

A Gift from Mediation-Optimistic-Tragic Endings in Chinese Literature

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Abstract: This paper analyzed how Confucian's mediation roots in modern Chinese female writers leading them to expose their life lessons in the works of optimistic-tragic endings as a concrete form of the term mediation as the first step. To answer this question, the author compared the achievements of three Chinese female writers, Lin Hai-yin (1918-2001), Hsiao Hung (1911-1942) and Eileen Chang (1920-1995) and observed Confucian's mediation influence on their optimistic-tragic stories' endings. The analysis of the critical plots in those women's works showed mediation is a gift for writers to confess to their real life, and an enlightenment for them to create the endings of their works regardless of their lives are pleasure and amenity or misfortune and hardship. These three modern female writers all make one point that meditation plays an important role in their works. However, they create optimistic-tragic endings not because of their study is limited by traditional Chinese culture. Instead, they take the initiative to use optimistically tragic endings to call back their childhood memories.

Keywords: Mediation, Optimistic-tragedy, Lin Hai-yin, Hsiao Hung, Eileen Chang

1. Introduction

1.1 Chinese Confucianism thoughts of Meditation in literature

From mystery and supernatural *zhiguai* in Wei and Jin dynasty, Tang Dynasty's "*Ch'Ian-ch'I*," and Ming-Qing fictions to modern and contemporary works, Chinese *Xiaoshuo* passes through a great history. Among the various forms of Chinese literature, many works of literature often end in tragedy. These kinds of tragic endings reflect one of the Chinese Confucianism thoughts, *mediation* (*zhonghe zhuyi*). The idea of *mediation* is derived from two separate Chinese characters "Mean" and "Harmony," and their combination makes *mediation* as a word to show the optimism in Chinese tragic literature.

The ideas of the "Mean"-and-"Harmony" originate from an ancient Chinese Confucian text, *The Doctrine of the Mean*. The Confucian text demonstrates, "When joy, anger, sorrow and pleasure have not yet arisen, the situation is referred to as the Mean (centeredness, equilibrium). When they arise to their appropriate levels, it is referred to as 'harmony.' The Mean is the great root of all-under-heaven. 'Harmony' is the penetration of the Way through all-under-heaven. When the Mean and Harmony are actualized, Heaven and Earth are in their proper positions, and the myriad things are nourished"^[6]. Therefore, based on the Confucianism, "Mean"-and-"Harmony," are the balance between the human and nature, the peace between nations, the reconciliation between civilizations, and more importantly, the internal personal competition between spirit, reason, and appetite. Besides, the original meaning of the word "Harmony" is an ancient Chinese instrument, so people later use "Harmony" as an element of music, illustrating a kind of aesthetic feeling. Thus, *mediation* represents both Chinese social moral principle and aesthetic value.

1.2 The Concrete Form of Meditation

Since *mediation* combines the social moral principle and aesthetics, Chinese writers, especially those who write tragic works, often illustrate both natural beauty and social conflicts in their works and write an optimistic-tragic result for the endings of their works. Even though the word "optimistic" and "tragic" seems to be oxymoronic, Chinese people in the old time always used two opposite words to mediate conflicts, and as a result, the optimistic-tragic ending is the concrete form of meditation in Chinese literature. For instance, the hexagram Pi (Grace) can be understood as blockage, and the hexagram T'ai (Peace) is prosperity that can give rise to Pi^[5] ^[18]. Richard Wilhelm argues these two principles, Pi and T'ai, are joined together and penetrate one another in a creative event ^[18]. As Andrew H. Plaks explains

Pi and T'ai's bipolarity, "the ascendance of one term immediately implies its own subsequent diminution. One term is generated and grows, it nourishes, by its own essence the seed of the opposite term, until the seed ultimately supersedes and reduces to (approach) zero the 'parent' term, whereupon the process reverses itself" [18]. In this case, when Pi appears in the way luck is blocked, T'ai will go with Pi and reverse it [5]. This pairing concept is an abiding feature logical method in the Chinese tradition, and later this bipolarity roots in Chinese culture and literature. Consequently, the word "optimistic-tragic" is bipolar and can reflect Confucian's *mediation* [15]. In Chinese literature, *mediation* gives authors space to leave sad endings with hopefulness in literature.

This paper mentions the pre-existing ideas that the Confucian's *mediation* in Chinese culture shapes modern Chinese writers' way of thinking and writing and hence forcing writers to be optimistic to deal with the tragic endings. This paper will, however, contend that conversely, the Confucian's *mediation* roots in the deep mind of the modern Chinese writers helps them to expose their life lessons in their optimistic-tragic endings.

1.3 Meditation Usage in modern Chinese literature

Modern Chinese writers who write optimistic-tragic endings, actually put their expectations on their works. They may or may not be able to handle their real-life situations, such as being poor or being disappointed in love, but all of them try to believe that they can get better solutions to deal with the situation without the influence of any external factors. Therefore, these modern Chinese writers make their works to appear as an exclusive (or rarefied) world. In their literature world, story's tragic endings showcase the sadness that the writers have to go through in their real life while the optimistic story plots and characters imply the type of contentment that writers desire to own.

This paper aims at using three Chinese female writers, Lin Hai-yin (1918-2001), Hsiao Hung (1911-1942) and Eileen Chang (1920-1995)'s works to observe that how these female writers get influence from Confucian's *mediation* to write optimistic-tragic stories' endings. It also seeks to start with an analysis of the effect of the description of nature in the denouncements, and then focus on the characterization's actions in the endings of the story. Finally, the paper will show how the outcome of a plot as well as these factors explain why *mediation* is a gift to illustrate Chinese writers confession to their real life, how *mediation* demonstrate social moral principle and aesthetic in literature's denouncements, and how *mediation* influences the ways in which the three female writers create the endings of their works.

2. Mediation Effect on Optimistic-tragic Endings of Modern Female Chinese Writers

2.1 Winter Sun in Lin Hai-yin's Memories of Peking

Confucian's *mediation* incorporates the ideas of "Harmony". Further, the original meaning of "Harmony" has been derived from Chinese music instrument which reflects Chinese aesthetics. Female modern writers like Lin Hai-yin and Hsiao Hung have been able to reproduce the natural beauty of the place where they spent their childhood in their works as well as mediate the tragedy at the end of the works. In one of the most famous Lin Hai-yin's work *Memories of Peking: South Side Stories* (1960), Lin uses a seven years old girl, Hsiao Ying-tzu's perspective to reappear the beauty of Peking, the place she lived in her early life.

Readers and book reviewers usually regard *Memories of Peking: South Side Stories* as Lin's autobiographical novel as she wrote the book in her lifetime in Taiwan where she moved after the civil war. As an autobiographical novel, writers usually combined autobiography and fictions, and so does Lin as she reveals, "I am not going to tell you whether they are genuine or made up. I just want you to share the memories of my childhood" [14]. From this point, Lin's *Memories of Peking: South Side Stories* is a story to talk about Hsiao Ying-tzu's childhood memory with Ying-tzu's family and friends in Peking that may be based on author Lin's actual involvement and her imaginary from her creation. The writing of autobiographical novels gives Lin's space to describe her image of herself instead of the realistic of herself.

"Winter Sun, Childhood Years, the Camel Caravan" is both a preface and a short story of *Memories of Peking: South Side Stories*. As an opening chapter, Lin shares the experience with her readers that "I" come with "my father" to meet with the camel caravan year after year as well as describes the seasonal change of the south side of the city of Peking [11]. When Lin first uses Ying-tzu's tone to mention seasons

of Peking, she writes, “winter was almost over, spring was near, and the sun was especially warm; warm enough for people to take off their cotton-hair coats? Had not the camels also begun taking off their old camel-hair coats”^[11]? This sentence does not only reflect Hsiao Ying-tzu’s expectation to spring directly, but it also associates with the reduction of arrivals of camel caravan which the little girl also pities. Later on, when Ying-tzu’s father passed away, Lin uses Ying-tzu’s tone to mention season again; but at this time she writes, “summer had gone, autumn was over, winter had arrived and the camel caravan was back again; but childhood had passed away, never to return”^[11].

Different from the description of the pass of winter and the coming of spring, the following sentence contains a connotation through the portrayal of the season change from summer to winter, which implies that the caravan of camel can be back but the childhood experiences cannot. As most book reviewers, such as Weijie Song, consider “Camels serve as an eye-catching and memorable image of old Beijing in the Republican era” camels are Hsiao Ying-tzu’s fun in the childhood, and she is looking forward to the return of camel caravan^[16]. When camel caravan leaves in the summer, Ying-tzu feels disappointed because the leaving represented her feeling of loss. For Hsiao Ying-tzu, the protagonist of the stories, who is thought to be the person of the author, Lin Hai-yin, in her childhood day, her loss is more than her childhood and the time accompanied by her father. Lin loses her root that the environment in which she grew up cannot live any longer after 1949. Her childhood playmates were already running away from each other, and she even cannot see the familiar Hu-t’ung anymore. All these losses (or the passing) create a sad atmosphere in Lin’s book-even the caravan of camel can come back; it is not what it was. Lin knows this, so she clarifies her book as a method to “let the reality of childhood days pass away, but to keep the spirit of childhood forever alive”^[11].

Despite the fact that camels as an eye-catching in the story are fundamental artistic conceptions, the word “winter” is even more important. The word “winter” as an adjective to describe “the sun” showcases the basic tone and the content of the whole story. On the one hand, the biggest regret left on Lin by the caravan of camel leaving, the cruelty of the time, and the sad memory in the growth, as Lin describes her childhood memory are all cold and solitude as winter. On the other hand, Lin’s optimistic-tragic endings of “Winter Sun, Childhood Years, the Camel Caravan” embodies winter and the warm sun together. They are complementary. As for Lin, “winter” indicates a feeling of cold, but “sun” symbolizes the fun and simplicity of the childhood. The “sun” is the optimistic part of Lin Hai-yin’s life as well as the happiness brought by the memory of wonderful childhood. It stands at this feeling through talking about the aesthetics in an optimistic-tragic ending. The integration of “winter sun” not only is the beauty scene in the memory of Lin’s Hsiao Ying-tzu but also it can better express such emotion of the combination of happiness and sadness in her life.

Lin, as one of the most famous modern writers in Chinese literature, has a loving marriage and happy family with four children. She should be regarded as a successful and high-achieving woman, but it may be said that because the happiness and contentment she gains in her middle age, she now has the time to deliver the nostalgias and the childhood leaving for good? Or is she starting to learn how to turn into a mother’s perspective to look at herself from the sidelines as a child?

Peng Hsiao-yen, the introduction writer for Lin’s *Memoires of Peking South Side Stories* in English version, comments on Lin’s life, “although most of Lin’s works depict her experiences in Taiwan, she has often been classified as a writer of mainland origin, owing partly to the towering success of *Memoires of Peking South Side Stories* with its genuine flavor of the old capital, and partly to her own perfect Peking accent”^[14]. In Peng’s comments, Lin was counted as an outsider in Taiwan’s literature for her accent and childhood experiences in Peking. Although public appreciate Lin’s talent for writing and creating her works, her early life in Peking makes her loss of belongings in Taiwan. As a child who grew up in Peking’s *hu-t’ung*, she was impossible to live back to *hu-t’ung* in Peking anymore; and as a mother who is supposed to take care and educate four children, she was also incapable to give her children an insight into the people and culture in Peking where is the capital of Republican China before 1949; more importantly, as a Chinese who influences from Confucian’s filial piety, she was unable to predict whether she can visit her father’s grave again. Thus, Peking has become the most beautiful city in Lin’s imagination and will connect with her reminiscence forever. When Lin marks the beauty of Peking in her story, with a beauty of pity, she mediates the sadness of her nostalgia and happiness of thriving in literature. Even though Lin receives profound influence from Confucianism, she was not confined to this alone in her writing. Hence, the style of optimistic-tragic ending in Lin Hai-yin’s works is also the result of her yearning for her childhood friends and family in Peking whilst blends in her aesthetic view and her optimistic life attitude.

2.2 Hulan River in Hsiao Hung's Memories of Her Birthplace

Similarly, another modern Chinese female writer Hsiao Hung wrote *Tales of Hulan River* (1940), which was also her last work in her lifetime and was meant to commemorate her childhood and birthplace. As an autobiographical novel, Hsiao Hung's story breaks through the two kinds of restraints. She neither writes in programmed procedure nor fully exposes herself. She prefers to write freely and describes her birthplace, Hulan, a part of Northeast China. In Hsiao's story, she uses the first-person perspective to disinter natural beauty and her villagers in Hulan. Mao Dun (1986-1981), a modern Chinese writer, once wrote the preface for Hsiao Hung's *Tales of Hulan River* where he stated the book is "a narrative poem, a colorful genre painting, a haunting poem"^[12].

In the first chapter of *Tales of Hulan River*, Hsiao uses the name of "Hulan River" to depict her hometown and to show her nostalgia. Similar to Lin Hai-yin, Hsiao Hung also prefers to write the seasons in their first chapter of the works. At the very beginning, Hsiao recalls Hulan's frozen winter as "after the harsh winter has sealed up the land, the earth's crust begins to crack and split...anywhere, anytime, the cracks run in every direction. As soon as harsh winter is upon the land, the earth's crust opens up"^[9]. From the translator Howard Goldblatt's comment, the frozen winter and earth in Hulan "reveal to the reader glimpses of life in the author's childhood home", and the phrase "crust open up" also refracts the life has divided into segments in anywhere, anytime and every direction^[10] ^[9].

Although someone may argue that comparing with the autobiography, autobiographical novels seem like some lies, it just as what Albert Camus counters, "so what does it matter whether they are true or false if, in both cases, they are significant of what I have been and of what I am? Sometimes it is easier to see clearly into the liar than into the man who tells the truth. Truth, likelight, blinds. Falsehood, on the contrary, is a beautiful twilight that enhances every object"^[1]. In Hsiao's work, she portrays frozen winter as her image of her birthplace, Hulan, although Hulan is not cold throughout the year in reality. When Hsiao wrote the book, she was physically in Hong Kong, a sultry and humid place, but it has already proved that the aesthetic of frozen winter is in Hsiao's deep mind that she could not forget.

However, unlike Lin-Haiyin who uses "winter sun" as an aesthetic part to show her *mediation* ending, Hsiao chooses the "frozen winter" to imply her persevere attitude and her strong will. At the end of the story, Hsiao echoes the beginning and writes about the seasons again, "wind, frost, rain, snow; those who can bear up under these forces manage to get by; those who cannot seek a natural solution. This natural solution is not so very good, for these people are quietly and wordlessly taken from this life and this world. Those who have not yet been taken away are left at the mercy of the wind, the frost, the rain, and the snow...as always"^[9]. From this point, Hsiao is trying to describe a true portrayal of her life. She likens life's setbacks to "wind, frost, rain and snow", and sees life and death as "a natural solution"^[9]. The last sentence in her story's ending seems to indicate that Hsiao is unwilling to live, because she reveals that living is always suffering in the world, being blown by the wind. However, readers can figure that Hsiao did not actually want to die- just as Hsiao is not willing to be "quietly and wordlessly taken from this life and this world"^[9]. She knows that the four seasons' cycle is for life to survive, and everything is the reason for seeking the natural truth. Hence, even if Hsiao's novel reveals dreary, and what she describes is also the coldest winter in Hulan, readers can still feel her longing for life and her admiration for "those who have not yet been taken away"^[9]. Hsiao's hometown is beautiful and her work is full of aesthetic value are neither because she describes Hulan as unique and "isolation from the rest of the country", nor because she describes seasons in Hulan are warm or cold, with rainstorms, autumn fields, or crows^[10]. The aesthetics in Hsiao's works is reflected in her integration of vitality into the four seasons. Therefore, Hsiao Hung's story's ending is not a complete tragedy, nor is negative. Instead, Hsiao optimistically transforms her misfortune into her unique life experience in her optimistic-tragic story endings, as well as expresses her lingers for her hometown with her *mediation's* writing attitude.

In the first four chapters of *Tales of Hulan River*, Hsiao Hung mostly describes the natural scene and folk customs in Hulan, illustrating readers a macro-perspective of the beauty in Hulan. In the later chapters, Hsiao writes her and her villagers' stories. She emphasizes her protagonists' characteristics, aspiring or foolish, in her optimistic-tragic short stories' endings to involve the conflicts and drama, and yet shows writers' self-reflection.

Hsiao Hung observes her village stage performances in "Harelip Feng" in her *Tales of Hulan River*. The story uses "I" as a child's perspective to talk about the marriage between Harelip Feng and the daughter of the Wang family in whom "I" called her Big Sister Wang. Since Harelip Feng freely married Big Sister Wang, the villagers who are conservative look down upon their marriage. The story ends after Big Sister Wang gives birth to their second child and then dies.

Hsiao Hung's short story "Harelip Feng" is tragic, because the young couple lives a miserable life. Before Big Sister Wang dies, they live in a terrible environment as "I" mention the place they live, "it's freezing cold in the mill. An earthenware basin on the edge of the *kang* was cracked from the freezing cold"^[9]. After Big Sister Wang dies, Hsiao also comments, "everyone else in the neighborhood agreed that this time he was done for. All those people eager for some entertainment began preparing themselves for the excitement Harelip Feng's predicament would create"^[9]. Hence, Harelip Feng should be pessimistic since on the one side his wife died and left two children for him that he needs to care and feed them by himself, and on the other side his villagers always disdains him and his children, thinking his children will die in the young ages.

However, Hsiao uses *mediation* as a tool to describe Harelip Feng's "thriving" life after his wife dies at the end of the story. She writes, "but Harelip Feng, rather than completely losing heart as everyone around him anticipated, lived not as one in the throes of despair, but as a man with a firm grip on himself"^[9]. After the children gradually grow up, Hsiao writes that Harelip Feng usually says this, "the little rascal's playing with me", or "the little rascal really knows what's going on"^[9]. Given the above, the short story "Harelip Feng" has an optimistic-tragic ending that even though Harelip Feng loses his wife and needs to bring up two sons with many challenges, he still has tenacious vitality and just "lived on as usual"^[9].

In comparison with the first chapter in *Tales of Hulan River* that Hsiao Hung showcases the beauty in Hulan, "Harelip Feng" as book's last chapter focuses on the villagers' characteristics. Hsiao uses the ideas of *mediation* to portray her protagonists. Specifically, she writes an optimistic-tragic ending in "Harelip Feng" not because the Confucian's *mediation* limits her writing style, but because the tales are the childhood memories that haunt her, as she writes, "they remain with me-and so I have recorded them here"^[9]. The idea of *mediation* through Hsiao's whole book that readers can feel protagonists' sadness without pessimism, especially in the story "Harelip Feng." To achieve *mediation*, people should learn to see light something, such as Harelip Feng treats death as a dim view and still lives strongly.

In "Harelip Feng," Hsiao not only puts her yearn for her native land and villagers, but also she uses Harelip Feng's to take the introspection during her last two years of life. Hsiao relied on men for a lifelong time and got seriously ill in Hong Kong when she was only 31 years old. She once gave birth two times just as Big Sister Wang has, but she never had a chance to raise her children. Hsiao's works seem to be tragic, and her real life is a tragedy; but Hsiao's consciousness is optimistic, and she picks the place where she was born to display the achievements she gains when fighting the tide of the times although she has lack of raising a child. Her description of Harelip Feng in the last chapter of her last book depicts an optimistic-tragic ending to show her desire for a life that is full of peace, an environment that is alive with energy to write, and an opportunity that is able to afford a child. Her feelings, memories, and languages of death into melt into her novels and expressing out the idea of *mediation*.

2.3 Material Wealth in Eileen Chang's *Memories of the Romance*

Three years after Hsiao Hung finished her *Tales of Hulan River*, and one year after Hsiao died, another modern Chinese female writer Eileen Chang published her short story "Aloeswood Incense: The First Brazier"(1943) in Hong Kong's magazine in 1943. The story talks about how a girl, Ge Weilong as "a very ordinary Shanghai girl" has become a social butterfly in pre-war period Hong Kong^[2]. Chang focuses on describing how Weilong's personalities, the value of life, and ways of behaving change over time. Weilong used to be concentrating on her study in Hong Kong when she just lived with her aunt Madame Liang, an affluent widow. However, Madame Liang gradually trains Weilong to be a social butterfly to entertain Liang's guests in parties, but she does not expect that Weilong will fall in love with George Qiao, a playboy, which causes Weilong come into prostitution eventually. Chang portrays Weilong's idea of love as this, "now, as she probed her feelings, she saw why she felt such stubborn love for George...but in the end she loved him simply because he did not love her...He'd said many tender things, but never that he loved her"^[2].

Therefore, at this point, Weilong clearly knows that George does not love her, but she still chooses to be addicted in her fantasy as Chang continues, "and yet now she knew that George *did* love her. There were, of course, some differences between his love and hers-and of course his love had lasted only a moment. But her self-respect had sunk so low that she was easily satisfied"^[2]. Weilong uses self-hypnosis to convince herself that she only needs George's a few love or interest on her, and this kind of George's attention can make Weilong believe that she can marry with George and can have a happy and stable life and marriage in Hong Kong. As a result of Weilong's illusion, she gets a tragic ending that Weilong "had been sold to Madame Liang and George Qiao. She was busy all day long, getting money for George Qiao

and people for Madame Liang” after Madame Liang asked George to use adultery as an excuse for the future divorce^[2].

Although Chang assures that her protagonist Weilong’s future is predictable at the end of the story that once Weilong gets old and loses her beauty, her aunt and her husband will abandon her, Chang still shows Weilong’s lucky to her readers. Weilong at least uses her youth and beauty to get money and luxury life when she is still young. Thus, “Aloeswood Incense: The First Brazier” is not a story which shows how a girl gets into the upper class and gain a loving marriage through her efforts. It is a story that seeks to reveal how a girl degenerates under the temptation of money and luxury whereas readers find it hard to reach an agreement whether being wealthy and owning a short stable marriage is a fortunate or unfortunate destiny during the prewar period. Moreover, Chang once states that there are “some differences” between George’s love and Weilong’s love, but she also hides the similarities between them as she writes in her “Beating People” (1944), “if I do not want to see something, I have a talent for not seeing it”^[4]. In this story, both Weilong and George are addicted in material life. George confesses to Madam Liang, “I don’t have any money and I’m used to the good life. Nature apparently intended me to be an imperial son-in-law” which Madam Liang comments him as a “money-loving materialist”^[2]. Weilong is similar to George. In her mind, “go to school, then go out and get a job: perhaps this wasn’t the best path for someone like her- pretty, but without much ability. Of course she’d have to get married”^[2]. In this case, Weilong is also an opportunist that she does not want to work and does not think studying is useful anymore. In contrast, she believes that beauty is now her largest capital to protect her future. At the end of the story, Chang gives both Weilong and George enough money and luxury life that causes the ending being regarded as an optimistic tragedy. While “Situ Xie sent a very impressive gift, and even George Qiao’s father, Sir Cheng Qiao, gave Weilong a wristwatch of white gold inlaid with diamonds,” George also gets enough money and freedom to play, so their marriage is cost-efficient for both of them^[2]. Since George and Weilong’s marriage in the story’s ending is worthwhile for both of them that they both get a stable and luxury life, it is hard to say that Eileen Chang’s Weilong is tragic.

It might be said: Why Eileen Chang portrays Weilong and George Qiao as “money-loving materialists” and gives both of them enough money through writing the ending in optimistic-tragic way? This is not because Eileen Chang is compromised to Confucian’s *mediation*; it is because that she believes that most people are not heroes, and she puts these non-hero people in her works. In Chang’s essay “Writing of One’s Own”(1944), she describes her characters that “they are of the majority who actually bear the weight of the times. As equivocal as they may be, they are also in earnest about their lives”^[2]. As a result of showing Chang’s life philosophy in her works, she mold Weilong as her, being a materialist, since she once declares herself in “From the Mouths of Babes”(1944), “I like money because I have never suffered on its account-certainly, I’ve experienced a few minor nuisances to do with money, but nothing compared to what others have suffered- and know nothing of its bad side and only good”^[4]. So does Weilong. Weilong was not born in an extremely poor family that her family still can afford to move to Hong Kong which just as Chang’s description that Weilong is a girl who “has experienced a few minor nuisances to do with money, but nothing compared to what others have suffered”^[4]. In this case, Weilong may also just know money’s good side and does not know the bad side, therefore, it is not surprised that Weilong can gradually become a materialist since she knows that money can give her almost anything which makes the story “Aloeswood Incense: The First Brazier” becomes a *mediation* story that has an optimistic-tragic ending. In view of this, “Aloeswood Incense: The First Brazier” can be regarded as an autobiographical story since Eileen Chang and her female protagonist have de facto similar identity. The secret and fateful connection between the characteristics of protagonists and Eileen Chang makes her works meet the requirements of writing autobiographical novels.

Another protagonist who has Eileen Chang’s shadow for being a money-loving materialist in her work is Wang Chia-chih. Chang also gives her an optimistic-tragic ending. Chia-chih is one of Eileen Chang’s famous novellas, *Lust, Caution* (1979)’s protagonist. It demonstrates Chang’s great ability to work on optimistic-tragic endings. Instead of exploring whether Chang gets influence from *mediation* to write this novella’s ending, it is more important to focus on the structure of the ending plots to appreciate Chang’s talent.

The novella’s heroine, Chia-chih who is a patriotic student, is assigned to seduce and assassinate a traitor, Mr. Yee who works for the puppet government. However, when Mr. Yee says, “I said I wanted to buy you a ring, didn’t I? A diamond ring-a decent one”, and agrees to trade gold to buy a six carats pink diamond which has “the size of a pea” for Chia-chih, she suddenly realizes “he really loves me” and warns him to run. At the end of the story, Mr. Yee escapes the attack, captures the radical students who plan the assassination, and executes all of them, including Chia-chih^[3].

In light of this, *Lust, Caution* has a tragic ending when patriots, Chia-chih and her collaborators, are executed, whereas the traitor, Mr. Yee survives due to Chia-chih's divulgence and still maintains his position as an officer in Japanese occupiers' puppet government. The greater irony is that the patriotic female student, Chia-chih, betrays her collaborators just because she is deeply moved by an expensive rare pink diamond from Mr. Yee. Despite the fact that the ring is just an external material, Chia-chih still believes that the ring can reflect Mr. Yee's love for her which motivates her to let him go. Thus, *Lust, Caution's* ending does not match Chinese "political correctness" because Eileen Chang does not eulogize the sacrifice on behalf of the nation.

At the same time, Eileen Chang still "reserves places" for her story ending as a kind of the *mediation*, which she does not make the story ending read in such a pessimistic way. After Mr. Yee executes Chia-chih, Chang describes Mr. Yee's feeling in this way, "he had enjoyed the love of a beautiful woman, he would die happy without regret. He could feel her shadow forever near him, comforting him. Even though she had hated him at the end, she had at least felt something. And now he possessed her utterly, primitively-as a hunter does his quarry, a tiger his kill. Alive, her body belonged to him; dead, she was his ghost"^[3]. Mr. Yee's inner monologue directly reveals his love for Chia-chih, the woman whose death he has just ordered that he treats killing Chia-chih as a measure to keep himself from staying with her forever. The phrase to "die happy-without regret" also represents Mr. Yee's bliss, joy, and completeness. In addition, Mr. Yee's confession also echoes Chia-chih's conjecture "He really loves me"^[3]. Given all that, Chia-chih's decision of warning Mr. Yee is not wrong since she protects the man who she loves and also loves her, and Mr. Yee's decision of executing Chia-chih is also reasonable since he can "possessed her utterly," which can say that Chang's *Lust, Caution* is a novella ends in a tragic and happy ending.

Whereas Eileen Chang gives her readers an optimistic-tragic ending that at least, both protagonists of her *Lust, Caution's*, Chia-chih and Mr. Yee, confess their love to each other, and the tragic ending is just the different decisions they make to express their love, this novella's denouncement is just an illusion to conceal Chang's mockery to the reality. Firstly, Chang satirizes the ideas of "love conquers all." In her *Lust, Caution*, although Mr. Yee treats Chia-chih as his "first true love", he still asks his subordinates to capture her and execute her without giving her a final glimpse, which can be regarded as the mockery of true love^[3]. Moreover, Chia-chih's betrayal to her collaborators also becomes an irony in Chang's ending that she is against eulogizing patriotism, a political correctness' slogan, in her novellas. As a famous modern female writer in wartime China, many left-wing writers punished Eileen Chang as she wrote in her essay "Writing of One's Own," "I am incapable of writing the kind of work that people usually refer to as a 'monument to an era,' and there is no revolution in my work"^[4]. That was true. Chang does not talk too much about the political revolutions in her works, and this may be somewhat related to her personal experience since she was unable to gain a loving marriage and get rid of the title of "national traitor" in her society as her first husband was HU Lan Cheng, a collaborator with the Japanese puppet government and later on betrayed her, having affairs with other women.

However, there may also have been the possibilities that Chang chooses to write all about *Lust, Caution* in an optimistic-sadly-ending way without any political education and revolutionary thought, because she tries to make her readers feel that her works and her protagonists are authentic and complicated. Her irony toward patriotism and romantic love by using *mediation* rather than being restricted by *mediation* gives Chang's works an edge of realism that makes it easy to forget they are fictions since she clearly knows the "everyone is alone."

If Hsiao Hung's works are described as dreary, then Eileen Chang's works are permeated with a lonely atmosphere. Living in an era that flames of war are filling the air, Chang writes down in her "From the Ashes"(1944), "for most of us students, however, our attitude toward the war can be summed up by a metaphor: we were like someone sitting on a hard plank bench, trying to take a nap. Although in terrible discomfort and ceaselessly complaining of such, we managed all the same to fall asleep in the end"^[4]. "We," as those people who survive and struggle to maintain their normal life in the war, are the real people instead of those heroes that take part in revolutions and the politicians who guiding revolutions in Yanan or Chongqing since "we" understand the relentless war and try to live and choose to live with humiliation. Chang's "we" also "occupy ourselves instead searching for shadows of ourselves in the shop windows that flit so quickly by" in her works even though "our own faces, pallid and trivial"^[4]. However, it is because of "our faces pallid and trivial" and "our selfishness and emptiness, in our smug and shameless ignorance, everyone of us is like all the others", only such "stupid" people that "never have feeling of righteous indignation" can survive in such a world of war^[4]. Only those who endure loneliness can become survivors. Therefore, reviewers and readers cannot jump to conclusions that Chang's works have no faith or love which exist just as does light and heat. In contrast, Chang is a humanistic writer that she always tries to find the harmonious aspects of life from struggles. She exactly knows wars bring

tragedy to people whilst people still live optimistically as if “even if out of boredom, was at least a somewhat less passive approach to the situation”, so Chang attempts to transform this kind of attitude to her optimistic-tragic ending as well as gains the strategy from Confucian’s *mediation* in her works ^[4].

3. The Endings of Female Writers’s Nobody

As French author Anaïs Nin declares, “We write to taste life twice, in the moment, and in retrospection.” When these female writers, Lin Hai-yin, Hsiao Hung, and Eileen Chang, use their optimistic-tragic works to have auto-criticism, they use the language in their works to restructure their personal history. However, although all three of these female writers create their endings as their tools to make self-analysis, their aspects of self-examination are different due to their life circumstances.

As a woman, according to Zhuang Yiwen points out, Lin Hai Yin is a feminine model who cares about both her family and her writing career. She is a docile daughter, a virtuous wife, and a loving mother throughout her life, while Eileen Chang and Hsiao Hung have been rebellious since their childhood. They are out of line with traditional standards of women’s virtues and have not raised their children. When they passed away, they were neither a wife nor a mother, but were only a woman and an ordinary woman writer. In terms of that, Hsiao and Chang are far from the female role that male discourse has historically interpreted. In addition, compared with Hsiao Hung, Chang is more independent of the family and social network since she does not need to establish diplomatic relations with many friends and need to be relieved by her friends. Chang lives for herself and perfects and completes all her achievements through words.

As a writer, these three female writers all prefer to draft non-heroes as their protagonists. In the works of Lin Hai-yin’s, she dares to describe the death of her family members and friends at the end of her stories in *Memories of Peking: South Side Stories*. While tracing back to her childhood memories, she writes down, “Papa’s flowers have fallen, and I am no longer a child.” ^[11] Lin melts death into the beautiful landscape in Peking and she feels happy to tell the public that stories she writes are the fragments of her childhood. In Hsiao’s work, her stories in *Tales of Hulan River* are full of vitality. Although the winter she describes is frozen and the yard she describes is desolate, there are always full of hope and optimism at the end of her stories. She offers tenacious vitality to Hulan’s villager, Harelip Feng and creates an optimistic-tragic ending in her *Tales of Hulan River*. Chang’s works are different than the preceding two authors because of her standing aloof from her independence in property and spirit. This prompts her to write whatever she wants to write as she describes lack of “humanity” as “actually it’s more human” that she describes Weilong and Chia-chih, two young and pretty girl, as her “money-loving materialists.”

4. Conclusion

All in all, these three writers are the victims of wars. They try to describe both warm and dark as two aspects at the same time and put forward the method of redemption while exposing the darkness of wartime society. The approach that Lin proposes is to find the aesthetics in the society to haunt people, whereas Hsiao believes the quiet acceptance and to live will be better under the wartime, while Chang chooses to live foolishly and lonely. It is hard to say which choice is smart since all three writers emphasize “realism.” Their works are not concentrated on explaining something to the public; conversely, their works are their imagination of a hard time and expectation to their life from tomorrow on ^[8]. Lin enlightens herself in the reality of the regret beauty, Hsiao cautions that she has to live tenaciously, and Chang tells herself to learn numbness. But none of them really does. That is why they write these into their autobiographical works, using *mediation* to write optimistic-tragic endings. They suffer, so they make up for their unapproachable pursuits.

As modern Chinese outstanding female writers’ works, *Memories of Peking: South Side Stories*, *Tales of Hulan River*, “Aloeswood Incense: The First Brazier,” and *Lust, Caution*, are all looking back to writers themselves, but they do not have strong forward-looking. They dare to face the deepest worries in their hearts, but they have no fantasy to influence the future. They just merely place their hopes in their literary works, reflecting from *mediation*. Like this, *mediation* is not limit the way for Lin, Hsiao, and Chang end their works, but melt into how they think and write about the society in a macro perspective under the micro observation. *Mediation* is a gift for them to enjoy and embrace their turbulent life.

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