The Politics of Literary Fame: Tracing Eileen Chang's Reception in China and the United States

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Abstract As a modern Chinese woman writer who valued traditional Chinese culture and female subjectivity, Eileen Chang (Ailing Zhang 张爱玲 1920–1995)[1] has attracted more and more interest from academia and popular culture. Her literary fame has undergone dramatic ups-and-downs over the seventy years since she began publishing (1943-2013). Although she is now possessed of a respectable literary reputation, Chang was long considered merely as a popular story writer in China because of the bias towards the theme of women and love as well as women's literature (1943-1952). Later, as a diasporic writer in America where Orientalism was prevalent, Chang was submerged in grey oblivion (1955-1970s). Her literary fame has been gradually resurrected by the gains in momentum made by gender studies and multiculturalism (1970s-present). This paper examines the inexorable connection between the vicissitude of Chang's literary fame and social-political influences, and asserts that a canonical work is inevitably shaped by changing literary standards and social-political preferences.

Key words Eileen Chang; literary fame; canonical work; reception; social-political preference

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Eileen Chang (Ailing Zhang 张 爱 玲 1920-1995), once considered as merely a popular story writer and almost forgotten by the public, has garnered increasing

attention and praise in today's world where feminine subjectivity, traditional Chinese culture, and quotidian life are highly appreciated and evaluated. Eileen Chang's literary fame is inevitably intertwined with social and political influences even though she declared that she always held an apolitical stance. Her literary fame has undergone dramatic ups-and-downs over the past seventy years (1943-2013). These seventy years witness how political, social, and cultural elements shape and reshape Chang's authorial reputation. A canonical work is considered to be a work that is unfettered by time and space. However, through examining the vicissitudes of Chang's literary career I claim that a canonized work is inevitably constructed by social and political preferences. The history of her literary fame can be divided into three periods: 1943-1952, her career as a popular story writer in China; 1955-1970s, her years as a diasporic American writer submerged in grey oblivion; 1970s-present, the resurrection of her authorial reputation all over the world.

In the 1940s, after publishing her short stories, Chang won millions of readers in Shanghai. Nevertheless, she was never considered as a serious writer because her works deal with women and love, which Chinese critics considered mundane and trivial. Chang shares the same experience with women writers from Charlotte Brontë to Toni Morrison with regard to public reception. In 1955, she moved to the United States where Cold War policy and Orientalism were prevalent. She was always considered to be a Chinese writer rather than an American writer, even though she spent forty years in the United States producing English literary works. Confronted with the prejudices of Orientalism and living in displacement, Chang again was not recognized as a canonical writer because of the inhospitable social-political environment. Even though she was highly praised by some scholars, her English literary works have not attracted much attention in American popular culture until recent years. Because critical attention to gender and multiculturalism has been elevated,[2] Chang's literary fame has been gaining momentum posthumously. Nowadays, Chang's world-wide fame is clearly demonstrated by her works' inclusion in two major literary anthologies: *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*[3] and *The Longman Anthology: World Literature*.[4] In these anthologies, Chang is given pride of place next to modern contemporaries including Virginia Woolf, Franz Kafka, Marcel Proust, and James Joyce.

The canonical literary value is embedded in Chang's modern concerns for romantic love and women's subjectivity. Love, among the most sincere and intense of all human emotions, and women, half of the people who may experience love, had both been, to some extent, neglected for a long time in Chinese literary history.

Inheriting the Chinese romantic love genre and meanwhile closely associated with the western romantic literary tradition, Eileen Chang elevates this long-time suppressed Chinese literary genre while also embracing a modern sense of humanity. Chang's readers can sense a new form of humanity emerging in her stories, one which takes a significant position in China's modernization. Chang's focus on women's subjectivity and romantic love in the first half of her authorial career serves as a double-edged sword. On one hand, this emphasis on women and romance brought her popularity among middle-class readers, especially women readers. On the other hand, she did not receive approval or support from mainstream literary critics because she subversively prioritized individualism over nationalism in the 1940s, when the national cause was regarded as the overarching goal. Also, in opposition to the prevalent socio-political climate in America in the 1950s, Chang's English fiction did not receive success.

1943-1952

Chang won overnight authorial reputation when she was twenty-three years old. She expressed her opinion about this instant popularity when *Chuanqi* 传　奇 (*Romances*),[5] the collection of her short stories, was published: "Ah! Get famous as early as possible! If fame comes too late, the happiness won't be as intense" (6).[6] In the beginning, she wrote serialized stories for magazines and journalssuch as *Ziluolan* 紫罗兰 (*Violet*), *Wanxiang* 万象 (*Phenomena Monthly*), and *Tiandi* 天地 (*Heaven and Earth*). Some of her most famous works — *Love in a Fallen City*, *The Golden Cangue*, *Red Rose, White Rose* — are among these early stories. If 1943 is the year of Chang's literary debut, 1944 is the peak of her literary career in her life time. In August 1944, Chang published the first collection of her short storieswhich aroused a big public sensation. The collectionwas sold out in four days. *Chuanqi* was reprinted in one month and reprinted the third time three years later.[7] One of her stories, *Love in a Fallen City*, was adapted into a play and was warmly welcomed by the Shanghai people in the same year. Everything Chang wrote at this time attracted public attention. *Liuyan* (*Written on Water* 流言), a collection of her essays, was reprinted three times in December 1944. By the end of 1944, Chang had published sixteen novellas and short stories, and two collections of her literary works. In 1943 and 1944, Chang was remarkably prolific and popular.[8]

Despite receiving the public's approval, Chang was not taken to be a serious writer by the influential writers of China. In the 1940s, China was undergoing Japanese invasion (1937-1945) and an endless civil war. Chang gained her popularity by writing about middle-class life and love affairs in Japanese-occupied

Shanghai. However, most of the Chinese writers in China during that special political time upheld May Fourth ideology. For instance, inheriting and developing this ideology, some leftist writers, such as Lu Xun 鲁 迅 , Ro Shi 柔 石 , Tian Han 田 汉 , and Qu Qiubai 瞿 秋 白 , formed their powerful association — The League of Left-Wing Writers. These writers used their pens to promote communist revolutionary literature and fought for their nation's freedom and independence. Their ethos was that everything should be connected to national cause, including personal life. Sándor Petőfi's poem was translated to be used as a patriotic slogan prevalent across the country: "Life is indeed important, love is more valuable. However, if it is for the sake of freedom, both life and love could be sacrificed."[9] Such a declaration highly privileges nationalism over individualism and gender.

The major topics of Chang's works — personal matters and love affairs — made her male literary contemporaries hostile to her. Tonglin Lu observes, "among the problems created by the prevailing masculinism of May Fourth intellectuals was an indifferent if not hostile attitude toward women's new role as writers. For women writers, preoccupation with gender-related problems typically earned them the criticism of indulgence in the insignificant private sphere" (6). Qian Zhongshu 钱 钟 书 ,[10] a Chinese scholar and writer, never thought highly of Chang. Fu Lei 傅 雷，a famous translator, also criticized Chang's works as trivial, even though he was the first critic who provided a candid critical view of Chang's works.[11] Fu denies Chang's aesthetic value because of her unvaried themes of love and marriage, unlikable characters, and petty bourgeois life in her works. In other words, Fu condemns Chang for betraying political engagement and the lofty nationalistic cause.

Chang is not the only woman writer who is either categorized as a popular writer or faces the charge of nationalistic betrayal in modern times. Such women writers as Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and Edith Wharton were addressed as popular writers in the beginning of their writing careers because of their themes of love and marriage. Moreover, African American writers such as Zora Neale Hurston and Toni Morrison were also accused of racial infidelity because they exposed women's issues and prioritized gender over nationalism.

Different from many of her contemporary peers, Chang never encompassed the big historical picture in the 1940s nor generated patriotic claims as other Chinese writers did in such a time of upheaval. Instead of ruining people's happiness, the outside world filled with wars and chaos aids the protagonists to gain their love in Chang's stories. Chang steadfastly positioned personal feelings and her literature in the first and foremost position through isolating herself from the outside world.

This inclination is explicitly expressed in her essay "Tiancai Meng." She delineated her profound feeling about the "petty trivia" artistically:

> I do appreciate some of the art of living. I know how to […] listen to the bagpipe played by Scottish soldiers, enjoy the breeze while sitting on a wicker chair, eat peanuts soaked in salty water, watch neon lights on rainy nights, and reach out from a double-decker to pick new leaves off the treetops. My life is brimming with joy as long as I don't have to make contact with others.(64)

Not all the critics devalued Chang and categorized her as merely a popular writer. Hu Lancheng 胡兰成 (1906-1981), a scholar and collaborator who served Wang Jingwei's puppet government during the Japanese occupation, wrote essays highly praising Chang's devotion to individualism.[12] He depreciated the naïve slogans of nationalism by comparing Chang's upholding humanity with the leftist writers' faith in collectivism. Romanticizing the secular and mundane life and unwilling to parrot nationalistic slogans, Chang claims her apolitical stance and her literary emphasis of the personal dimension in the essay "Writing of One's Own."

> All I really write about are some of the trivial things that happen between men and women. There is no war and no revolution in my works. I think that people are more straightforward and unguarded in love than they are in war or revolution. War and revolution, by their very nature, make more urgent demands of rationality than sensibility. Works that portray war and revolution often fail precisely because their technical prowess outstrips their artistry. (18)

Even when there is social upheaval in her works, the turbulent political revolution merely serves her love theme and literary aesthetics. In "Sealed Off," the two strangers on the same tramcar, Lu Zongzhen and Wu Cuiyuan, would not be in love without the blockade. War and revolution, toppling the preexisting order and convention, can breed true love, however ephemeral it is, in Chang's vision. A more striking example is *Love in a Fallen City.* In this novella, Bai Liusu, a divorced young lady in Shanghai, tries to remarry Fan Liuyuan, a wealthy playboy from Hong Kong. Liuyuan intended to leave Liusu as his mistress but the war delays his departure for Britain and creates an opportunity for him to realize his love for Liusu. "He was just a selfish man; she was a selfish woman. In this age of chaos and disorder, there is no place for those who stand on their own, but an ordinary married couple, room can always be found" (165). When Liusu and Liuyuan

support each other on the verge of death amid the ruins and chaos, they reach a deep mutual understanding. In the end of the story, Liuyuan finally promises marriage to Liusu because they both realize their love for each other at the fall of Hong Kong, even if the love is temporary. Chang writes in the end, "Hong Kong's defeat brought Liusu victory" (167). Liusu's happiness owes enormously to the war in this story. The political calamity in Chang's works does not torture and destroy her characters. Instead, it facilitates their pursuit of love.

Eileen Chang distinguished herself from many women writers who devoted themselves to the revolutionary cause as most of male writers did. For instance, Ding Ling 丁 玲 (1904-1986), an outstanding woman writer, presents the big picture composed of national upheavals and social movements. Different from May Fourth writers such as Ding Ling, Chang was apolitical and committed herself to exploring individual matters. Chang used the dramatic political upheavals as a means to interpret the theme of love and personal salvation, rather than to promote national salvation. In other words, she subversively privileges individualism over nationalism.

Since the May Fourth movement,[13] Chinese literature has been inexorably interlinked with politics.[14] Popular, but overlooked as a mere popular writer when the Nationalist Party ruled, Chang was confronted with a much harsher environment after the establishment of New China in 1949. Inheriting the legacy of the socialist movement, the Communist Party continued to provoke social and ideological changes in New China (1949-). Women's voices and representations were still marginalized in the prevailing masculine discourse of nationalism. Ostensibly, the Communist Party firmly advocated women as equal as men. Mao Zedong 毛 泽 东 (1893-1976), the first Chairman of the People's Republic of China, defined women as the upholders of half of the sky and claimed that men and women were equals. Essentially, the dominant powers in the new regime, like other radically political revolutionists (such as communists in Russia and Marxists in Europe), merely intended to unify and include women as part of their social change by presenting their seemingly progressive declaration of gender equality. As Tonglin Lu straightforwardly expresses, "women's emancipation is a gift imposed by the Communist Party, which used this gesture as a marker of its progressive stance. Once their function to represent the party in public is fulfilled, women must continue to play a submissive role not necessarily in the family but in society" (7-8). Women were treated as sexless objects serving the system of the new communist country. They were not only supposed to submit to fathers and husbands, due to the permeating and lasting patriarchal norm, but also were

supposed to obey the sexless collectivity and the lofty nationalism. Nationalism is in binary opposition to Chang's aesthetic emphasis of individualism and gender. Yue Meng and Jinhua Dai claim, "the very state of submission has not changed. The throne of the past patriarchal figure, the emperor, is nowadays occupied by a collectivity, the incarnation of the nation" (31). Moreover, literature is adopted as a means to serve and consolidate communist domination. Back in 1942, Mao already clearly stated that political standards should always be privileged over the artistic standards.[15]

According to Xiaojue Wang, communism's official dominion over mainland China in 1949 meant that China disintegrated topographically and ideologically into several parts — the red mainland, Nationalist Taiwan, colonial Hong Kong, and millions of Chinese people in diaspora all over the world.[16] The political change significantly influences modern Chinese literature. Highly valuing nationalism and collectivism, New China rejected Chang's literary works, which did not suit the new political regime's agenda. Feeling uncomfortable with the political demands, Chang left her native city for Hong Kong in 1952. Since her exile from mainland China, wandering in the great China region, she never went back to Shanghai, the city that celebrated and witnessed the height of her writing career. Chang then immigrated to the United States in 1955 and began her forty-year endeavor as a Chinese diasporic writer in America.

1955-1970s

Unpleasantly restricted by the politics in mainland China, Eileen Chang carried her sincere hope that America would accept and approve her literary works, but was also strictly constrained by American politics. She was not categorized as a Chinese American writer until recently, even though she produced a number of English literary works in America. The reason she was always considered as a Chinese writer rather than an Asian American writer could be because her primary topics are people's lives in China and never involve Chinese Americans or other Americans.[17] More importantly, it is because her literary works written in English never received the outstanding reception it did in Shanghai. Talking little about America, Chang immersed herself completely in classical Chinese literature and the life back in China. In 1995, Chang was found dead in her apartment in Los Angeles, isolated, alone, and forgotten.

It is worthwhile to examine the reasons her English literary works did not attract much attention from American readers and critics. What Chang endured in her later writing career in America, to some extent, reflects the reception politics

with which numerous Chinese American writers were confronted. In the 1950s, immigrant writers as well as Asian American writers, like Chang, were faced with the severe political constraints of both Cold War culture and the prevailing Orientalism.[18] Orientalismhere means the American / Western way to depict stereotypical Chinese people and Chinese culture. Chang's strategy to survive in such a literary environment filled with intense political stress and rigid cultural stereotypes was schizogenesis. Betraying her literary interests, she wrote about the politics in New China in *The Rice Sprout Song* and *The Naked Earth*. However, these two novels did not receive much public attention. After her attempt to cope with American literary politics failed, Chang became nostalgic about her youth in China and about traditional Chinese literature. Her reclusive life in America and her mere description about the good old time in China demonstrate her profound sense of displacement as a diasporic writer.

In America, Chang produced three types of major works. The first type were the novels written or translated in English, like *The Rice Sprout Song: A Novel of Modern China* (1955)[19] and *The Naked Earth* (1956),[20] *The Rouge of the North* (1967).[21] The second type were the translations she wrote for other Chinese writers, such as *The Sing-Song Girls of Shanghai* (*Hai shang hua liezhuan* 海上花列传 1892), originally written by Han Bangqing 韩邦庆 in the late Qing Dynasty. The third type was fully colored with self-retrospection and nostalgia. Written in Chinese or English, these works include semi-autobiographical novels, *Xiao tuan yuan* (小团圆 *Little Reunion*), *The Fall of the Pagoda* (*Lei feng ta* 雷峰塔), and *The Book of Change* (*Yi jing* 易经).[22] Chang also devoted half of her life to writing *Nightmare in the Red Chamber* (*Honglou mengyan* 红楼梦魇 , hereafter referred to as *Nightmare*), her study of Cao Xueqin's (曹雪芹)*Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Hong lou meng* 红楼梦 1792).[23]

In the beginning of her period of diaspora, with the hope of becoming a writer of English fiction and hoping for financial success, Chang coped with Cold War cultural politics. She wrote two anti-communism novels — *TheRice Sprout Song* (1955) and *The Naked Earth* in Chinese (1954) — then translated them into English in 1955. Sponsored by the United States Information Agency, these two novels are themed with anti-communism. *The Rice Sprout Song,* her first English novel published in America (publisher: Charles Scribner's Sons), describes peasants' miserable life and the hypocritical life the communist cadre led under the new regime. Gold Root and Moon Scent, a couple, lead their lives as hardworking peasants. Fearful and indignant, Gold Root expresses his resentment to a local official because the government urges the peasants to contribute food to the Spring

Festival so as to honor the Korean-War solders' families. A riot follows and Gold Root's family is accused as counter-revolutionists. After the deaths of Gold Root and his daughter, Moon Scent vengefully sets fire to the storehouse and kills herself in the fire. This tragedy ironically exposes that what the communists promise is merely an illusion. Peasants will never be the master of the country after the new country is established. In fact, the peasants still have to submit to the government as they did before and their miserable life is not improved at all.

This novel is suspected of being a political propaganda because of its content and its political sponsor. Regardless of its political content, it received favorable reviews from mainstream American journals and newspapers, such as *The New York Times*, *Time Weekly*, *Herald Tribute*, and *The Saturday Literary Review*. In *The Saturday Literary Review* (1955), Preston Schoyer comments, "it is a moving story, growing in excitement as it rises to its tragic climax. But the tale is much more than its plot implies. Miss Chang gives the scene and the people the honest feel, the very smell of China; both are brilliantly alive. The book has another dimension; it opens a clearer window on life in Red China" (qtd. in Trudeau 33). Also, highly appreciating Chang's irony and earthiness, Schoyer writes, "as a penetrating commentator on the hidden world of Communist China as well as an exciting new artist, one can only hope that we shall hear again from Eileen Chang" (qtd. in Trudeau 34). Nevertheless, good reviews do not equate to market success. *The Rice Sprout Song* was not reprinted after the first edition was sold out.

To accommodate herself in the Cold War political climate in the US, Chang had to work on topics beyond her themes of love and marriage. This literary transition inhibited her writing talent. For instance, Amy Ling asserts, "*The Naked Earth* is a flawed novel with a particularly weak ending. The author herself expressed displeasure in this book, confessing that she was constrained by a plot contractually agreed upon beforehand" (qtd. in Trudeau 45). Moreover, Chang had to undertake academic work, such as translating *The Sing-Song Girls of Shanghai* or the research on *Dream of the Red Mansion* in universities, the politically safe positions, so as to avoid the political scrutiny of McCarthyism. The unfamiliar topics fettered her literary talent and the scholarly life replaced her creative writing career. The major American publishing houses did not favor Chang's literary works. Even if she had her literary works published in America, American readers barely paid any attention to her. Diasporic writers were not only living under Cold War culture but also were censored by Orientalist anxiety.

In the 1950s, American readers, intimidated by communist China, preferred to identify China and the Chinese according to what they themselves imagined

and constructed. Caucasian was the default race in America. Other ethnicities were considered as outsiders, who were potentially primitive, intimidating, and precarious for the whites. Their imagination of China and Chinese people was embedded in the stereotypes from the American popular novels of the 1950s, such as Jade Snow Wong's 黄玉雪 (1922—2006) *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1950) and Suyin Han's 韩素音 (1916—2012) *A Many-Splendored Thing* (1952). American readers favored the assimilated and westernized Chinese. Like the daughter in Wong's autobiographical fiction or the sweet and tender Eurasian girl who loves her gentle Caucasian lover in *A Many-Splendored Thing*, these acclaimed Chinese figures embrace the Anglo-Saxon ideology and desert the traditional Chinese value system. Pursuing their own individualism, denouncing their Chinese family, and challenging the outdated Chinese ideology, these "bold and subversive" Chinese are by nature American and identify themselves as Americans. As Xiaojue Wang observes, "Han's China is not only a world 'ornamented with classical poetry,' but one that features sentimental love stories between a Chinese girl and a Caucasian. It is a vision of China with which Western readers can easily identify" (127). It is much easier and more pleasant for the American readers to accept and appreciate this type of Chinese character than those in Chang's novels. China and Chinese people in Chang's imagination are nothing other than Chinese. She wrote to Chih-tsing Hsia (C. T. Hsia), an influential Chinese scholar in Columbia University, "I always have a hunch, for those who love China, the China they love is exactly the China I intend to disavow" (70-71). Even though aware of what the readers in America expect, Chang was unwilling and unable to pander to the prevalent Orientalist politics. The Chinese she depicts are equivocal and unlikable. Gold Root and Moon Scent are selfish and cowardly in *The Rice Sprout Song*. The woman in *Pink Tear* is cruel and loveless. Compared to the brave, amiable, independent Chinese people crowned with a western halo, Chang's Chinese characters are plain, backward, and alien. Their otherness, which is repugnant and intimidating, cannot win the readers' favor in an era when Orientalism was highly predominant.

Women writers who fulfilled the public's expectation were rewarded with fame and glory. In 1953, Jade Wong was sent on a four-month speaking tour in Asia by the U.S. State Department because of her successful depiction of Chinese Americans. Suyin Han also attained immense popularity after *A Many-Splendored Thing* was published. In 1955, the movie, *Love is A Many-Splendored Thing,* was released after the adaptation of the novel. In contrast, Eileen Chang was constantly rejected by mainstream American publishing houses. Never considered as an American writer, she was on the verge of oblivion in public. Displaced and

disoriented in diaspora, Chang was reclusive during her stay in America. She devoted herself totally to classical Chinese literature and memories of her life as a youth back in China.

As I noted before, Chang indulged herself in the research and translation of traditional Chinese literary works, such as *The Sing-Song Girls of Shanghai* and *Dream of the Red Mansion*. She also reflected on her own life, translated herself, and wrote the autobiographical novels — *Little Reunion*, *The Fall of the Pagoda*, and *The Book of Change*. During her struggle in the United States, Chang fell back to the sentiment that she formulated in 1944: "we seek the help of an ancient memory, the memory of a humanity that has lived through every era, a memory clearer and closer to our hearts than anything we might see gazing far into the future. And this gives rise to a strange apprehension about the reality surrounding us," as she wrote in "Writing of One's Own" (19). She attempted to dissolve her sense of displacement through tracing back to the memory and nostalgia.

Most of Chang's works were not published in America while she was alive. Not able to interest any mainstream publishers in the United States, *The Naked Earth* was published by Union Press in Hong Kong in 1956.[24] *Pink Tear*, the first English novella completed once Chang settled down in America, was the reworking of "The Golden Cangue," one of her short stories published in 1943. *Pink Tear* was rejected by the major publishers such as Scribner, Norton, and Knopf in America due to its suspicious pro-communism. Chang revealed Knopf's comment in her letter to C. T. Hsia. Knopf commented on the manuscript, "all characters are loathsome. If the old China was like this, wouldn't it make the Communist Party the savior?" (69-70) *The Rouge of the North,* reworked by Chang several times based on *Pink Tear*, was eventually published, not in America but by Cassel in England twelve years after Chang completed the story. *Nightmare* was published in Taiwan in 1976. Her three semi-autobiographical works were published posthumously in Taiwan and Hong Kong — *Little Reunion* in 2009,[25] *The Fall of the Pagoda,* and *The Book of Change* in 2010. Chang was never able to find an American publisher for *The Book of Change* and *The Fall of the Pagoda*.

Fettered by the Cold War literary politics as well as by Orientalist expectations, Chang, like numerous other Chinese diasporic writers in displacement, was neglected by the mainstream media and the public. Nevertheless, several major scholars in America unearthed Chang's literary works and highly valued her literature. Her literary fame owes debts to critics including C. T. Hsia, David Der-wei Wang, Leo Ou-fan Lee, Nicole Huang, Shuang Shen, Xiaojue Wang, and numerous scholars from Taiwan and Hong Kong. In 1961, C. T. Hsia

anthologized Chang in his breakthrough book *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*. Closely examining Chang's major literary works, "The Golden Cangue," "Jasmine Tea," "Blockade," and *The Rice Sprout Song*, Hsia praises Chang's contribution to modern Chinese literature. "Eileen Chang is not only the best and most important writer in Chinese today; her short stories alone invite valid comparisons with, and in some respects claim superiority over, the work of serious modern women writers in English: Katherine Mansfield, Katherine Anne Porter, Eudora Welty, and Carson McCullers" (389).

David Der-wei Wang has also studied Chang's literary works since the 1980s. He initiated the research on the Gothic nature of Chang's fictions. Wang writes forewords for Chang's English literary works — *The Rice Sprout Song, The Rouge of The North*, *The Sing-song Girls of Shanghai*, *The Fall of the Pagoda*, and *The Book of Change*. In his foreword for both *The Fall of the Pagoda* and *The Book of Change*, Wang perceives that Chang's most convoluted modernity is hidden in her two semi-autobiographical works. Wang grasps Chang's poetics — derivation rather than revelation and involution instead of revolution. Following her Chinese precursors — Han Bangqing and Cao Xueqing — Chang transforms her memory of the past into her fictional works. Wang sheds light on Chang's altered ego rather than focusing on authenticity as previous scholars and readers did. *The Fall of the Pagoda* and *The Book of Change* are derived from Chang's family history but already revisited and re-interpreted by Chang for several times. As for involution, Chang never ceased to explore humanity and to question the revolutionary ideal.

In addition, Wang also gives another reason for the waning of Chang's literary fame after 1952. "Conventional wisdom has it that Chang's creativity suffered a precipitous decline after she left China in 1952. This may be the conclusion if one defines creativity narrowly in terms of originality, novelty, and iconoclasm" (241). The literary standard in the specific modern era determines that a literary giant is devalued because of her misfit and ahead-of-time feature.

> Chang opted to dwell on what many critics deem decadent and ideologically problematic. She points nevertheless to a genealogy in which revolution is underlined by involution, and revelation presupposes derivation. And it is not until the dawn of a new century that we have finally come to realize that where most of her fellow writers performed the least modern of modernities, Chang managed to bring about the most unconventional of conventionalities. (241)

Indeed, it takes almost half a century for us to realize the sophisticated, innovative

features inherent in Chang's artistic expressions.

Other scholars such as Leo Ou-fan Lee, Nicole Huang, Shuang Shen, and Xiaojue Wang perceive Eileen Chang's works from different perspectives in numerous books and papers. Leo Ou-fan Lee, an influential scholar at the University of Hong Kong, writes *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China*, *1930-1945* (Harvard UP, 1999), *Cang Liang Yu Shi Gu: Zhang Ailing De Qi Shi* (Oxford UP, 2006), and numerous papers on Chang and her literary works. Nicole (Xincun) Huang, a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, devotes her research to the study of Chang, such as *Women*, *War*, *Domesticity: Shanghai Literature and Popular Culture of the 1940s* (Brill, 2005) and *Writing Against the Turmoil: Eileen Chang and Popular Culture in Occupied Shanghai* (Shanghai, 2010). Shuang Shen at Pen State University studies Chang in diaspora literature. For instance, her paper "Ends of Betrayal: Diaspora and Historical Representation in the Late Works of Zhang Ailing" discusses about Chang's literary choice as a diasporic writer in America. Xiaojue Wang, an assistant professor at the University of Pennsylvania, studies Chang's works from the perspective of Cold War cultures. Their critical points of view facilitate readers' understanding and appreciation of Chang's literary works aesthetically and culturally. Their research works attract more specialists and students to engage in the study of Chang.

1970s-Present

Time changes, politics also changes simultaneously. Around 1990, when gender and multiculturalism studies rose to social prominence, Chang's works were excavated and re-evaluated both in Chinese-speaking regions and in America. There have surfaced a remarkable number of women writers in Taiwan that followed Chang's writing style and aesthetic strategy since the end of 1970s. David Der-wei Wang observes this Chang phenomenon in literature and names these writers who were immensely influenced by Chang as *Zhangpai zuojia* (张派作家 Chang-school writers).[26] These writers include Li Ang 李昂 , Shi Shuqing 施叔青 in Taiwan and 钟晓阳 in Hong Kong. There also emerged a new Eileen Chang fever in mainland China in the 1990s, after the policy of Reform and Open-up had been implemented for a decade. Some mainland Chinese writers are also included into *Zhangpai zuojia* by David Wang, such as Wang Anyi 王安忆 . Movies based on Chang's stories were released during this time: *Love in a Fallen City* (1984), *The Rouge of the North* (1988), *Red Rose, White Rose* (1994), and *Eighteen Springs* (1997).

In America, Ang Lee's 李安 movie — *Lust, Caution* (*Se, jie* 色，戒) —

drew public attention to Eileen Chang in 2007. Its English translation by Julia Lovell and *Love in a Fallen City* — a collection of Chang's translated stories by Karen Kingsbury — were published in the same year. Chang's works have also been anthologized in *The Norton Anthology of World Literature* and *The Longman Anthology: World Literature*. In the MLA International Bibliography, over ninety academic papers have been devoted to Chang's literature since 1990. There is a whole book in English to explore Chang's works — *Eileen Chang: Romancing Languages, Cultures and Genres* — published in 2012. Today, Chang's literary fame is reaching higher both in public and academia. One's literary fame is constructed by countless scholars, professors, film-makers' endeavor. These people, like C. T. Hsia, David Der-wei Wang, Leo Ou-fan Lee, Nicole Huang, Shuang Shen, Xiaojue Wang, and Ang Lee rewrite Chang's literary works by contributing their research and cultural products.

From the reception history of Chang's literary works, we obtain a heightened understanding about the relationship between literature and society. The modern consciousness of female subjectivity in Shanghai provided the prerequisite for Chang's early success. However, the prevalence of nationalism and communism caused her to be marginalized in China. Her literary career was later unluckily undermined by Cold War politics and Orientalism in America. Finally, with the rise of gender and cultural studies in academia, her authorial reputation has begun to find the prominence it deserves. The history of her literary fame is a mirror of global social politics and cultural hierarchy in the past seventy years.

Canonized literary works are, to some extent, fruits cultivated by readers, social-political conditions, and cultural standards in specific historic times. This essay does not unveil the asocial, apolitical, and transcendental nature possessed by canonized works but rather claims that literary fame is founded on the basis of various politics embedded in society. As Frank Kermode observes, "reception history informs us that even Dante, Botticelli, and Caravaggio, even Bach and Monteverdi, endured long periods of oblivion until the conversation changed and they were revived" (33). The oblivion about Chang is a modern version of the reception experienced by these canonical writers. We recognize that one masterpiece is written and re-written by its readers, scholars, and its society even after the writer completes the work. The power hidden in this creation is diffused but significant. Everyone is involved in this creation. Everyone is responsible for the emergence or the stifling of a great work. In this way, we, as social classes and cultural groups demystify the definition of masterpiece and realize that essentially we all contribute to or jeopardize the formation of the masterpiece in everyday life.

Notes

1. Born in a distinguished aristocratic family in 1920 China, Eileen Chang was caught in two worlds: the traditional Chinese and the modern Western world. Her great grandfather was Li Hongzhang 李 鸿 章 , an influential official in the Qing dynasty. As an outstanding Chinese woman writer, she presented Chinese heterosexual love in the 1940s, when she witnessed the old world rotting and dying, and simultaneously the new world desperately crawling toward enlightened, modern China from political chaos and Sino-Japanese war.

2.This is claimed by King-Kok Cheung in the introduction to *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature*. See 1-36.

3. "Sealed Off," one of Chang's short stories, is included in *Norton Anthology of World Literature*. See Puchner 1345-54.

4. "Stale Mates," a short story by Chang, is included in *The Longman Anthology of World Literature* (New York: Longman, 2004). See 745-750.

5. The first collection contains ten novellas and short stories.

6. Eileen Chang, preface to the first edition of *Chuanqi* published in 1944; rpt. in *Qingcheng zhi lian—Zhang Ailing duanpian xiaoshuo zhi yi* (倾城之恋—张爱玲短篇小说之一 *"Love in a Fallen City"—Collected Short Stories of Zhang Ailing*). Taipei: Huangguan, 1994.

7. In the third edition of *Chuanqi* (published in 1947), five more stories were included.

8. The information of Chang's career is referred from http://baike.baidu.com/view/2137.htm

9.「生命诚可贵 , 爱情价更高 . 若为自由故 , 两者皆可抛 .」I am responsible for the English translation.

10. A famous Chinese intellectual known for his scholarly work — *Guan zhui bian* (*Limited Views: Essays on Ideas and Letters* 管锥编) and the satiric novel—*Wei cheng* (*Fortress Besieged* 围城).

11. Fu Lei wrote the essay "On Eileen Chang's Fiction" in the same journal, *Wanxiang*, in 1944.

12. Chang and Hu were married in August 1944. Their marriage lasted only three years. He was also the editor of the journal, *Ku zhu yuekan* (苦竹月刊 *Ku Zhu Monthly*), where Chang published some of her short stories and essays.

13. Students at Peking University protested against Japanese imperialism on May 4th, 1919. Since then there had been a series of protests advocating nationalism and social reforms. According to Kirk Denton, the May Fourth movement "was a broad cultural revolution characterized principally by radical anti-traditionalism" (113).

14. This was claimed by Ye Shaojun 叶绍钧 , one of the Chinese scholars.

15. In 1942, Mao Zedong gave the speech "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art" ("Yan'An wenyi tanhua" 延安文艺谈话), in which he resolutely privileged political criterion

over artistic criterion.

16. In Wang's essay "Eileen Chang, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, and the Cold War" (113).

17. Belinda Kong also notes that Eileen Chang lived in the United States but "produced novels in English about China" as a Chinese diasporic writer. See Kong 141.

18. Driven by dominant pride as well as peril, whites assimilated Asians by means of creating westernized Asian characters and cultures.

19. The original Chinese work, *Yang ge* 秧歌，was published in Hong Kong, 1954.

20. The original Chinese work, *Chi di zhi lian* 赤地之恋 , was published in Hong Kong, 1954.

21. Chang translated it into Chinese, *Yuan nu* 怨女 , which was published in 1968.

22. *Little Reunion* was written in Chinese. *The Fall of the Pagoda* and *The Book of Change* were written in English.

23. Chang did her research on *Dream of the Red Chamber* when she was working for some American universities, including Miami University and University of California.

24. Both English and Chinese versions.

25. Chang began writing *The Book of Change*, *The Fall of the Pagoda*, and *Little Reunion* in the 1970s. It is believed that she delayed publishing them because Stephen Soong (Song Qi 宋淇), her friend and literary agent, warned her that Hu Lancheng 胡兰成 , her ex-husband, might trouble her due to the content about Chang's personal life. Her fame could be tainted after publishing *Little Reunion*.

26. "Nuzuojia de xiandai guihua — cong Zhang Ailing dao Su Weizhen" ("女"作家的现代"鬼"话—从张爱玲到苏伟贞 " 'Female' Writers' Modern 'Ghost' Tales — From Zhang Ailing to Su Weizhen"), in *Zhong sheng xuanhua: Sanshi yu bashi niandai de Zhongguo xiaoshuo* (众声喧哗: 三十与八十年代的中国小说 *Heteroglossia: Chinese Fiction in the 1930s and 1980s*, Taipei: Yuanliu, 223-238. 1998)

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