosmix.com, accessed 26/01/2016) Cultural feminism intends to re-estimate the values related to female, create a spiritual space for them and promote female spirits. (Li: 2005, p.77)

A. *Obtainment of Respect and Grace*

Luckily Trigiani does not let the suspension of Lucia's destiny last long. Kit and Lucia converge into one story in the last chapter. Lucia did not lose even a bit of her glamour and charm. On the contrary, after so many experience, good or bad, she is able to look at everything happened in her life quietly. All the villagers respect her in the Greenwich Village. In the eyes of Kit, "She's in her seventies, but has the chic look of New York's older ladies who stay in the moment. Her hair is done, her lipstick is applied in the latest shade of fiery fuchsia, and she wears a vintage Hermes scarf wrapped around her neck and anchored by a sparkly brooch. Aunt Lu is trim and small. Her perfume is spicy and youthful, not flowery like a grandmother's." (Trigiani, 2004, p.3) Only by overcoming difficulties and struggling with injustice can a woman understand how to protect herself and bring her own power into play to be qualified to have a happy life.

On the company of Kit, Lucia agreed to see John. There was no doubt that John did not change at all, slick and confident and full of vinegar. As mentioned above, Lucia deeply knew the principle "You can't keep bad things from happening. And you can take no credit for the good things-they are just luck." Lucia did not regret anything that was happened to her. She did not regret have met John either. She believed she could somehow control the bad thing and turn around things when she is meant to. That's why in the end Lucia got what should belong to her at the earlier time-Dante. They had a date that night, which stands for a new beginning. Lucia won Dante's heart, won Kit's respect and the readers' like. Maybe her triumph is a monument in women's history.

B. *Reunion with Dante*

A woman like Lucia, confident, elegant and optimistic, is born to have a happy ending, in spite of how many tortures and bitter she has experienced. Now we have to refer to Dante, who also appears in the middle of the story. Dante once begged Lucia for many times to save her heart, but in vain. This was the last time Dante went to express his emotion.

'Dante, thank you for being there for all of us. I don't know how to repay you. I don't think there is any way.'

Dante puts his arms around me. 'You're family, Lucia.'

'Almost was.'

'You'll always be my girl. You were from the first moment I saw you. You were sitting in church with your brothers. You were eight years old and I was twelve and I thought, I hope she waits for me. Lucia, I'll wait forever if I have to.'

'You must hate me for the way I broke off our engagement.'

‘How could I hate the girl I used to stare at in church?’ (Trigiani, 2004, p.164)

Many people don't like Trigiani's works, described to the reason that she usually writes a heroine as a princess, having all the beautiful characteristics girls want. But her book fans just like her in this point, because this is how feminism is fully expressed. Women should have a strong heart and live to excellence. In this book, Lucia found Dante was the most suitable to her, while at that time Dante had decided to marry another girl, so she did not mean to scrap another girl's happiness. "I knew that if I told him I wanted him, he would probably drop Juliana Fabrizi and return to my arms. He's waiting for me to say the word but I'm not going to. I will not hurt him again." Above all, Lucia is such a kind girl that even if sacrificing her own future, she will make sure of other's happiness. A kind and hard working girl like Lucia is worth having her own happiness and a true lover.

V. CONCLUSION

Nowadays female writers attract more attention and spotlight in the publish field. Though a minority writer, Trigiani puts a vivid and cordial girl image in front of our readers through detailed description of plots and the relationship between Lucia and people around her. During the past years, what we have done is not enough to carefully analyze women's spirit world. Feminism requires us to look at the protagonist from her standpoint and the author's standpoint. Lucia is not only the most beautiful girl, but also a strong and independent woman. This personality determines her to have an uncommon life. She experienced a lot of sufferance and bitterness, and grew to be a mature real woman. Though not so smooth in her love and family, with so many incidents happening on her, Lucia has never given up hope and optimism. This is the real feminism Trigiani advocates: taking care of yourself. God helps those women who really live by heart. Lucia is qualified to have a happy life through her own struggle. To sum up, it is easy to give the conclusion that looking from the feminism perspective, Lucia's personality is significant to the story. It provides a window for reader so to see this novel deeper and fuller.

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