Transgressing Boundaries: Hybridity in Zhang Ailing's Writing and Its Multidimensional Interpretations in Contemporary China

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ABSTRACT

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Zhang Ailing is an extraordinary yet important literary figure in 1940s China. In her writing, the specificity of hybridity breaks through restriction of domestic, social, political and cultural issues and makes her writing surpass the boundaries of races, cultures and space and time. It integrates Zhang's profound concern for human life and humanity with her exquisite literary sensibility. In my thesis, I deploy my study on this hybrid specificity, and also on the cultural phenomena relevant to Zhang Ailing in 1990s China, namely the "Zhang Ailing fever" and the nostalgia theme in Hong Kong film. By exploring the underlying relationship between the two issues on the basis of respective analyses of them, I try to enrich our understanding of this legendary writer and stimulate further thought on the broad and complex process of the "rehabilitation" of Zhang's literary reputation in both Western sinology and Chinese academia.

ABSTRAIT

Franchir les Frontières : « L'hybridité » dans L'écriture de Zhang Ailing et ses Interprétations Multidimensionnelles dans la Chine Contemporaine

Yuan Wang

Zhang Ailing est une figure littéraire extraordinaire et importante de la Chine des années 40. Dans son écriture, la spécificité de « l'hybridité » efface les différences domestiques, sociales, politiques et culturelles, et de ce fait les différences raciales et spatio-temporelles. Cela intègre la préoccupation profonde de Zhang pour la vie humaine et l'humanité avec sa sensibilité littéraire exquise.Dans ma thèse, je me suis focalise sur l'étude de cette spécificité « hybride » et aussi sur le phénomène culturel pertinents à Zhang Ailing dans les années 90 en Chine, à savoir la « fièvre de Zhang Ailing » et le thème de nostalgie dans les films hongkongais. En explorent la relation fondamentale entre les deux problèmes sur la base d'analyses respectives de chacun, je vais tenter d'enrichir notre compréhension de cet écrivain légendaire et de réfléchir sur le processus large et complexe de « réhabilitation » de la réputation littéraire de Zhang dans la sinologie occidentale et l'éducation chinoise.

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Introduction

Zhang Ailing (1920-1995) was an important literary figure who rose to prominence during China's turbulent 1940s. From a literary perspective, 1940s China manifested an extraordinary diversity of literary theories and genres, encompassing a wide range of contending cultural and ideological factors. In the difficult time of foreign invasion followed by civil war, the whole nation faced profound social, political, and cultural transformation. The brutal reality of the decade compelled many writers to ponder broadly and deeply the meaning of history, society, nation and culture. Confronted with unprecedented social, historical and political realities, writers engaged in intimate creative dialogue with the age. The discourse of modern enlightenment thought from the May Fourth period served as their primary foundation. The turbulence caused by the war and China's political partition into three geographical areas in the 1940s—the areas controlled by the Nationalists (KMT), the areas occupied by the Japanese Imperial Army, and the liberated areas controlled by the Communists (CCP)—offered writers a remarkable opportunity to exhibit distinct individualized styles in the literary realm.

The peak period of Zhang Ailing's literary career was set in Shanghai in the 1940s. This entire period also saw the continuous presence of war in Shanghai, which for the most part was under direct Japanese domination. Given the circumstances of Japanese occupation of Shanghai, it was impossible for her to directly echo the resistance literature prevalent in other parts of China, which to great extent arose out

of social and ethnic responsibilities. On the other hand, the political circumstances also afforded Zhang Ailing opportunities otherwise not available. According to Edward M. Gunn, though the Japanese and the puppet government attempted to control and to restrict local literary practices, including various types of censorship in the occupied areas, there was a visible lack of a coherent, effective policy and ideology.[1] Thus for writers with distinct personal styles like Zhang Ailing, it was precisely the hardship of staying in this occupied city that offered them a moderately loose environment where they could avoid being subject to some of the constraints, that is, the social and national requirements that other writers in other areas confronted. As the critic Ke Ling remarks, "I counted with my fingers and found that, in such a big literary world, Zhang Ailing cannot be placed in any other period. Precisely Shanghai's being occupied offered her the opportunity."[2] In addition to the significance of her physical location, Zhang Ailing's unique personal perspective of this extraordinary historical moment resonates with the extraordinary dynamism of her time, producing her fascinating literary works. In the following paragraphs I will address this point in detail.

Zhang Ailing was born in Shanghai, and moved to Nanjing and Tianjin with her family for a couple of years. Most of her childhood and youth, however, were spent in Shanghai, where she lived from the age of eight onwards. She studied at Hong Kong University from 1939 to 1941 until the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941. Japan's invasion and occupation of Hong Kong caused her to abandon her studies and she returned to Shanghai in 1942, beginning her literary career. Most of her short

stories and essays were published in various Shanghai popular magazines of the time, dating from the five-year period of 1942-1947. Her main published literary works include a collection of short stories, *Romances* (*Chuanqi*, 1944), a collection of essays, *Written on Water* (*Liuyan*, 1945; English translation, 2005), a novel, *Eighteen Springs* (*Shiba chun*, 1950), which was revised and newly titled as *Half a Lifetime's Romance* (*Bansheng yuan*), published in Taibei in 1968. In 1952, when most of her peers were trying to adjust themselves to the new society and to CCP's literary and art policies, she left the Mainland for Hong Kong. There, two other novels appeared shortly after: *The Rice-sprout Song* (*Yangge*, 1954; English version, 1955) and *Naked Earth* (*Chidi zhilian*, 1954; English version, 1956). Both were commissioned by the United States Information Service in Hong Kong, and their decidedly anti-communist content became a very important and direct reason for the ban on her works and for her name being excluded from the official writings of Chinese literary history in the Mainland for about thirty years. In addition to her novels and essays, she composed several film scripts from the late 1940s to early 1960s, including *Everlasting Affection* (*Buliao qing*, 1947) and *Hooray Mistress* (*Taitai wansui*, 1947), which were successfully shot and received quite positive reviews at the time. She arrived in the United States in 1955 and lived a secluded life until she passed away in 1995 in Los Angeles. During this time, she annotated and translated the late Qing dynasty novel *Flowers of Shanghai* (*Haishang hua liezhuan*, 1894) and published a collection of research essays on *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Honglou meng*) entitled *Honglou mengyan* in Taibei in 1976.[3]

Undoubtedly, Zhang Ailing's great talent as a writer led to her meteoric success. When her first short story, "Chenxiang xie—diyilu xiang" [Aloe Ashes—First Burning] was published in the leading journal of the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly school *Ziluolan* [*Violet*] in 1943,[4] the chief editor, Zhou Shoujuan (1894-1968), became the first to discover her talent. At the age of twenty-three, Zhang Ailing had become a literary celebrity: both her remarkable writing and her personal life were already the stuff of legend in 1940s Shanghai. In his canonical work, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* (1961),[5] Hsia Chih-tsing even regarded Zhang as "the best and most important writer in Chinese." Not only was this recognition very high, but also its timing was remarkable. In the 1960s, Zhang Ailing was still not well known to most Chinese readers of the time, in the Mainland for reasons of censorship after she wrote the two anti-communist novels, and in Taiwan as well, for other reasons. Compared to the general ignorance of this female writer in academia at the time, this striking statement by Hsia was somewhat idiosyncratic, revealing Zhang's talent and achievement in literature.

Hsia's claim seemed not only to be a serious academic critique but also a fairly early sign of the much later Zhang Ailing "fever" appearing in China in the 1990s. This was a very interesting cultural phenomenon, especially prevalent in the Mainland and Hong Kong. In fact, for the latter, the great interest in Zhang Ailing's literature is to a great extent linked to the cultural wave of Shanghai nostalgia. For an examination of this aspect of the issue in Hong Kong, I will address this particularly in Chapter 2, connecting it to the main content of the chapter, namely the film adaptation of Zhang

Ailing's novels in Hong Kong in the 1990s.

In the Mainland, the name of Zhang Ailing, the literary celebrity of the 1940s, completely disappeared after the liberation for about thirty years. This regrettable absence is a direct result of subsequent ideological restrictions. I will offer a detailed account of this absence at the beginning of the section of "Literary Review." By the early 1980s, Zhang Ailing was rediscovered, beginning with some scholars who accessed Hsia's *History*; their curiosity of this suppressed writer was piqued by Hsia's remark. With more liberal and tolerant ideological policies and more active academic research in the following years, Zhang Ailing's writing has gradually become a popular topic which has attracted more and more attention. Many scholars and graduate students in universities have tried to reevaluate Zhang Ailing's writing from "pure" academic perspectives (here I use quotation marks: though they claim that to use "pure" is to consciously distinguish their research from the ideological and politicized works before 1980s, academic research on this kind of topics can hardly be insulated from ideological impact, either explicit or implicit) and to resituate this distinct writer in modern Chinese literary history. A distinct manifestation is that in many new publications in the 1990s focusing on modern Chinese literary history, Zhang Ailing's writing has been bestowed with importance, and this indicates that her writing is something that cannot be omitted or ignored anymore.

Inspired by passionate academic attention, more republications of Zhang Ailing's literary works are available for the public, while Zhang Ailing's name and her writing have entered into a much broader public view rather than being limited within

academia. In the mid-1990s, not only Zhang Ailing's writing but also her legendary life has attracted more and more people: from 1992 to 1995, four different biographies of Zhang were published in the Mainland. The intense interest in both her writings and herself stimulate numerous commercial reprints of her works, and this in turn attracts more people to become readers of Zhang. In this dynamic process, Zhang Ailing has become a cultural symbol who cannot be ignored, in both elite culture and popular culture, and there appears to be an inclination to categorize her writing as classics despite an intermittent and yet nevertheless ongoing debate. Moreover, new concepts related to Zhang have come into being: *Zhang xue* [scholarship on Zhang] (the same way addressing the scholarship on *Hong lou meng* as "*Hong xue*") and *Zhang mi* [fans of Zhang].

From a completely ignored writer to a fashionable cultural "star," Zhang Ailing has been infused with new legendary factors. What is the particular quality of Zhang Ailing's writing which makes her so extraordinary in modern Chinese literature and which, at the same time, can produce such unfailing charm? For this complex question, there might be various answers; in this thesis, I would like to give a possible answer from the perspective of analyzing the specific hybrid quality of Zhang Ailing's writing and her unique insight and thinking embodied in her works.

Of all the aspects of Zhang Ailing's remarkable achievement in literature, a unique quality is its distinctive hybridity, which successfully breaks through the restriction of domestic, social, political and cultural issues, surpassing the existing predetermined boundaries and integrating her profound concern for humanity and

human life with an exquisite literary sensibility. Homi Bhabha's notions *hybridity* and the *third place* have offered me illumination when I try to choose an appropriate word to define the specificity of Zhang Ailing's writing. Bhabha has developed his concept of hybridity from literary and cultural theory to describe the construction of culture and identity within conditions of colonial antagonism and inequity. In his argument, hybridity could be viewed as a "third place," which is a space of new forms of cultural meaning and production blurring the limitations of existing boundaries and calling into question established categorizations of culture and identity.[6] Here I invoke the notion of "hybridity" to address descriptively the significant characteristics of Zhang Ailing's writing as something that in a particular socio-cultural process has manifested a capacity to engage in the cultural multiplicity. In this sense, what Zhang has endeavored to do is, within a combinatory frame of different cultural and racial systems, to meditate on humanity and human life with her own philosophical insights and unique literary sensibility.

In both her writing and her life, Zhang Ailing presents a detachment from the mainstream literature of her times. In modern Chinese literary history, the New Literature that developed in the May Fourth period was one of the significant foundations of modern Chinese literature. It undoubtedly had a deep, long-lasting influence on the literature of later periods and has always remained the key part of the literary mainstream. In the second chapter of his book, Edward Gunn labels the literature of May Fourth as Romantic, namely "sometimes realistic in form, but infused with a sense of romanticism"; in the fifth chapter, on the other hand, he

categories Zhang Ailing's writing as Antiromantic.[7] Zhang Ailing exceeds the limitations of overzealous patriotism while simultaneously refuses the standard practice of attempting to realize the reformation of Chinese society through a literary enlightenment of the people's spirit. Instead, she calmly, penetratingly delineates people's spiritual suffering and embarrassment, their psychological conflicts and weaknesses without the preconceived ideological motive prevalent in mainstream literature. She writes decisively away from the China/World humanity paradigm current in the period. Due to the historical and social reality of that time, in mainstream literary works, most authors consciously made themselves bear the ethical, social or moral responsibilities of using literature as a tool of enlightenment aimed at readers. In these works, *liegenxing* (the wicked features in humanity) of Chinese people is a key topic to be revealed and blamed in the model of China/World humanity paradigm, and eliminating it is regarded as something important and necessary in the progress of reformation. Although Zhang Ailing was also concerned with the negative side of humanity, she chose a different perspective. In her writing, Zhang always focuses her incisive perspicacity on humanity itself; in her writing, the figures might be Chinese or people with other ethnic origins, but the rooted evil side of their humanity thus revealed and interrogated are applicable to all. This allows her to address humanity as a somewhat philosophical notion on a much broader scale rather than to restrict the vision of humanity colored with Chinese ethnic characteristics. Thus the insights manifested in her writing are broadened into a more general meditation on modern peoples instead of being limited to modern Chinese people.

Here I am using the word "modern" to refer to the particular historical setting in the historical progress of transformation instead of the general meaning of the word. Although in Zhang's writings a somewhat melancholic nostalgia for the seeming absence of the Chinese past is detectable, what Zhang tries to examine is how the complication of people's humanities came into being within a matrix in which the traditional and the modern, the Western and the Chinese were weirdly tangled together and led to an alchemical combination of cultures. Therefore her writing was bestowed with a quality of generalization, through which it concerned all human beings, on the one hand maintaining the style of Chinese culture and on the other hand, communicating and corresponding with some Western modern thoughts such as Freudianism. I will expand on this point in detail in Chapter 1. With this particular quality, her writing has become something that is hybrid and generalized while remaining multivocal and densely symbolized. Thus the connotation of Zhang's writing is complex enough to sustain a variety of different interpretations including critical approaches from various perspectives. Referring to the academic research in 1990s Mainland China, there have been various critical approaches on, among others, the abundance of imagery as psychological metaphor, the cultural model, philosophical connotations in Zhang's writing, or from the perspectives of structuralism, feminism and Semiotics and so on.

In this thesis, I would like to focus my analysis on two issues, namely the hybrid specificity of Zhang Ailing's writing and the contemporary cultural phenomena tightly related to Zhang Ailing in the 1990s. I want to explore the underlying

relationship between these two on the basis of analyses of each of them, trying to enrich our understanding of this legendary writer and to stimulate further thought on the broad and complex process of the "rehabilitation" of Zhang's literary reputation first in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Western sinology and later in the Mainland.

In the text, I examine how Zhang Ailing substantiated the hybridity by surpassing the boundaries between different factors and dimensions of arts, cultures and nations, and how this specificity has worked implicitly in contemporary cultural waves including the Zhang Ailing "fever" in the Mainland and the Shanghai nostalgia in Hong Kong. The notion of boundaries, in fact, has far-ranging definitions and applications in different fields. Julie Thompson Klein defines it as "the rhetoric of boundaries [is] signified by spatial metaphors of turf, territory, and domain. Metaphors of place call attention to the ways categories and classifications stake out differences."[8] Here, by using this notion to label the characteristics of Zhang Ailing's writing with as having the quality of boundary crossing, I do not mean Zhang's writing is a kind of interdisciplinary activity, in the sense that the boundary realizes disciplinary formations and defines knowledge units. In my research, the different factors and dimensions I am referring to are those with distinct ethical, cultural, social and historical characteristics. By crossing the boundaries between them, Zhang Ailing actually formulates a hybridity in her writing and in turn, this specific quality is one significant factor that enables her writing to surpass the temporal-spatial "boundaries" to cause a striking and long-lasting Zhang Ailing "fever" after the complete silence of several decades.

Before I generally introduce the main structure of this thesis, I would like to discuss the cultural phenomenon of Zhang Ailing "fever" mainly in the Mainland a little further to see how the hybridity in Zhang Ailing's writing works in contemporary China. Together with the detailed analyses on Hong Kong films adapted from her writing in chapter 2, I try to provide a clearer, more comprehensive idea of how to situate this writer as a contemporary literary and cultural phenomenon.

The cultural phenomenon of Zhang Ailing "fever," which appeared at the end of twentieth century and has continued up to now, deserves more examination since it makes Zhang Ailing, a writer who only has published a few works and merely wrote within a couple of years, quite unique in modern literature: none of her contemporaries ever attracted so much attention in both academia and popular culture after scores of years in a completely different historical and cultural context. During the period of 1919-1949, numerous great writers have inscribed their names in modern Chinese literature. Out of them, Zhang Ailing manifests an alternative approach to modernity, history and humanity with her specificity of hybridity in both writing style and literary thoughts, crossing the fixed boundaries of many dimensions in arts, aesthetics and cultures. For some people her narrative may seem to display a relatively narrow point of view, compared to the broader literary visions emphasizing revolution and politics in the critical-realist school. However, she has exploited a profound, valuable style to explore human subjectivity and humanity from the perspective of the individual, which was almost overshadowed by the prevalent collectivist subjectivity in her time.

Since the 1980s, due to the significant changes of the Communist government's policies and the gradual opening of China to the world, new trends of thought have come into being and people's thinking manners have been deeply influenced and transformed. Modern and contemporary Western thought were again introduced into China stimulating the transformation of the society and of people, to a certain extent repeating what had happened around May Fourth. Of course, despite the coincidence, this time the imported Western thought is not used to save the nation in crisis but, to conduct a serious self-examination of the past historical process. People have begun to make efforts in rethinking the history of the twentieth century, especially the time since the Liberation, with a consciousness of self-examination.

Similar phenomena have also appeared in the literary realm. The openness offered opportunities to Mainland intellectuals and scholars to access a much broader range of readings. On the one hand, Zhang Ailing's works were found in sealed-up piles and her unique literary style, which offered a completely "new" taste and charm, immediately attracted the spiritually thirsty readers of the time. On the other hand, some scholars accessed English versions or versions published in Hong Kong of Hsia's *History* even though it had not been published in the Mainland at the time (only in 2005 was the first simplified Chinese version published in the Mainland, with some abridgement). Aside from Hsia's obvious anti-Communist political inclination, his arguments offered a new perspective for the scholars to rethink modern Chinese literary history, and to great extent it was precisely Hsia's work that stimulated the development of the trend "rewriting literary history" in the 1990s. At the same time,

Hsia's strikingly high commendation of Zhang Ailing greatly spurred scholars' curiosity about this ignored writer to carry on researches on her.

Actually before the opening, Zhang Ailing was not the only writer whose works had been banned for quite a long time. In the 1980s-1990s, many other writers' works also reemerged in the process of rethinking the literary history, including those of Qian Zhongshu (1910-1998), Fei Ming (1901-1967) and Lu Ling (1923-1994). Although some of them also entered the realm of popular culture as a topic of interest, such as Qian Zhongshu (his novel *Weicheng* [The Besieged City] was adapted into a teleplay in 1997, obtaining plenty of positive comments and great interest in the writer and the novel itself), none of these writers could attract as much attention as Zhang Ailing from academia, media and reading public, creating the Zhang Ailing "fever" and making the writer a literary star with a lot of fans. Why have Zhang Ailing's writings become so popular recently?

First of all, Zhang Ailing is extremely adept at telling stories. Numerous readers are first attracted by her writing precisely because of the interesting stories about common men and women. To some degree, to be a good storyteller is Zhang Ailing's purpose. In her opinion, "[i]n writing fiction, one ought to have a story. It is better to let that story speak for itself than fabricating a plot in order to fit a certain theme. Readers often pay very little heed to the original themes of the great works that have come down to us through the ages, because times have changed, and those concerns on longer have the power to engage us."[9] Here the point is that the "themes" Zhang Ailing is talking about are those grand ones bearing on the historical or social

responsibilities in the past. When the social and historical context has changed, the "validity" of the themes has expired. Readers in a different age can hardly find resonance in them. "Yet readers of these works may at any time extract new revelations from the stories themselves, and it is only thus that the eternal life of any given work is assured." Here actually Zhang Ailing herself has offered some implication of the answer to the question above.

During the process of social and ideological transformation, light has gradually been cast upon individuals with the weakening of the dominant collective subjectivity. Concern in common people's life has gradually become a topic, replacing the grand themes and interesting more and more writers. The legendary yet ordinary stories of common people written by Zhang Ailing with the delicate anatomies of the humanity complexity undoubtedly could attract a lot of readers. At the same time her position of dissociation from politics (*The Rice-spout Song* and *Naked Earth* are exceptional but we can't ignore the fact that they were commissioned and the content were pre-decided[10]) is another welcome feature since the readers had grown tired of the previous monotone themes tightly linked with politics. Casting off the shackles of hegemonic political or ideological discourse, readers could receive a vivid reflection of the unveiled reality of humanity as shown by Zhang Ailing, finding what she describes and remarks as revelatory of the genuine condition of human life experience and humanity, even though her stories take place in the particular time-space which differs from today, and through the figures have different ethical, social or cultural backgrounds from that of today.

One significant feature interwoven with Zhang Ailing's aesthetics of desolation is her particular historical consciousness. In "*Chuanqi* zaiban xu" [On the Second Edition of *Romances*] she writes, "[t]here will come a day when our civilization, whether sublime or frivolous, will be a thing of the past."[11] After about fifty years, when people are facing the upcoming end of the century, they spontaneously react in their own ways with different understandings about historical progress, and look back on the whole century from various perspectives. Zhang Ailing's opinion of human history and civilization may have its limitations, but the peculiar combination of the calm, rational insights with the distinct preference to the enjoyments of quotidian embodied in her writing, corresponds on the one hand to a particular mood at the end of century, and on the other also suggests a kind of philosophical contemplation of the relationship between human and history/time.

The last feature I want to address here is the prevalent nostalgia for the old Shanghai of the 1930s-1940s. Xudong Zhang regards writings of Zhang Ailing and Wang Anyi (1954-)[12] as modernistic allegories about the history/present of the particular city within the local cultural context.[13] As "a cultural fashion and mode of historical imagination,"[14] Shanghai nostalgia is not only a way in which people can realize a conversation with the particular history and satisfy their imaginative aspiration for past prosperity, but also a means by which people can obtain certain historical experiences to situate the self in the transformation of the present and even the future. Zhang Ailing's writing richly embodies the cosmopolitanism of Shanghai formed as a hybrid cultural product in the colonial context of that time. Therefore

when the wave of Shanghai nostalgia was rising, Zhang Ailing certainly came into view as a representative literary and cultural symbol, through which people can experience (or actually imagine) the abundant, multivocal details of the time. Therefore in the second chapter, Shanghai nostalgia becomes a keyword to examine the relationship between Zhang Ailing's writing and contemporary Hong Kong films.

In Chapter 1, first I offer a general examination of the social and historical background in which Zhang Ailing's writings were composed, and how the specific hybridity could be shaped in this particular background. In the second section focusing on Zhang Ailing herself, I investigate Zhang's specific life and education experience to discover why and how her insight of hybridity came into being. The following two sections separately consider three significant issues related to the hybrid quality: 1) application of literary techniques integrating Western and traditional Chinese literary features in Zhang's writing; 2) Zhang's peculiar aesthetic system of "desolation" and her philosophical insight on human life, humanity and the relationship between human beings and the world they are living in.

In the second chapter, I discuss the way how Zhang Ailing defines the generic notion "ordinary/common people" from her distinctive perspective. Then I try to rethink Zhang Ailing's unique position in modern Chinese literary history by figuring out, in relation to the distinctive hybridity displayed in her writing, her writing's negotiation with the two leading literary currents/genres in modern Chinese literature, namely realism and modernism.

In Chapter 3, I extend my vision to the various interpretations of Zhang's writing in contemporary Hong Kong film through three film adaptations, connecting the film adaptations with the cultural wave of Shanghai nostalgia there in the 1990s. To bring forth my analysis of this issue, in the first section I examine the difficulties that filmmakers might encounter when they try to adapt Zhang Ailing's writings. After that, I examine the peculiar, ambiguous relationship between the two metropolises, Shanghai and Hong Kong, from the perspective of history, social structure and regional culture. I then select three Hong Kong movies that are adapted from Zhang's novels, *Qingcheng zhilian* [*Love in a Fallen City*] (1984), *Bansheng yuan* [*Eighteen Springs*] (1997) and *Hong meigui bai meigui* [*Red Rose White Rose*] (1994). By discussing them one by one, I attempt to see how the two directors Ann Hui and Stanley Kwan interpret and retell Zhang's story in their own way, attaching themselves to the Old Shanghai nostalgia and performing dynamic dialogue with 1940s Zhang Ailing; more significantly, I want to see why Zhang Ailing's literary works could interest them as a symbolic approach to the (imagined or ever-existing) old Shanghai/past. In the epilogue of the chapter, I further analyze the nostalgia theme in 1990s Hong Kong film.

Literature Review

Not only does Zhang Ailing's writing have special characteristics, but the academic research focused on her is also somewhat exceptional. As previously mentioned, Hsia Chih-tsing admired Zhang Ailing so much that he placed her into a fairly high position in Chinese literary history in his 1961 *History*. Since then, Zhang

Ailing's name has been known to and noticed by Western academia. However, during the same period, due to the ideological restrictions in Mainland China from 1949 to the 1980s, Zhang Ailing's special life experience[15] and the anti-communist theme of the two novels written in Hong Kong resulted in an unreasonable phenomenon—her name was completely skipped over in the publications of modern Chinese literary history and her works were entirely ignored in Chinese academia.[16] For Zhang Ailing herself, completely differing from her attitude to her childhood life experience of recalling it many times, she had kept silent about her personal life in Shanghai during the war time, especially the marriage with Hu Lancheng. She never explained anything or showed any care of how people considered her. This definitely makes this writer more mysterious to most of us.

In Hsia's *History*, there is a whole chapter about Zhang Ailing, bringing forth Hsia's original argument about the ignored talented writer. Since leaving the Mainland in the 1950s, this was the first time for Zhang Ailing to obtain the attention and recognition from academia again. In the contemporary research focused on Zhang Ailing, Hsia undoubtedly is an inaugurator, and his remarks on Zhang Ailing had a far-reaching influence in this field.[17] At the same time we have to notice that Hsia's interest in Zhang Ailing has a different nature from those of later scholars—his interest is more likely colored by certain political orientation. This could be detected especially in his overemphatic praise of the two novels with an anti-communist theme—*The Rice-sprout Song* and *Naked Earth*—as classics in all of Chinese fiction history. Despite this possible ideological motive, however, Hsia's judgment on Zhang

Ailing's extraordinary literary talent does have authenticity and to a great extent has inspired numerous later research on Zhang.

The first Chinese version of Hsia's *History* was published in Hong Kong in 1979. This publication made it possible for scholars in the Mainland to access Hsia's research on Zhang Ailing and indirectly unraveled the repressed memory of Zhang Ailing in the Mainland. Ke Ling published an article, "Yao ji Zhang Ailing" [Words to Zhang Ailing from a Remote Distance] in 1985, recalling his communication with Zhang Ailing in 1940s Shanghai. In the same year, two leading journals in the field of modern literature, *Shouhuo* [*Harvest*], and *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu congkan* [*Series of Modern Chinese Literature Research*], respectively published Zhang's novels, *Qingcheng zhilian* and *Guihua zheng: Axiao bei qiu* [*Indian Summer: Axiao's Autumnal Lament*], becoming the prelude to the reemergence of Zhang Ailing's writings in the Mainland.

In Zhang Ailing's writing, the application of literary techniques integrating Western and traditional Chinese literary elements is a distinct characteristic and many critics and scholars have remarked on it. In 1944, the famous translator and scholar Fu Lei, using the pen name Xunyu, published the first systematic review of Zhang Ailing's writing.[18] In this article, Fu Lei commended Zhang Ailing's literary techniques through the case study of *Jinsuo ji* [*The Golden Cangue*], which he thinks is "one of the most wonderful harvests in our literary field." He notes that, "the integration of classical and modern literature and the interweaving of classical and modern images are perfect in this short story." He also indicates that the

psychoanalysis in this story is very vivid and profound, although he does not further link Zhang Ailing to Freud. However, when he turns to Zhang's other stories such as *Love in a Fallen City* and *Lianhuan tao* [*Interlinking Knots*], he rigorously and somewhat arbitrarily criticized Zhang's overuse of words borrowed from classical novels, calling them "disgustingly vulgar and hackneyed." Despite holding an opposite aesthetic standpoint to Zhang Ailing's and being affected by it in his analysis,[19] Fu Lei's analysis is fairly original and valuable because he uncovers many representative characteristics of Zhang's writing and thus builds a foundation upon which numerous critics carry on research on Zhang Ailing in later times.

From a relatively objective perspective, Shui Jing, a Taiwan critic deeply fascinated by Zhang Ailing's writing, extends and deepens Fu Lei's remark on Zhang's integration of Western and traditional Chinese literary characteristics. He says, "Judged from the form, Zhang Ailing's novels seem to continue the tradition of classical novels (*zhanghui xiaoshuo*). In fact her writing is seemingly in harmony but actually at variance to the tradition. The signification and techniques of her writing is much closer to Western literature."[20]

As I mentioned earlier, Hsia Chih-tsing's careful analysis of Zhang Ailing in his *History* has had a very significant effect on the Zhang Ailing scholarship, hence he is regarded as the founder of this research field. He directly points out that "she is deeply indebted to Freud and Western novelists for the psychological sophistication and metaphorical enrichment of her stories"[21] and thus more deeply and systematically reveals the clear relationship between Zhang Ailing's writing and Freudianism and

Western literature.

In addition to the analysis of the integration of literary techniques in Zhang Ailing's writing, Hsia's other significant contribution to Zhang Ailing research is to indicate that Zhang "tries to capture what the Chinese present crudely and un-self-consciously: the sense of desolation inherent in all human hunger and frustration. 'Desolate' is her favorite word." He classifies Zhang as a profound pessimist while at the same time a cheerful satirist and a good-natured critic of urban manners.

When Leo Ou-fan Lee deals with Zhang Ailing's preface to the second edition of *Romances*, he points out that Zhang Ailing's attitude toward life is "a philosophy of desolation,"[22] which is manifested or implied all along in her works, so as to shift the argument from simple literary characteristic to the level of Zhang Ailing's personal philosophy on human life.

In her perceptive analysis of Zhang Ailing's fiction, Rey Chow explores the subtle relationship between Zhang's desolation and modernity. She remarks that in Zhang's writing there is a presumed "whole." "It is this sense of wholeness—as that which is itself cut off, incomplete, and desolate, but which is at the same time sensuously local and immediate—rather than the wholeness of idealist notions like 'Man,' 'Self,' or 'China' that characterizes Zhang's approach to modernity."[23]

Many critics have also commented on gender subjectivity and a feminist concern in Zhang's writing. Although this issue is not explored in my thesis, it is significant enough in the scholarship of Zhang Ailing to be mentioned here. Lim Chin Chow

analyzes the castration parody and male "castration" in Zhang Ailing's writing and points out that this is precisely her anti-patriarchal strategy in her feminist narrative.[24] The Hong Kong scholar, Lin Xingqian, contributes a lot to the research on this issue. He utilizes the theory of Western feminism to interpret the "female subculture" presented in Zhang's fiction. He elaborates the inner anxiety and ugly, monstrous body of the females delineated by Zhang and argues that, in this manner Zhang's purpose is to inquire about the actual situation of female subjectivity and self in patriarchal society.[25]

Whereas the relevant research on these issues has been fairly abundant, the other ones I examine in Chapter 1, such as Zhang Ailing's specific definition of "common people" and her ambiguous relationship with realism and modernism have not been well explored in academia yet. In his book *Chinese Modern: the Heroic and the Quotidian*, Xiaobing Tang utilizes Zhang Ailing's notions "the heroic" and "the quotidian" to conduct several case studies, such as Luxun's writing in modern Chinese literature. However, he merely touches on Zhang Ailing and her notions in the introduction but has not brought her writing into his research. As I mentioned earlier, Edward Gunn has placed Zhang Ailing in the anti-Romantic camp, opposing her writing to the mainstream May Fourth literature. Yet scholars have realized that it is somewhat hard to classify Zhang Ailing's writing with an "ism" because of her peculiar style. Therefore I try to avoid talking merely of her uniqueness, but rather examine what the specificity of her writing and literary thinking is and how to locate Zhang in the whole framework of modern Chinese literature.

Moreover, compared to the thriving research on Zhang Ailing's fiction, few critics cast light on Zhang Ailing's film scripts and the relationship between her writing and film art. In his review, Fu Lei mentions that Zhang utilized film techniques to realize the transition of time in *The Golden Cangue*. After him, many other critics and scholars use the same example when they illustrate one of Zhang Ailing's writing skills, namely borrowing techniques from film art. Most critics only echo Fu Lei's argument without further exploration. Leo Lee develops the point to a deeper scale. In his paper, "Buliao qing: Zhang Ailing he Dianying" [Endless Love: Eileen Chang and Movies] for the International Conference on Zhang Ailing,[26] he discusses at length Zhang's technical affinity with cinema through the case study on *Love in a Fallen City*. Regarding Zhang Ailing's film scripts, the Taiwanese scholar, Zhou Fenling, addresses Zhang's film script compositions when exploring the relationship between Zhang Ailing and film art. She first generalizes Zhang Ailing's opinion of film art presented in her film reviews and tries to examine how Zhang Ailing composed the film scripts from a feminist perspective.[27] In Chapter 1, I also attempt to explore the two issues some more to offer a clearer and more detailed understanding of Zhang Ailing's writing.

In the 1990s, research on Zhang Ailing and publications of her works in the Mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan mushroomed. Zhang Ailing is probably the one single writer who can and has captured the attention of both academic and non-academic readers at the same time in contemporary China. She has always been so unique—she was always on the margins of her age—that Leo Lee comments that

"the 'mystery' of her last years only adds more glamour to her legend."[28] Indeed, Zhang Ailing's whole life and her career as a writer could definitely be regarded as a "legend." With such a background, a study on the contemporary perception and interpretation of Zhang Ailing's works becomes necessary. Part of this necessity is the question of how to remark on and evaluate the film adaptations of Zhang Ailing's novels. Leo Lee has addressed the two films, *Red Rose White Rose* and *Love in a Fallen City*, but his examination is fairly short and simple and mainly focused on the limitation of the adaptations.

There are numerous studies on film adaptation theory. Robert Stam carries out a comprehensive study on the theory and practice of film adaptation, especially on the issue of the rooted prejudice of "infidelity" as a representative judgment of filmic adaptation of novels. In Stam's view, because of the automatic differences and specificities of the two arts, "fidelity" is something impossible in filmic adaptation.[29]

The issue of Shanghai nostalgia and the local culture in 1990s Hong Kong is also significant and there are many works devoted to it. Ackbar Abbas generalizes Hong Kong culture as a culture of a "colonial place disappearance," and in this "city of transients," Hong Kong people have been trying to maintain their own culture through negotiation and cultural strategies.[30] And in his essay, "Cosmopolitan De-scriptions: Shanghai and Hong Kong," Abbas further juxtaposes the two metropolises to examine the cosmopolitanism of each, arguing that in 1930s Shanghai, cosmopolitanism was stimulated by a space of multivalence, while for 1990s Hong Kong, cosmopolitanism is the embodiment of the culture of a space of disappearance.[31]

With the illustration of the available studies, Chapter 2 of my thesis is an effort to make a comprehensive study of the film adaptation of Zhang Ailing's novels, from the perspective that the hybrid, multivocal connotations of Zhang Ailing's writing have offered various possibilities for the directors to develop their respective ideas through Zhang Ailing's original stories. Furthermore, I contextualize the film adaptations in the cultural phenomenon of Shanghai nostalgia and Hong Kong culture as well.

I must confess that I owe a lot to the available research on Zhang Ailing in the process of writing this thesis. My sincere attempt is to contribute a little, through my efforts, to fill in some gaps in this field.

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[1] Edward M. Gunn, *Unwelcome Muse: Chinese Literature in Shanghai and Peking 1937-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), Chapter 1: Literature and Political Initiatives.

[2] Ke Ling, "Yao ji Zhang Ailing," [Addressing Zhang Ailing from Far Away] in *Mo mo ren* (Beijing: Shenghuo, dushu, xinzhi sanlian shudian, 1991).

[3] This brief biographical account is based on two valuable publications, Yu Qing, *Zhang Ailing zhuan* [Biography of Zhang Ailing] (Taibei: Shijie shuju, 1993); and Feng Zuyi, *Bainian jiazu Zhang Ailing* [Zhang Ailing: A Family of a Century] (Taibei: Lixu wenhua, 1988).

[4] The Mandarin Duck and Butterfly school is a literary school that appeared in 1906 in Shanghai, and its main claim is to write popular novels without any political or other grand issues involved. The representative writers of this school are Xu Zhenya (1889-1937), Li Hanqiu (1874-1923), Bao Tianxiao (1876-1973), Zhou Shoujuan (1894-1968), most of whom were from Jiangsu province and the Shanghai area. One typical work of this school is Xu Zhenya's *Yu li hun*, which was published in 1912.

[5] Hsia Chih-tsing, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

[6] See Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994); "Frontlines/Borderposts," in *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question*, ed. Angelika Bammer, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); "Cultures in Between," in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, eds. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, (London: Sage Publications, 1996).

[7] Edward M. Gunn, *Unwelcome Muse: Chinese Literature in Shanghai and Peking 1937-1945*, 57, 198-231.

[8] Julie Thompson Klein, *Crossing Boundaries: Knowledge, Disciplinarities, and Interdisciplinarities* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 1.

[9] Zhang Ailing, "Ziji de wenzhang," [Writing of One's Own] in *Liuyan* [Gossips], (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1987). English translation by Andrew F. Jones, *Written on Water* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 22.

[10] Actually until now these two novels are remaining somewhat mysterious to readers even to the academia. Why Zhang Ailing suddenly agreed to write this kind of novel with such a distinct political inclination? It seems inexplicable in her whole literary career. Despite her urgent economic needs of that time, what was her purpose of writing in this way? Unfortunately due to the limitation of current materials and resources, I cannot explore this issue further more. But this might be an interesting topic for future research in Zhang Ailing scholarship. I believe that to clarify this "mystery" will help us to understand this unique writer more comprehensively.

[11] Zhang Ailing, "Chuanqi zaiban xu," [On the Second Edition of *Romances*] in *Written on Water,* 202.

[12] She is a contemporary Shanghai writer who has composed several notable novels with the cultural background of Shanghai. The representative one is *Chang hen ge* [Tales of Sorrow].

[13] Zhang Xudong, "Xiandai xing de yuyan: Wang Anyi yu Shanghai huaijiu," [Modernistic Allegories: Wang Anyi and Shanghai Nostalgia] *Zhongguo xueshu* 3 (2000).

[14] Zhang Xudong, "Shanghai Nostalgia: Postrevolutionary Allegories in Wang Anyi's Literary Production in the 1990s," *Positions: East Asia Culture Critique* 8 no.2 (2000): 353.

[15] By saying this, I refer to her non-explicit stance toward the political issues of the time when she was in Shanghai and her first marriage with Hu Lancheng during the short period of 1944-1946, who was an important official in the puppet government headed by Wang Jingwei and also had close relationships with Japanese officials in the government and army. Although they broke up very soon, this marriage got Zhang Ailing into some serious suspicions about her political stance. Unfortunately she did not explain anything, because of her personality, and furthermore, after she arrived at Hong Kong, she wrote the two novels with the anti-communist theme.

[16] If we refer to the main publications of modern Chinese literary history, such as Wang Yao's *Zhongguo xin wenxue shigao* [New Chinese Literary History] (1953), Ding Yi's *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue shilü* [A Brief History of Modern Chinese Literature] (1955), Liu Shousong's *Zhongguo xin wenxue shi chugao* [First Draft of New Chinese Literary History] (1956), and Tang Tao's *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue shi* [Modern Chinese Literary History] (1979), we cannot find any word mentioning Zhang Ailing or anything related with her.

[17] In his presentation at the international conference on the topic "Zhang Ailing and Modern Chinese Literature" held in Hong Kong in 2000, Zheng Shuseng said that without Hsia, there would not be academic research on Zhang Ailing. In his book *Xiangxiang Zhang Ailing : Guanyu Zhang Ailing de yuedu yanjiu* [Imagine Zhang Ailing: Research on the Reception of Zhang Ailing's Writing] (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 2004), Liu Fengjie remarks that current research on Zhang Ailing has not broken the frame originally constructed by Hsia in the perspective of the macrostructure. In fact, Hsia's *History* was rigorously criticized by many scholars in the Mainland around 1983 because of his distinctly opposite ideological and political inclination. However, it was precisely Hsia's argument that got most scholars in the Mainland to approach Zhang's work and numerous scholars have been influenced by Hsia's arguments.

[18] Fu Lei, "Lun Zhang Ailing de xiaoshuo," [Review on Zhang Ailing's Fiction] *Wanxiang* 5 (1944). Before this article published, a female writers' symposium was held by *Xin zhongguo Bao* on 1944.3.16 and some critics of the times commented on Zhang's writing with a few words. Although Hu Lancheng published his "Ping Zhang Ailing" [Commenting on Zhang Ailing] a little earlier in the same year, his comments were much more like perceptive impressions than a proper literary review.

[19] Soon after Fu Lei published this review, Zhang Ailing published her essay "Ziji de wenzhang" [Writing of One's Own] to disprove most of his arguments, clarifying her own aesthetic standpoint and literary theory. Fu Lei evidently utilized the aesthetic theory with the origin of classical realism, heroism and tragedies to evaluate Zhang Ailing's writing, which definitely belongs to a completely different aesthetic system. Therefore Liu Fengjie defines Fu Lei's review as a representative misinterpretation in his book *Xiangxiang Zhang Ailing*.

[20] Shui Jing, *Zhang Ailing de xiaoshuo yishu* [Art of Zhang Ailing's fiction] (Taibei: Dadi, 1973).

[21] Hsia Chih-tsing, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* (second edition, 1971), 397.

[22] Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

[23] Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading between West and East* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 114.

[24] Lim Chin Chow, "Castration Parody and Male 'Castration': Eileen Chang's Female Writing and Her Anti-Patriarchal Strategy," in *Critical Studies: Feminism/ Femininity in Chinese Literature*, eds. Peng-hsiang Chen and Whitney Crothers Dilley, (New York: Rodopi, 2002), 42-44.

[25] Lin Xingqian, *Huangye zhong de nüti: Zhang Ailing nüxing zhuyi piping* [The Female in the Wild Zone: Feminist Criticism on Zhang Ailing] (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2003), 42-91.

[26] The conference was held in Taibei on May 25-27, 1996.
[27] Zhou Fenling, "Zhang Ailing yu dianying," [Zhang Ailing and Film Art] in *Yanyi: Zhang Ailing yu Zhongguo wenxue* [Gorgeous Singularity: Zhang Ailing and Modern Chinese Literature] (Beijing: Zhongguo huaqiao chubanshe, 2003).
[28] Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China,* 267.
[29] Robert Stam, "Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation," in *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005), 1-52.
[30] Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 1-15.
[31] Ackbar Abbas, "Cosmopolitan De-scriptions: Shanghai and Hong Kong," *Public Culture* 12 no. 3 (2000): 769-786.

Chapter 1

Zhang Ailing: A Distinctive Hybridity in Modern Chinese Literature

When Zhang Ailing became renowned for her writing within a short time of the publication of her first collection of short stories, *Romances* (*Chuanqi*), in 1940s Shanghai, it was evident that the name of this female talent, with her distinct style and elegance, would be inscribed in modern Chinese literary history. Of all the remarkable aspects of her literature, one of the most significant points is the specific hybrid quality of her writing. It successfully breaks through the restrictions on literature imposed by social, political and cultural issues of the nation at that time and integrates the themes of humanity and human life with exquisite sensitivity. Compared to her contemporaries, most of who were focusing on political, economic, ideological and cultural issues due to the turbulence and confusion of early twentieth-century China, Zhang Ailing impresses her audience with her unique hybrid literary thoughts and profound insight embodied in her writing.

In this chapter, I want to analyze the hybrid quality of Zhang Ailing's writing by examining the broader historical and cultural context in China during the first half of the twentieth century and the particular personal background of her writing and her literary texts, including fictions and essays. My strategy is to contextualize, identify and analyze Zhang's literary techniques, literary theory and aesthetic system manifesting her particular insight on literature, humanity, historical process, human civilization and the discursive relationship between people and the world they are living in. By doing so, I want to examine the specificities of Zhang Ailing in order to rethink her appropriate position in modern Chinese literature. I would like to argue that, she is not completely

removed from either of the main literary currents of the time in China, although many people were of that opinion because of a misreading of her apparently detached stance. Instead, she has constructed a hybrid characteristic in her own style by negotiating her relation to literary currents in discursive ways, and thus the hybridity of her writing is distinguished from those of her contemporaries.

First, I offer a general examination of the social and historical background in which Zhang Ailing's writings were composed, and how a specific hybridity could be shaped against this particular background. In the second section, focused on Zhang Ailing herself, I investigate Zhang's life and educational background to study why and how her hybrid insight came into being. The following sections separately consider two significant issues related to the hybrid quality: 1) application of literary techniques integrating Western and traditional Chinese literary features in Zhang's writing; 2) Zhang's peculiar aesthetic system of "desolation" and her profound insight on human life, humanity and the relationship between human beings and the world they are living in.

Historical, Social and Cultural Context

As I mentioned in the introduction, the peak of Zhang Ailing's literary career was a brief period in the 1940s, which was a very turbulent period in modern Chinese history. Nevertheless, if one wants to accurately analyze the specific hybrid quality of Zhang Ailing's writing, the analysis cannot only be limited to the 1940s. The broader historical, social and cultural context of modern Chinese history should necessarily be brought into view, since the 1940s was a phase of great change, and at the same time, literature has an extremely close relationship with the factors constituting a particular context, even though I need not review all of modern Chinese history and the development of modern Chinese literature in exhaustive detail.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, sensible Chinese intellectuals have attempted consciously to import Western ideas and methods in technical and political fields as a way to strengthen the powerless reign of Qing government. From the New Literature Movement of May Fourth in 1919 onwards, open-minded Chinese intellectuals have set their sights even further, on a much broader variety of Western discourses concerning political, literary and cultural theories, regarding them as vital to China's modernization. At the same time, though many intellectuals harshly criticized and resisted traditional Chinese culture with a negative opinion on the formation of National Character (*guominxing*), we cannot ignore the reality that the deep influences of traditional culture still worked potently.

When Homi Bhabha addresses the conditions of colonial discourse, he sees the effect of colonial power as "the *production* of hybridization rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native traditions."[1] Although, here he analyzes hybridity in the specific historical and geographical context of British colonial India, his statement is still a reference point for rethinking the Chinese context in early twentieth century. In the semi-colonial society of the time, the urgent national crisis caused by Western military invasions compelled intellectuals to seek an intense vitality in the "inanimate" Chinese nationality so that the whole nation could be awakened. Therefore in the Chinese context, in contrast to colonial India with its forced passiveness, intellectuals voluntarily bestowed authority on imported Western discourses. However, when different cultures encounter one another, whether voluntarily or forcedly, or whether one is in a superior position, hybridity or hybridities are produced, as Homi Bhabha suggests. The process is not uni-directional repression but rather a complex one. Thus within the complex trans-cultural context, hybrid insights and thoughts were

gradually being cultivated and made functional as many Chinese intellectuals carried out artistic creation, social criticism and academic research, especially in the 1940s. During the war, the trans-cultural characteristic was distinctly exploited, and it was stimulated and embodied basically in two aspects: one, that the national war obliged intellectuals to be concerned with the tribulations of human suffering in wars (generally this kind of concern can easily go beyond national/racial boundaries to humanity as a whole); and two, that the extraordinary diversity of literary theories and genres is due to the temporary political-geographical partition.

In this broad context, Zhang Ailing is one writer who self-consciously drew her intellectual nourishment from both Western and traditional cultures and thus constructed the distinctive hybrid specificities of writing with her talent and the gradual accumulation of skills and thoughts. Certainly the local milieu of the metropolis of Shanghai, where she was living and writing, had a considerable influence on the formation of the hybridity of Zhang Ailing's writing and can be viewed as another, smaller context as well. I prefer, however, to address that particular context in the next section, together with an examination of her personal life experience.

The hybridity of Zhang Ailing's writing can be placed within a broad historical and cultural context of the time, although this does not guarantee her position in mainstream literature. In fact, due to her distinctive literary opinions, her writing is somewhat marginal to a certain degree from the perspective of official Chinese literary history. In the introduction I have briefly addressed Zhang Ailing's detachment from the mainstream. Here I would like to expand on this issue a little bit more. In the twentieth century, China experienced an intense, profound transformation of political and ideological systems, and this definitely was the central theme of the historical progress of

the century. The restriction and marked influence of this theme on literature cannot be ignored. The dominant "ism" in literature, running through the whole century, was leftist critical realism, which includes various forms and definitions in different historical phases and the origin of which can be traced back to the May Fourth Movement. The essential characteristic of this realist literature is to consciously take on social, historical and political responsibilities, functioning as a tool of enlightenment and propaganda. Due to its particular historical and social background, this literary genre inevitably became the mainstream genre of modern Chinese literature, even though there was a considerable diversity of literary genres and theories throughout modern Chinese history. The representative writers of this mainstream literature include Lu Xun (1881-1936), Mao Dun (1896-1981), and Ba Jin (1904-2005), among others.

Narrowing our focus to the 1940s, in both the areas controlled by KMT and the liberated areas controlled by CCP, critical-realist writing with "*jiuwang*" (saving the nation from extinction) and revolutionary themes definitely occupied the dominant position in literature. Even in the areas occupied by the Japanese such as the Northeast, (namely the three provinces Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning), literary writing was deeply colored with a distinct national consciousness of awakening and standing up against the foreign invasion.

Zhang Ailing, however, had little interest in politics but a distinct perspective on human life and human history. She resisted being aligned with mainstream literature from the beginning of her literary career. Her distinct literary style definitely has to be categorized as other than that of mainstream literature. This specificity can also be contextualized in the particular setting of Shanghai, which I will examine later. However, this detachment does not mean that Zhang Ailing insulated herself from literary currents as a "hermit."

Holding a different perspective from that of mainstream writers, Zhang Ailing has indeed negotiated the currents so as to construct her distinctive hybridity. I will elaborate on this issue at the end of the chapter.

Personal Background and Accumulation of Hybridity

In addition to external influences from the broader historical, social and cultural contexts, Zhang Ailing's own life and educational experiences also offered her an inherent basis to construct the distinctive hybridity in her writing. Referring to several biographies of Zhang Ailing,[2] we can discover that she had a unique family lineage. Her great-grandfather was Li Hongzhang (1823-1901) and grandfather was Zhang Peilun (1848-1903), both very famous officials in late Qing Dynasty. Although when Zhang Ailing was born, the family's fortune and prestige had declined, her "class origins" from such an important aristocratic family has a significant influence on her development, both in life and writing. From the recollection in her essays such as "Siyu" ["Whispers"][3], during Zhang Ailing's childhood, her family still had the typical characteristics of the upper-class big families: material affluence and luxury, strict and complicated proprieties, and factitious, distant interpersonal relationship, and so forth. This kind of life provided Zhang Ailing with a special life experience, which gave birth to her dual yet opposite understandings of human life. On the one hand, she enjoyed distinct material satisfaction, thus she could more easily understand the pleasures of trivial details in daily life. This allowed the preference for the taste of the everyday urban citizen in her life philosophy to be forged. On the other hand, the decline of her big family and the decadent, repressed atmosphere within, made Zhang Ailing recognize human life as uncertain and transient; the unmerciful way her father and stepmother treated her[4] directly drove her to question familial ethic and humanity. These two divided, contradictory sides of Zhang Ailing's

thinking—the affirmation of the minute details in life, in the present and in the concrete living process versus the doubt/negation of the universal connotation of human life—have structured a tension which infused special vigor and significance into her writing.

Hsia Chih-tsing describes Zhang's ambiguous attitude to her own childhood environment as "mingled fascination and horror."[5] This remark reveals how Zhang Ailing has forged an identity as a writer in a complex dialogue with her family background. To a certain extent, she did not feel comfortable identifying with her aristocratic origins. In her recollection, she looked down on everything in her father's old-fashioned house as a "languorous, ashen, dust-laden living," and divided the world "into two halves of bright and dark, good and evil... [w]hatever belonged to my father's side was bad."[6] Her writing offered her place to explore the trauma of the inevitable decline of big families like hers, from her own perspective, like in *Jinsuo ji* [The Golden Cangue] and *Qingcheng zhilian* [Love in a Fallen City]. At the same time, her experience and memory of living in a big family throughout her childhood made her sometimes nostalgic for such a symbol of home. This complicated emotion was one reason why she always criticized the class, to which her father belonged to and which was doomed to extinction, with deep sympathy and mercy—this might be what she called "mercy because of understanding."

Moreover, Zhang Ailing had distinctly different parents who influenced her in very different and decisive ways in her upbringing. Her father Zhang Tingzhong (1896-1957) was a an old-fashioned person who clung to traditional culture and did not change with times. From her stern and old-fashioned father Zhang received traditional training in classical Chinese poetry and prose. When Zhang Ailing was very young, she had already been sent to a traditional, old-fashioned private school to learn classical Confucian works such as *Shijing* [The Book of Songs] and the classical poetry of Tang (618-907) and Song

(960-1279) dynasties as well. She also read a lot of classical and popular fiction from her family's collection with great interest. Immersed in and edified by traditional culture, Zhang Ailing acquired abundant and profound knowledge, effectively laying the ground for her later literary achievements. In complete contradiction to her father, Zhang Ailing's mother Huang Suying (1896-1958) was a woman with experience studying abroad and held distinctly modern view. It was she who insisted on sending Zhang Ailing to public schools in order to receive a modern education. Under her supervision and urging, Zhang began to learn English, Western-style painting and the piano, thereby accessing modern Western culture. Zhang Ailing studied at St. Mary's Hall Girls' School between 1931 and 1937 in Shanghai, and then enrolled in the English Department at the University of Hong Kong from 1939 to 1941. These years of education based on modern Western culture significantly broadened and deepened Zhang Ailing's knowledge and understanding of the world. When Zhang Ailing was a teenager, her parents, a mismatched couple got divorced. Living in the intense domestic turmoil that, to some degree, embodied Western and Chinese traditional cultural conflicts, Zhang Ailing inevitably became consciously hypersensitive to the cultural contradictions in her surroundings.

Apart from her personal family background, Shanghai, the city where Zhang Ailing had grown up and spent the peak years of her literary career, definitely had a close link with Zhang Ailing and a considerable influence on her. Since it was opened to the West in the late-nineteenth century, Shanghai had fallen under the strong influence of the West economically, politically and culturally. Countless cultural and theoretical lines of thought swarmed in and conflicted with conventional Chinese ones. Gradually the two sides mingled and mixed into a cultural hybridity, which was exactly the essence of local culture of Shanghai in the following century. Regarding how to understand Shanghai

modernity, Xudong Zhang argues that, "to take Shanghai 'literally,'...it means to read and write about Shanghai between, beneath, and beyond the existing genres, styles, and discourses to create the peculiar linguistic, intellectual, and political spaces for the deconcealment of the dualisms, ambiguities, overlaps, hybridities, and rifts rendered invisible by various grand narratives of history, including the anti-grand narrative rhetoric of returning to the private, the quotidian, the normal, which...has become the greatest and least tolerant grand narrative of our times."[7] I have quoted Zhang's remark in length not only because it is illuminating in grasping the complexity of the nature of Shanghai modernity, but also because it formulates the peculiar characteristic of Shanghai discourses: namely the anti-grand narrative of returning to the private, the quotidian and the normal which paradoxically also becomes a version of grand narrative in Shanghai's particular cultural context. This might be somewhat common in today's literature but with regard to the pre-Liberation era, in which a grand narrative absolutely should be identified as belonging to the mainstream literary category with the grand themes of that time such as revolution or criticizing the National Character, this specificity becomes so remarkable that it needs further careful examination.

Here I would like to draw on the work of another scholar, Ackbar Abbas on Shanghai cosmopolitanism. Abbas points out that in Shanghai, for historical reasons, cosmopolitanism emerged under the colonial powers simultaneously from several extraterritorial concessions, including the British, American, French and Japanese, for several years; the city's character had become multivalent—a capacity to be all at once a space of negotiation, domination and appropriation. On this basis Abbas argues that the multivalent negotiation somehow had resulted in a cultivation of *indifference* so that everything could be openly accepted (?), and the city became one place in China that was

free from the control of debilitating and bureaucratic state apparatus.[8] The reason I question the word "accepted" is because according to Abbas's own words, the multivalence of Shanghai resulted in indifference instead of toleration to difference. So, "accept" might cause some confusion about Shanghai's attitude. Since Abbas has noticed the underlying tension between national culture and Shanghai cosmopolitanism (Shanghai's strength as a cosmopolitan city being based on China's weakness as a nation) that implies that on the one hand, even scandal and outrage could be *accepted* within the Shanghai multivalent context, but on the other hand, another reaction probably was an impassive or potentially resistant detachment, especially to the nation/state. Based on Abbas's elaborate analysis, we can see that Shanghai was always seeking its survival and development among the mingled tensions and pressures, both from the foreign and the domestic sides. In this particular setting, Shanghai had to identify itself as a single unit, instead of being affiliated to either side, through continual negotiations for its own appropriation with the others (whether the state or the foreigners).

Not coincidentally, Zhang Ailing's writing is representative of the anti-grand narrative focusing on the quotidian, as Xudong Zhang discussed. In her essays such as "Ziji de wenzhang" ["Writing of One's Own"], we can recognize this as a deliberate choice, and this choice probably was partly inspired by the indifference examined above. Growing up and living in the unique cosmopolitan metropolis for several years, Zhang Ailing was deeply immersed in the local urban culture of Shanghai. She had a very clear idea about the effects produced by the historical and social fluctuations on the collective thinking, value system and ideological structure of Shanghai people, and delineated them with her incisive wit and specific literary style.

In Zhang Ailing's works, together with Shanghai, another colonial metropolis, Hong

Kong, became a somewhat fixed spatial setting for most stories. This can be regarded as a discursive reflection on the author's experience of living in these two cities. Moreover, sometimes, she even consciously places the two in a frame of comparison or contrast. It is very interesting coincidentally, that many other scholars juxtapose these two cities for a comparative examination as well, mostly because of the two cities' similar historical experience as colonial, cosmopolitan metropolises. In the third chapter I will delve into the mutually interacting relationship between Zhang Ailing's writing and the city of Hong Kong.

Narrative Techniques: Integration of Western and Chinese

Many scholars, such as Hsia, have claimed that Zhang Ailing has proved herself as a literary genius with her remarkable achievement in literature. Her writing subtly unites aspects of Western culture and Chinese traditional culture to form a unique elegant and exquisite style. To utilize either Western narrative techniques or traditional Chinese ones in writing is not something unique or original to Zhang Ailing's writing, as can be ascertained when we look at the abundant modern Chinese literary practices since May Fourth. The writing influenced by Western culture does not need not to be discussed at length since referring to the West is, originally, the essence of the New Literature. For the use of traditional Chinese literary techniques, the popular novels that were written by the Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School (*Yuanyang hudie pai*) writers such as Zhang Henshui (1895-1967), available throughout the first half of 20th century, directly applied the traditional serial-novel-style (*zhanghui ti*) and other traditional literary skills. Moreover, the integration of Western and traditional cultural features together could also be found in the writings of some other modern writers in China, for instance Lao She (1899-1966), Qian Zhongshu (1910-1998) and Lu Ling (1913-1994). What then makes

Zhang Ailing so extraordinary that numerous scholars have regarded her writing as a representative example for the issue of Western-Chinese literary integration in modern Chinese literature?[9] In this section I will try to answer this question by discussing how Zhang Ailing has creatively forged a hybridity of narrative techniques drawn from both Western and traditional literature with her distinctive style.

Zhang Ailing had defined her own writing as the following, "[I] connect Western sexual psychology with Oriental traditional family system, so that in the alignment of 'flavor of *yangchang* (the modern field)' and 'Oriental inherent culture' I can pursue a way of pure art."[10] Undoubtedly "Western sexual psychology" mainly refers to Freudian psychological theory. At the turn of the 20th century, Freudianism (*Fuluoyide zhuyi*) was imported into China, and, almost simultaneously together with Darwinism, Marxism and some other selected Western philosophies, began to influence radical Chinese intellectuals. Before 1949, five works of Freud and numerous secondary critical works about Freud were translated into Chinese.[11] With these sources available by the mid-1930s, Freudian theory was familiar to many intellectuals and, in reductive forms, to the Chinese public.[12] Therefore, in modern Chinese literature we can detect traces of the impact of Freudian theory on Chinese writing, especially in the aspect of interpretation of people's inner world. As a female writer, Zhang Ailing was instinctively concerned with the particularity of human mentality through her sensitive observation and receptivity. Since the themes of her novels are centered on emotion, affection, marriage and family, Freudian psychoanalysis, which to a certain extent focuses on sexual mentality, is a useful instrument for her to probe the mental world of her characters.

In one of her famous novels, *The Golden Cangue*, the protagonist Cao Qiqiao is represented in a vivid and profound way with her complicated emotional experiences and

mental fluctuation being clearly presented. Her husband is disabled, lying in bed due to general paralysis; meanwhile, Cao, a very young woman, has normal emotional and sexual desires. When she tries to obtain the warmth of "true love" from her husband's younger brother Jiang Jize within the big family where interpersonal relationships are normally so distant, the dandy firstly rejects her because of selfishness and then cheated her "love" for her money. Having been very lonely for years, the sexual repression of Qiqiao was definitely imaginable. In the paragraph which depicts how Qiqiao and her son spent a whole night talking about the private affairs of her daughter-in-law, the ambiguous setting, dialogue and behavior all reveal Qiqiao's deeply twisted sexual psychology which has been repressed into abnormality:

> She looked at him through slit smiling eyes. All these years he had been the only man in her life... But being her son, he amounted to less than half a man. And even the half she could not keep, now that he was married.[13]

Precisely because of this complex attitude towards her son and because of her distorted sexual mentality, Qiqiao secretly destroys the affection between the young couple, and finally, her daughter-in-law is obliged to commit suicide.

In the short stories, *The Heart Sutra* (*Xin jing*), and *Jasmine Tea* (*Moli xiangpian*), Zhang Ailing daringly treats the sexual and psychological topics of the Electra complex and the Oedipus complex, which are important arguments of Freud on children's sexual consciousness. In *The Heart Sutra*, the incestuous affection between Xu Xiaohan and her father is depicted with elaborate details, and intense mental conflicts are also vividly portrayed. As for *Jasmine Tea*, the protagonist Nie Chuanqing, a poor, cowardly young man whose mother died when he was only four, lives very unhappily with his hardhearted father and stepmother. Accidentally he finds out that his professor Yan Ziye was his

mother's lover before she got married. He worships Professor Yan a lot and becomes irate as to why his father had not been Yan instead. In Chuanqing's view, if Yan were his father, he would have enjoyed the happiness of a normal family. Torn between his hate towards and jealousy of Professor Yan's daughter, his classmate Danzhu, he unreasonably thinks she has usurped his *real* father. Finally this crazed thinking results in his violent injury and abuse of the innocent girl. Chuanqing's somehow abnormal admiration of Professor Yan has indirectly resulted from his subconscious fanatical thirst for love from his dead mother.

In his *History*, Hsia mentions the two short stories as typical examples of the remarkable Freudian emphasis in Zhang Ailing's writings about the parent-child relationship,[14] but Hsia merely leaves his argument there without further examination. If we put the three stories mentioned above together, an interesting question arises: since in *The Golden Cangue*, Zhang Ailing has also described Qiqiao's complex attitude towards her son, Changbai, why does Zhang Ailing often prefer to utilize Freudian theory in the frame of a parent-child relationship? Let me suspend this for a while in order to introduce something else first.

Lydia Liu has examined the use of Freudianism by Chinese writers through case studies on literary works of Guo Moruo (1892-1978), Shi Zhecun (1905-2003) and Yu Dafu (1896-1945). She is holding the opinion that many Chinese writers and critics have made self-conscious attempts to establish a "translingual" relationship between Chinese fiction and Freudianism, rethinking the nature of desire and how to represent it in modern literary language.[15] According to Liu's analyses, these writers basically deal with the topics of split identity, displacement, the unconscious, and sexual repression. In contrast to their works, Zhang Ailing's writing is centered on the peculiar sexualized relationship

between the parent and the child within a family. As I have mentioned in the preceding section, due to her unhappy childhood Zhang Ailing is hypersensitive to interpersonal relationships within families. In traditional Chinese culture, ethics for family members has been a significant theme of social regulations reinforced by the feudal domination throughout the ages. However, in the historical and social turbulence from the end of the nineteenth century, the fixed ethic had gradually been encroached upon and destroyed. Using Freudianism, an imported Western theory, to explore the underlying psychological complexity in the parent-child relationship, Zhang Ailing is rethinking the classical ethical criteria and all of traditional culture by placing the normal parent-child relationship into a subversive structure. Therefore, the particular use of Freudianism by Zhang Ailing not only is an adoption of narrative technique but also, more significantly, bestows her writing with modernity from the perspective of satirizing and challenging the authority of the deeply-rooted traditional culture through the narration of inclined incest, which is a taboo subject in traditional Chinese culture.

Another significant literary device frequently used by Zhang Ailing, is to borrow techniques from film, an art form, which had an enduring fascination for her. Living in the metropolis of Shanghai, where the film industry had been thriving since the early twentieth century,[16] Zhang Ailing had convenient access to numerous Western and Chinese films. According to her own essays and her brother Zhang Zijing's recollection[17], she had been a film fan since her youth. After returning to Shanghai from Hong Kong in 1942, she began to write film reviews, including the two essays *Jie yindeng* [By the Light of the Silver Lantern] and *Yingong jiuxue ji* [Schooling at the Silver Palace] in *Liuyan*, for some English newspapers and journals, even before she published her novels. Moreover, she also composed several film scripts from the late 1940s to early 1960s, entering the

cinema industry herself. As many critics including Lee Ou-fan and Fu Lei have noted, with her abundant knowledge of films, Zhang Ailing consciously applied certain cinematic techniques in the composition of her novels. Lee Ou-fan remarks that, "what Zhang Ailing specializes in is the adoption of the techniques from Hollywood films. She created her personal style—integrating the cinematic techniques with skills in Chinese traditional narration perfectly."[18] Here, based on Lee's general remark, let me examine this issue further with some concrete examples from *The Golden Cangue* to see how Zhang Ailing indeed has created a hybridity of the features from two separate arts.

One technique Zhang Ailing employs is cinematic montage. According to the definition in *Film Art: An Introduction* written by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, one conception of montage is a synonym for film editing. Thus sometimes what Zhang tries to do is to edit the elements of the fabula,[19] such as events, actors, time, and location, in a cinematic way to visualize her story. In her masterpiece, *The Golden Cangue*, a couple of examples of this kind could be found. A representative one is a descriptive passage of settings that has been remarked on by many critics:

> Qiqiao pressed the mirror down with both hands. The green bamboo curtain and a green and gold landscape scroll reflected in the mirror went on swinging back and forth in the wind—one could get dizzy watching it for long. When she looked again the green bamboo curtain had faded, the green and gold landscape was replaced by a photograph of her husband, and the woman in the mirror was also ten years older.[20]

By using only several short, simple sentences, the writer has easily and smoothly implemented the transition of time—a ten-year interval of story duration has been omitted in the ellipsis to achieve the shortening of plot duration. Ellipsis is a term shared by both literature and film, but the ways to represent it in the two different arts are distinctly different. In literature, we would commonly have a sentence of this pattern, "I came back

after two years."[21] In this way readers are informed that the duration of two years has been omitted. However here, instead of the general literary way, Zhang chooses a cinematic way to represent the ellipsis, namely elliptical editing. According to *Film Art*, filmmakers can create an ellipsis in three principal visual ways, namely using a conventional "punctuation" shot change, empty frames and a cut-away. In the quoted passage, Zhang actually uses a dissolve as the "punctuation" in the overall continuity of the setting, which is a familiar device in the classical filmmaking tradition. By offering this descriptive passage, Zhang undoubtedly impresses the readers with direct visual feelings as if they were spectators of an ongoing film, in which two shots of the same subject are cut together and are not sufficiently different in the suppositional camera distance and angle: Qiqiao is standing in the same pose in front of the mirror while some noticeable nuances of the setting indicate the transition of time. Zhang's work here could remind us of what the film editor Paul Hirsch has said about editing, "you can span thirty years within an hour and a half. You can stretch a moment in slow motion. You can play with time in extraordinary ways."[22]

Literature is an art based on words and sentences. Although authors can still describe the features beyond the dimension of a plane such as visual and aural perception, by using words that offer boundless imagination, there is a limitation in literature for the full representation of something, especially the aural features. In traditional Chinese fiction, which mostly focuses on the representation of actors, the aural features especially musical ones are paid very little attention if not ignored. When they are occasionally mentioned, the function is random and lyrics mean much more than the musical tune—it is much more inclined towards literature than music. In contrast, since film is an art in which images and sounds are essential factors to actualize an integrated, complete artwork, its

representation of aural features is much richer compared to that of literature.

Zhang also makes an effort to perfect her description by adding aural elements such as musical ones into the stories. Zhang Ailing loves to deploy musical elements in the plot of her stories, like filmmakers manipulating music to intensify the images in their films. In film, sound is a powerful technique to hold the viewer's visual attention accompanied by aural attention, giving the viewer a more complete perceptual experience. More significantly, the engagement of hearing opens the possibility of what the Soviet director Sergei Eisenstein called "synchronization of senses"[23]—making a single rhythm or expressive quality unify both images and sound. Of all the sounds in films, music is the least negligible. One significant benefit musical scores provide is auditory motif: music engages a distinct sensory mode in viewers.

In *The Golden Cangue*, one of the main characters Chang'an, is associated with a little tune of "Long, Long Ago"[24] played on a harmonica. When she decides to quit school because of her mother Qiqiao's unreasonableness, at midnight Chang'an takes up her harmonica to play the tune, "tell me the tales that to me were so dear, long, long ago, long, long ago...." This sad, dolorous tune reveals Chang'an's deep sorrow about the loss of her happy times spent at school. The second time this tune appears is when Chang'an breaks off her relationship with Shifang in the park:

> Chang'an heard, coming faintly in slow swings, the sound of a harmonica clumsily picking out "Long, Long Ago"—"Tell me the tales that to me were so dear, long, long ago, long, long ago...." This was *now,* but in the twinkling of an eye it would have become long, long ago and everything would be over. As if under a spell Chang'an went looking for the person blowing the harmonica—looking for herself.[25]

This tune's recurrence emphasizes Chang'an's much deeper sorrow about the ultimate loss of her hope, revealing Chang'an's desperation about her life. For Chang'an, Tong

Shifang is not only the man she falls in love with but also, more significantly, a symbol of hope for her to escape from the dull, hopeless life living with her mother and to obtain a normal, happy life. To break up with Shifang means that "everything would be over" in Chang'an's mind. She cannot help going to look for the person blowing the harmonica, "looking for herself"—the Chang'an who was ever happy in her memory. Functioning like a filmic musical motif, this tune becomes a narrative element to imply plot development and guide the readers to seek an implicit meaning Zhang wants to reveal. At the same time, we must admit that in the second descriptive section, the subjective and actual tune seem to be tangled up. Has Chang'an actually heard the tune or did it only emerge in her head? At first it seems that she did hear it faintly coming, but later, at the end the phrase "looking for herself" confuses readers a little bit: maybe she just heard it subjectively? Zhang does not give the answer. However, the charm arises precisely from where the confusion lies: Zhang melts the filmic musical motif into literary artifice, using the combination of the advantages of the two arts to create an amazing impression.

The comprehension and acceptance by Zhang Ailing of Western culture, art and theories are not in conflict with that of Chinese classical culture and arts. Instead, classical Chinese literature nourishes her writing simultaneously. In her novels we can detect the genuine and important influence of classical fiction and poetry in the setup of the dramatic and romantic plots, the mixture of classical and vernacular language in the narration and dialogue, the aesthetic effect with implied and pithy characteristics, and the employment of artistic conceptions abounding in psychologized imagery.

First of all, Zhang Ailing shows her ability of grasping the psychological fluctuations of the characters frequently, in combining depiction of their mental status with natural and

social circumstances. In other words, it is a psychological projection of the characters' inner world onto the objective surroundings turning the later into a subjectively colored one. Additionally, the delineation of the subjectively colored setting intensifies the vivid representation of the characters. In her writing, there is plentiful dense nature imagery, and the most impressive imagery is the kind focusing on the description of the Moon. For instance, "(the moon is) yellow, looks like on a piece of jade-color silk, when someone was embroidering some ashes dropped on it, burning a small area" in *Aloe Ashes—First Burning* (*Chenxiang xie: Diyi lu xiang*),[26] "(the moon) should be a reddish-yellow wet stain the size of a copper coin, like a teardrop on letter paper by *Duoyun Xuan* (Solitary Cloud Studio), worn and blurred"[27]; "a dark gray sky dotted sparsely with stars and a blurred chip of a moon"[28] and "the moon was barely visible behind dark clouds, a dab of black, a dab of white like a ferocious theatrical mask"[29] in *The Golden Cangue*. The description is vivid while also implicit and pregnant with meaning so that the writer offers a desolate setting as a foil to connote certain characters' emotional feelings and psychological activities. Exactly this is a traditional device in Chinese classical writing that brings classical poetry to readers' mind, in particular the Song poet Liu Yong (987-1053)'s "Where will I wake from drunkenness tonight? (Maybe on) a bank with poplars and willows, wind in dawn and a fragment of the moon."[30]

In addition, Zhang Ailing employs the habitual narrative manner of Chinese classical fiction in her writing. In her short stories and novels the narration of the storyteller is frequently used as an imitation of *huaben* fiction (fiction narrated with the tone of storytellers) in classical literature[31]. With her wit, she subtly applies this artifice in several stories, especially the two stories titled *Aloe Ashes* and *Jasmine Tea*. At the beginning of these stories, the author first uses the tone of a fictional storyteller to address the audience,

"saying" something like "today I will tell you a story about...." Only after this prologue, which seems to be meaningless and redundant and seems to have nothing to do with the plot, the real story will be narrated from an omniscient third-person perspective. If the prologue were deleted, there appears to be no compromise to the integrality of the stories; the only apparent change is that the narrator turns hidden from the visible. But as Mieke Bal has said in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, "[i]n principle, it does not make a difference to the status of the narration whether a narrator refers to itself or not. As soon as there is language, there is a speaker who utters it; as soon as those linguistic utterances constitute a narrative text, there is a narrator, a narrating subject."[32] Then why does Zhang Ailing still explicitly identify the narrator/herself as a storyteller first? The answer probably lies in her pursuit of the purposeful effects of her writing. First, by doing this she has shortened the psychological distance between the narrator and the audience, placing the narrator/herself on the same level or even lower than that of the audience. This is so because in the past the audience constituted the storyteller's customers and he served them for money, so the storyteller had to please the audience from this perspective. In the developed commercial social milieu of Shanghai and being a professional writer who relied on the remuneration from her published works, Zhang Ailing did not identify herself as a torchbearer overlooking her audience from a higher level. Unlike many mainstream writers such as Lu Xun who did so with the consciousness of bearing the responsibility of enlightenment, she liked to identify herself at the same level as the common people (*putong ren*).[33] This conscious choice is due not only to local Shanghai culture but also to her peculiar perspective of literature and human life. Let me leave further examination of this issue to the following section. The second aspect of the answer, to the question above is that Zhang Ailing intentionally impresses

the audience with a subjective temporal distance between the space-time narrated in the story and that of the reality the audience is in. In other words, she attempts to create a peculiar aesthetic effect and historical atmosphere marked by historical vicissitudes. This might have been inspired from the habitual activity of traditional intellectuals reading various history records. History records were necessary reading for the traditional Chinese elite as a reference to obtain a paradigm or to carry out self-examination of the current situation for a long time. Here Zhang Ailing intentionally sets her stories as a kind of "history" (of course unofficial), thereby implying the possibility of another kind of enlightenment in terms of spurring readers to think about the reality through these "historical" stories. I also want to leave this for later discussion.

As Zhang Ailing has admitted in her essays, she is deeply fascinated with several classical novels including *Dream of the Red Chamber (Honglou meng)*. She classicizes her language in a similarly traditional style when she portrays scenes and describes characters' features, clothing and speaking tone; sometimes she even directly reproduces the authors' literary style. We may get such a feeling when Qiqiao emerges into our view for the first time in *The Golden Cangue,* because it immediately makes us recall the scene where Wang Xifeng's first presents herself in *Dream of the Red Chamber*. In the novel *The Interlocking Rings* (*Lianhuan tao*), Zhang copies many original words and sentences from *Dream of the Red Chamber* in order to describe her characters, for example "on the way bamboos are dark green, and fragrances are fine," "the three people moved forward in flowers and willows" and "like a wild goose with an arrow through its beak and a fish with a hook on its gill, the nephew could not say anything."[34] She is so excessively fond of "copying" her favorites that in *The Interlocking Rings* the character Yahese, an Indian merchant, bewilderingly and ridiculously talks in the same manner as the characters in

Chinese classical fiction. Thus Fu Lei sternly criticizes this as "hackneyed tone like the dregs of old novels."[35] First we have to agree with Fu Lei that, in *The Interlocking Rings* having all the characters, whether Indian, a Spanish or a Cantonese talk in a very similar way to those in *Dream of the Red Chamber* or *Plum Blossom in the Golden Vase* (*Jin ping mei*) is somewhat strange and unacceptable. Even Zhang herself has admitted this as a little bit "factitious" and "immoderate."[36] Despite this aberration in *The Interlocking Rings*, this kind of classicized narrative language colored with exquisite style can offer a distinctive, even "fresh" reading experience to readers of modern literature, especially those who have been used to the Europeanized colloquial language (*baihua*) of New Literature since May Fourth.

Emerging as the opposite of traditional literature, New Literature has emphasized a total revolution in the literary content, form and language. On the one hand, this attempt did inject new vitality in Chinese literature, but on the other hand the absolute denial[37] of traditional literature has to a great extent destroyed the continuity of Chinese literary development. So Zhang Ailing's effort can be regarded as an attempt to remedy this interrupted continuity. Fu Lei has argued that Zhang Ailing should "have her own purified style" by resisting the "pollution" from traditional, old-fashioned literature. His critical comment in fact implied an elite criterion, which evaluates old-fashioned fiction as something inferior and to be discarded. Yet, I am arguing that that Zhang Ailing has drawn upon traditional literary resources to create an unpurified, hybrid style, which actually is more appropriate for common Chinese readers, especially urban citizens.

The last point of this discussion is another of Zhang Ailing's literary techniques, namely, her use of colors in the narration. This particularly deserves to be discussed here because it also indicates the hybrid characteristics of her writing. The essay, "Tan yinyue"

[On Music], reveals that color and odor are Zhang Ailing's favorites. She also shows her abundant knowledge of western painting in "Tan hua" [On Painting] and "Wang bu liao de hua" [Unforgettable Paintings].[38] A passage depicting Qiqiao's daughter-in-law Zhishou in her bedroom alone in *The Golden Cangue* is a typical instance which indicates Zhang Ailing's use of colors:

> Inside the room she could clearly see the embroidered rosy-purple chair covers and table cloths, the gold-embroidered scarlet screen with five phoenixes flying in a row, the pink satin scrolls embroidered with seal-script characters embellished with flowers. On the dressing table the silver powder jar, silver mouth-rinsing mug, and silver vase were each caught in a red and green net and filled with wedding candies. Along the silk panel across the lintel of the bed hung balls of flowers, toy flower pots, *ju-yi*, and rice dumplings, all made of multicolored gilded velvet, and dangling underneath them glass balls the size of finger tips and mauvish pink tassels a foot long... In the moonlight her feet had no color of life at all—bluish, greenish, purplish, the tints of a corpse gone cold.[39]

Here several colors are available: rose-purple, gold, scarlet, pink, silver, red, green, multicolored, bluish, greenish, and purplish. The first eight are colors of objects, either decoration or furniture, and the last three are used to describe Zhishou's feet. The distinction between these two categories is not only for the obvious; that between objects and a part of the human body, but also of warm tone and cold tone. The scene is set in a bridal chamber and according to Chinese tradition the color of everything in the room should be warm, bright, florid and brilliant. However, in distinct contrast to the description of the objects in warm, bright colors, the colors used to depict Zhishou's body abruptly change to cold tones, even being defined as "tints of a corpse gone cold." A sharp contrast between the figure and the setting is brought into focus by the description of colors without any other explanation or comment. By constructing this unfavorable disharmony, Zhang Ailing has indeed indicated Zhishou's unspeakable inner suffering and impresses the readers in an intense way.

Zhang Jian considers Zhang Ailing as "an adherent of Rococo arts" and "(she) would be improvisational to add some Baroque and Rococo (into her writing)."[40] Baroque art is inclined towards splendid, dynamic and contrastive colors while Rococo art prefers elaborate décor. Probably both artistic styles, prevalent in seventeenth and eighteenth Europe, might have had considerable impact on Zhang Ailing simultaneously, because both emphasize the abundance of color. Although Zhang Jian has not provided direct evidence of the impact, this is certainly a possibility because Zhang Ailing has abundant knowledge of Western art. Zhang Ailing wrote some essays on Western art including "On Painting" and "Paintings Cannot Be Forgotten". In these essays, she expresses her familiarity with Western art history and artists such as Paul Cezanne (1839-1906), Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) and Paul Gauguin (1848-1903). With such knowledge, Zhang Ailing might have drawn some nourishment from both Baroque and Rococo in context of using the compounding of abundant colors in her writing. At the same time, the emphasis on elaborately managing colors is also important in Chinese classical arts. In drama, painting and fiction, colors are often employed in an extremely attractive way with particular underlying implications. Zhang Ailing evidently also assimilates this into her works, together with nourishment from Western arts to create her own hybrid aesthetic style. The passage quoted above is one example among her stories where nuanced red and golden colors are often exhibited to contrastively foil the inevitable decline of the flagging old world, producing a striking aesthetic effect.

Aesthetic System of "Desolation" and Literary Thoughts

Hsia Chih-tsing argues correctly that there is an "astonishing combination" of characteristics embodied in Zhang Ailing, namely "a Chaucerian gusto for life and all its little enjoyment plus an adult and tragic awareness of the human condition."[41] Zhang

Ailing has directly shown her appreciation of the little, trivial happiness in everyday life in a number of essays. In addition, she also expressed a thirst for becoming a celebrity with the following words in the essay "On the Second Edition of *Romance*", "[m]ake yourself famous as early as you can! If success comes too late, the pleasure of it isn't as intense."[42] A claim like this certainly would be regarded as vulgar or superficial, if viewed in isolation. However, in the same essay, Zhang Ailing reveals her pessimistic understanding of human life and civilization, offering an explanation for the preceding claim:

> Even if I were able to wait, the times rush impatiently forward—already in the midst of destruction, with a still-greater destruction yet to come. There will come a day when our civilization, whether sublime or frivolous, will be a thing of the past. If the word I use the most in my writing is "desolation", that is because this troubling premonition underlies all my thinking.[43]

As many critics have noted, this suffused desolation is precisely the aesthetic keynote of Zhang Ailing's writing, which distinguishes her from the majority of other writers in modern Chinese literature. Here, I want to claim that her aesthetics embodies her sensitive and profound feelings and thoughts about time and space, modernity and tradition, society and history, which go beyond the boundaries of culture, race and the specificities of space and time.

Zhang Ailing once expressed her opinion on human life when she remarks on the fate of married Chinese women in the essay "Epigraph for *Long Live the Missus*" (*Taitai wansui* tiji):

> The called "sad and joyful midlife" probably means that in their joy some bitterness is always mixed in... In fact "sadness and joy in the floating world" is more regrettable than "sadness in the floating world". The reason is that the former impresses people with an indistinct, phantasmagoric feeling.[44]

Holding such pessimistic subjectivity as the underlying basis for her writing, Zhang

Ailing unfolds her stories in a particular way that "takes pleasure only in material details...while the main theme is always gloomy. All general observation of human life points to emptiness."[45] Therefore, almost all her stories end with sorrow or gloom. During plot development the characters can perhaps find some happiness; nevertheless, this happiness is always ephemeral, even fictitious or illusory. The intense contrasts between happiness and sorrow, hope and desperation, brightness and gloom eventually evoke a strong aesthetic feeling of very deep and massive desolation. Certainly as Ou-fan Lee has argued, the novel *Love in the Fallen City* (*Qingcheng zhilian*) is an exception with a moderately happy ending.[46] However, instead of being a symbol of happiness and hope, this happy ending ironically implies to a great Zhang Ailing's underlying suspicion about true love. When Liuyuan talks to Liusu besides the "cold and rough" wall about their affection, his remark is profoundly ironic and filled with apocalyptic sentiment: genuine love can begin only at the end of the world, at the end of time, when time itself no longer matters. In other words, "true love" is purely imaginary and cannot exist in reality at all.[47] As Ou-fan Lee also indicates, "it is at such a moment that we can imagine Zhang's aesthetic state of desolation—*cangliang*, literally, 'gray and cold,' the color of the wall."[48]

Why has Zhang Ailing maintained this aesthetic system of desolation all along in her writing? Why does she choose her peculiar manner of narration as an intentional escape from the gravity and momentousness of historical events, all the while showing preference for the trivialness and everydayness of common people's life? The answer lies not only in the special historical and social surroundings—the restriction of the political policy of Japanese occupation and the highly developed mercantile culture of Shanghai which made writers search for a balance of spiritual pursuits and market demand. More essentially, Zhang Ailing has established her literary style based on the experiences of her

own life and her comprehension about the era, society and human life from a profoundly abstract perspective. When she was young, she witnessed how her family which formerly possessed splendor and magnificence gradually fell into a ruinous decline. Additionally, the historical experience of the city she was living in, also urged Zhang Ailing to meditate on individual living within the broad background of human society and history. As a westernized metropolis in semi-feudal and semi-colonial China under the colonial powers, Shanghai had been flourishing in a comparatively abnormal way, passively receiving the influx of both the good and bad of Western culture. Many writers' works have censured the scenes of debauchery, luxury, dissipated life and money worshipping in Shanghai, such as Mao Dun's *Midnight* (*Zi ye*) and the literary works of Neo-sensationalists (*Xin ganjuepai*). When Shanghai was invaded by the Japanese and became a complete colony, rigorous jeopardy became an inducement to the spiritual morbidity inevitably bursting out in this city. During the nation's wartime, neither the high-spirited courage and solidarity of the front line nor the rational collective subjectivity and cultural self-examination of the rear areas were available in Shanghai. In this "isolated island" (*gudao*), people were forced to individually face the problems of survival and the threat of death. With her incisive perspicacity, Zhang Ailing penetrates and reveals the intricate mentality of the Shanghai people— the tangle of the frantic desire for material and current enjoyment, the deep sense of dread about an unknown future, spiritual vacuity and impotence—in an elaborate manner. She says with a heavy feeling in the essay "Su Qing in My View" (Wo kan Su Qing):

> I stood on the balcony in the dusk alone... I was thinking that "these are times of disorder"...I thought about many people's fate, including mine: there is a feeling of indistinct life...For the future safety, when it arrives it will not be ours. What we can do now is merely to seek one's own safety nearby.[49]

Also, she articulates in another essay "From the Ashes" (Jinyu lu) that, "the vehicle of the times drives inexorably forward...we see only our own faces, pallid and trivial...each of us is alone."[50] By concentrating her concern on individuals out of a sense of deep isolation, Zhang Ailing obtains opportunities to think and write from a perspective beyond the restriction of the national discourse. In other words, in her vision, the point is how human beings face and survive perils individually instead of being identified as members in certain social or racial groups such as a nation, a race or a class. At the same time, Zhang Ailing has also crossed the cultural boundary between China and the West, because in modern Western discourse, the individual is privileged while in Chinese traditional discourse, the individual is subsumed in a network of relationships. When Zhang Ailing creates her characters as independent, isolated and lonely individuals existing in a turbulent, confusing world, rather than members of certain political groups with class identities in Chinese society, she writes outside the constraints imposed by national and class identities that dominated most mainstream Chinese literature at the time.

Leo Lee suggests that Zhang Ailing's narration is a kind of subversion of the "master narrative" of history[51]; here Lee is apparently remarking from a perspective similar to that of mainstream literary criticism in modern China, defining "master narrative" as the writings focused on grand social, historical and ideological themes. I would argue, however, that Zhang Ailing can also be regarded as a narrator of a master narrative if we define "master narrative" from a much broader perspective concerning universal human beings. The essay, "Writing of One's Own" (Ziji de wenzhang), is a straightforward yet comprehensive statement of her own literary theory and aesthetical system, articulating

her profound thoughts on human life. In the essay she considers mainstream literary works that focus on social, historical and political themes as "emphasis on the uplifting, dynamic" aspects of human life, while what she represents in her writing is "the placid and static aspects of life" that "have eternal significance." Furthermore, she regards the latter as the "background" of the former, and "without this grounding, uplift is like so much froth." In her opinion, "[h]eroism has strength but no **beauty** and thus seems to lack **humanity**." (my emphasis). Thus, she prefers "tragedy and, even better, desolation," for tragedy "resembles the matching of bright red with deep green: an intense and unequivocal contrast.... The reason desolation resonates far more profoundly is that it resembles the conjunction of scallion green with peach red, creating an equivocal contrast." Here the "equivocal contrast" (*cenci de duizhao*) is exactly what Leo Lee defines as "contrast in de-cadence."[52] Precisely with the employment of this contrastive device, which she thinks is "relatively true to life," Zhang Ailing prefers to interpret Shanghai society from the perspective of aesthetic distance rather than view it as the object of simplified social criticism. In the quotation the two words I emphasized, "beauty" and "humanity," are what Zhang Ailing has thought a lot about in her writing, and also indicate that her interest is focused on aesthetic and abstract thinking and interpretation.[53]

Based on this peculiar point of view, Zhang Ailing meditates on the world and humanity when she composes the stories in the cosmopolitan metropolis. In her novels, everyone is faced with vital changes, both in his/her way of life, with new factors being filled into an old pattern, and in the spiritual world with modern Western ideas making inroads while the remnant feudal ethics flounder. Perplexity, loneliness, affliction and disillusionment are always the dominant characteristics of the mentality of her characters.

Moreover, they are no longer symbols carrying the weight of historical and social signification, but rather performing as separate, isolated and lonely individuals instead. In Zhang Ailing's writing, these figures are units of common people while they are no longer representative of a particular identity of social class or ethnic culture in the writer's view; instead, they are merely ordinary individuals from whom readers could see and think about the nature of humanity.

The themes of Zhang Ailing's stories can be generalized into two categories: first, the exploration, among the trivialness and everydayness of daily life and intricate relationships in family and marriage, of the complexity of humanity and the representation of the subversive results when humanity is distorted by unbalanced desire; second, the revelation of the fragility and helplessness of human power when they are faced with the impermanence of time, fantasticality of fate and alienation of the world. The somewhat marginalized themes make it possible for Zhang Ailing to more easily implement the communication and integration between the East and the West. In the works of the first type, she profoundly anatomizes humanity through dense, penetrating analyses. Fairly different from other contemporaneous literary works, Zhang Ailing focuses her vision on the human beings' inner world instead of the exterior factors such as political systems, class repression and moral criteria. Even in *The Golden Cangue* it seems that social class is a significant factor of the whole plot –although Qiqiao enters a big middle class family from a lower class, the writer does not thus make this point a precondition of Qiqiao's later spiritual abnormality. As the plot develops, the writer gradually reveals that precisely the external repression of Qiqiao's affective and sexual desire by the chilly, selfish people in her surroundings has twisted her personality and mind. Her desperation for love directly induces her final abnormal mentality. The cultural

and social milieu is somewhat implicit in her writing; nevertheless, through the ample exhibition of the evil side of humanity, Zhang Ailing implies that the diseased social, political and cultural system cannot guarantee humans' normal existence and thus humanity is distorted, so that a vicious cycle is eventually formed. The works of the second type show some philosophical characteristics of existentialism in terms of identifying the world as ridiculous and empty and people having to face the dilemma of existence individually. However, existentialism emphasizes people's subjective resistance with a positive inclination, while Zhang Ailing's thinking is much more pessimistic with a cognizance that people are obliged to compromise, give up ceaselessly due to the limitation of humanity and the natural flabbiness in the wretched plight of life. In her stories, almost every character guards against others, and interpersonal relationships are full of inhospitality, division, quarrelling and resentment. This spiritual gap directly and badly obstructs balanced communication and understanding among them. However, regarding these ordinary people, Zhang Ailing does not simply treat them with scorn or animosity but tries to express "sympathy because of understanding"[54] instead. In her opinion, the dilemma of existence has to be attributed to the complications of the world, and all people are passively entangled in an overwhelming fate, sharing the suffering while being complicit at same time.

By constructing the aesthetic symbolic system of "desolation" to explore the abstract proposition of life experience, Zhang Ailing exudes a kind of lingering charm and verve, which is precisely like "seawater, though it may seem to ripple in much the same way (as a mountain stream), also contains within it the prospect of vast oceanic swells."[55] And this is the reason why I contend that her narrative manner could be regarded as another form of "master narrative" in terms of providing a vivid illustration for readers to think about

humanity and human life with a significance of hybridity, which means that in addition to the mundane stories she narrates, she has tried to express some abstract and profound thinking on human life.

From the discussion above, we can detect that although Zhang Ailing likes to identify herself as a member of ordinary or common people in terms of expressing her enjoyment of the little happinesses of daily life, actually we should be very careful that to categorize her with the label of "common people", from both reality and her real thinking. Firstly, during war time, she was married to Hu Lancheng, an important official in Wang Jingwei's puppet regime, and thus was objectively protected from the very worst dangers of living in an occupied area; even she herself did not show any distinct political inclination. At the same time, the vast majority of common people had no other choice but to endure as best they could. From this perspective there is a world of difference between the life Zhang chose briefly in the mid-1940s and the world most Chinese lived. Secondly, the word "sympathy" used by Zhang Ailing implies that Zhang did not really identify herself as one who is among the ordinary people she represented, since "sympathy" generally is used to express certain emotions for a situation that people are not experiencing themselves. Therefore question rises: how does Zhang Ailing define the notion of "common people"? And furthermore, how to locate her in modern Chinese literature properly? I will discuss these issues in the next chapter.

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[1] Homi Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817," *Critical Inquiry* 12 no.1 (1985): 154.
[2] Yu Qing, *Zhang Ailing zhuan* [Biography of Zhang Ailing] (Taibei: Shijie shuju, 1993), 1-32; Feng Zuyi, *Bainian jiazu Zhang Ailing* [Zhang Ailing:A Family of a Century] (Lixu wenhua, 1988), 1-65.
[3] In *Liuyan* [Written on Water], (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1987), 150-165.
[4] According to the essay "Whispers," when Zhang Ailing was about 17 years old, she had a bitter quarrel with her stepmother one day and the stepmother lied to her father that Zhang Ailing had hit her. Her father was furious on hearing that and ruthlessly hit Zhang Ailing, and then locked her in an empty room, threatening that he would kill her with one shot from his pistol. Zhang Ailing was imprisoned

for around half a year and she got a serious case of gastroenteritis which almost killed her. Her father did not even call a doctor or give her any medicine. Finally she ran away from her father's house one night to her mother's place, bringing nothing with her.

[5] Hsia Chih-tsing, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 407.

[6] Zhang Ailing, "Whispers," in *Liuyan*, 158-159.

[7] Xudong Zhang, "Shanghai Image: Critical Iconography, Minor Literature, and the Un-Making of a Modern Chinese Mythology," *New Literary History* 33 no.1 (2002): 144.

[8] Ackbar Abbas, "Cosmopolitan De-scriptions: Shanghai and Hong Kong," *Public Culture* 12 no.3 (2000): 774-776.

[9] In Western academia, scholars such as Hsia Chih-tsing and Leo Lee Ou-fan have addressed this issue, and in Chinese academy, this almost seems to be a widely accepted conclusion in the scholarship on Zhang Ailing.

[10] Quoted in Shi Zhanjun, "*Zouxiang wenhua zonghe: Sishi niandai wenxue yanjiu*," [Developing to the Cultural Synthesis: A Survey of Modern Chinese Literature in 1940s] in *Shangdong daxue xuebao* 42 (1998): 33-42.

[11] Zhang Jingyuan, *Psychoanalysis in China: Literary Transformation 1919-1949* (New York: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 1992), 13-14.

[12] Ibid., 34.

[13] Zhang Ailing, "Jinsuo ji," [The Golden Cangue] in *Zhang Ailing Wenji* [Collection of Zhang Ailing] (Hefei: Anhui wenyi chubanshe, 1992), Vol.2, 117; English translation included in *Twentieth-Century Chinese Stories*, ed. C.T.Hsia, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 174..

[14] Hsia Chih-tsing, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, 407.

[15] Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity China, 1900-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 128-149.

[16] According to Leo Ou-fan Lee's study, one of the best sources of information about the cinema industry in China is the official reports to the U.S. Department of Commerce by the chief of the Motion Picture Section of the Specialties Division, whose own reports were initially compiled by "the overseas representatives of the Departments of State and Commence". One such report issued in 1927 states that "there are in China at present about 106 motion-picture theaters with a total seating capacity of about 68,000." Of those 106 movie theaters, 26 were in Shanghai in that year.[16] Another report issued in 1930 notes that "all the larger motion-picture producers in the United States and Europe have agents or distributors in Shanghai," and thus "the best pictures produced anywhere are released in Shanghai almost as soon as they are in the country of production." See Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 83; C. J. North, *The Chinese Motion Picture Market*, Trade Information Bulletin no. 467, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce (1927), 13-14; *Motion Pictures in China*, Trade Information Bulletin no. 722, U.S. Department of Commerce (Washington: D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1930), 7.

[17] Zhang Zijing, *Wo de jiejie Zhang Ailing* [My Sister Eileen Chang], (Taibei: Shibao, 1996), edited with a chronology by Ji Ji.

[18] Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Buliao qing: Zhang Ailing he dianying," [Everlasting Sensation: Zhang Ailing and Film] in *Huiwang Zhang Ailing: Jingxiang binfen* [Looking Back to Zhang Ailing: Mirror Images in Profusion], ed. Jin Hongda, (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2003), 381.

[19] Here I am using the definition of "fabula" as "a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors"; in Mieke Bal's book *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 5.

[20] Zhang Ailing, "Jinsuo ji," in *Twentieth-Century Chinese Stories*, 157.

[21] Although sometimes in films, the same technique is used by means of an extradiegetic insert stating in written form "Two Years Later," for an art in which visual effects are definitely primary and significant, this kind of "literal" technique certainly cannot be representative.

[22] David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001),

260.
[23] Ibid., 292.
[24] This is a song composed by the British musician T. H. Bayly in 1833. It had been very popular across the whole world since then because of its simple yet beautiful tune. Even today many people are still very familiar with the tune.
[25] Zhang Ailing, "Jinsuo ji," in *Twentieth-Century Chinese Stories*, 186-187.
[26] Zhang Ailing, "Chenxiang xie: Diyi lu xiang," [Aloe Ashes—First Burning] in *Zhang Ailing Wenji*, Vol.2, 26.
[27] Zhang Ailing, "Jinsuo ji," in *Twentieth-Century Chinese Stories*, 138.
[28] Ibid., 171.
[29] Ibid., 174.
[30] This is the last sentence of Liu Yong's lyric poem (*ci*) "*Yu lin ling.*" The original text is: "今宵酒醒何处，杨柳岸、晓风残月。"
[31] The *huaben* fiction was a form of fiction that emerged in the Song, Yuan and developed in the Ming Dynasty. "*Huaben*" originally was the draft of the folk storytellers who worked and made money by telling stories at the popular amusement sites. In the Ming Dynasty, the elites imitated the style of *huaben* to compose fiction and developed it into a specific form of classical fiction.
[32] Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 22.
[33] Actually by using this term "*putong ren,*" Zhang Ailing holds a distinctive definition of the group, differing greatly from that in mainstream literature categorizing people according to ideological, political criterions. I will examine this issue in details in the following section.
[34] The original text reads thus: "一路上凤尾森森，香尘细细", "三人分花拂柳", "那内侄如同箭穿雁嘴，钩搭鱼腮，作声不得". Zhang Ailing, "Lianhuan tao," in *Zhang Ailing Wenji*, Vol.2, 203-272.
[35] Fu Lei, "Lun Zhang Ailing de xiaoshuo," [Review on Zhang Ailing's Fiction] in *Wanxiang*: 1944 Vol.5.
[36] Zhang Ailing, "Ziji de wenzhang," [Writing of One's Own] in *Liuyan* [Gossips], (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1987). English translation by Andrew F. Jones, *Written on Water* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 22.
[37] This absolute denial was especially evident in the 1920s and the 1930s mainly because of ideological targets. By doing this, most writers of the time, including Lu Xun, wanted to enlighten and urge Chinese people to rise up and struggle instead of dying in the declining traditional culture.
[38] These three essays are all included in Zhang Ailing's collection of essays *Liuyan*.
[39] Zhang Ailing, "Jinsuo ji," in *Twentieth-Century Chinese Stories*, 176.
[40] Zhang Jian, *Zhang Ailing xinlun* [New Account on Zhang Ailing] (Taibei: Shuquan chubanshe, 1996), 62.
[41] Hisa Chih-tsing, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction,* 392-393.
[42] Zhang Ailing, "*Chuanqi* zaiban xu," [On the Second Edition of *Romance*] in *Written on Water*, 199.
[43] Ibid..
[44] Zhang Ailing, "*Taitai wansui* tiji," ["Epigraph for *Taitai wansui*"] in *Dagong bao·Xiju yu dianying*: 1947.12.3.
[45] Zhang Ailing, "Zhongguo ren de zongjiao," ["The Religion of the Chinese"] in *Tiandi* (1944.8-10): Vol.11-13. English translation in David Pollard trans. and ed., *The Chinese Essay* (New York: Columbia University, 2000), 283.
[46] Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 292.
[47] Zhang Ailing, "Love in a Fallen City," in *Zhang Ailing Wenji*, Vol.2, 83-85.
[48] Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945,* 297.
[49] Zhang Ailing, "Wo kan Su Qing," ["Su Qing in My View"] in *Tiandi* (1945.4): Vol.19.

[50] Zhang Ailing, "Jinyu lu," [From the Ashes] in *Written on Water*, 52.
[51] Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945*, 284.
[52] I must admit that from the literal meaning the translation of "*cenci*" should be uneven or irregular. However here I choose to keep the translation "equivocal contrast" for "*cenci de duizhao*" in the English version Written on Water of Liuyan, which was published by Columbia University Press in 2005, because in my sense when Zhang Ailing uses "*cenci*", she emphasizes on a connotative meaning of this word far more. From this perspective, "equivocal" seems more appropriate.
[53] Zhang Ailing, "Ziji de wenzhang," in *Written on Water*, 15-22.
[54] This is a sentence in a letter written by Zhang Ailing to Hu Lancheng in 1944 when they got to know each other for a short time. Quoted Hu Lancheng, "Minguo nüzi," [A Lady in Republic of China] in *Zhang Ailing pingshuo liushi nian* [Accounts on Zhang Ailing in 60 Years], eds. Zitong and Yiqing, (Beijing: Zhongguo huaqiao chubanshe, 2001), 26.
[55] Zhang Ailing, "Ziji de wenzhang."

Chapter 2

A Particular Approach to Representation of Reality

Although since the 1980s, Zhang Ailing's name has reappeared in modern Chinese literary history, many works on modern literary history have faced the problem of how to locate Zhang Ailing in the historical process of literary development. Her literary style seems so extraordinary that it is hard to categorize her within any literary current. In this chapter I try to explore possible answers to this interesting question. In the first section, I examine how Zhang Ailing defines the generic notion of "ordinary/common people" from a distinct perspective, through a comparison among various definitions of the notion in the historical process. In the following section, based on the previous examination, I am trying to rethink Zhang Ailing's unique position in modern Chinese literary history, mainly by studying her writing's relation/negotiation with the two leading literary currents/genres, namely realism and modernism.

Definition of "Common People"

In modern Chinese literature, "common people" is an interesting concept, which has been broadly used while having complicated implications at the same time. In fact, common people or ordinary people is the English translation; in the Chinese original, there are several interrelated terms including "*pingmin,*" "*dazhong,*" "*putong ren*" and "*fanren.*" These Chinese terms have different implications respectively regarding certain groups of people if we contextualize them into modern Chinese literary history. Who are the "common people" or who could be regarded as a member of "common people"? For this question there could be several answers according to different definitions. Of all the

available ones, Zhang Ailing's might be somewhat special because of her peculiar perspective.

At the beginning of May Fourth Movement, Zhou Zuoren (1885-1968) published an essay entitled "Literature of Common People" ("Pingmin wenxue").[1] In the essay he defines the "literature of common people" by placing it in opposition to the "literature of nobility," and argues that the literature of common people should be "all-pervading" and "sincere." His argument is based on his humanist thoughts which he calls a kind of "individualist realism" (*geren zhuyi de renjian benwei zhuyi*)[2], the core of which is to confirm human beings' equal right of existence and moral criteria. Although Zhou Zuoren does not offer an explicit, comprehensive definition and theoretical frame for the term "common people," he has initiated the usage of the term in modern Chinese literature.

In the early 1920s, Communist intellectuals brought forth "revolutionary literature" as a slogan. As leftist literature developed, a controversy over "revolutionary literature" broke out in 1928. The young leftist writers argued that literature should look at the "masses of working and peasant class" (*gongnong dazhong*) as its object.[3] Their contention tended to be simplistic, and overemphasized the political function of literature, and was thus criticized by Lu Xun and Mao Dun. Nevertheless, the term they used distinctly defines common people as "masses of working and peasant class" with a given class identity and, this, to a certain extent, has influenced later literary criticism.

In the 1930s, after the "League of Leftist Writers" was founded in Shanghai in 1930, three large-scale discussions on "popularizing literature and arts" (*wenxue dazhonghua*) took place, comprising a literary movement centralized on proletarian politics. During the second discussion in 1932, one of the CCP leaders, Qu Qiubai (1899-1935), published two essays to clarify the conception of the "literature and arts of masses" (*dazhong*

wenyi).[4] In one title he used the phrase, "proletarian masses" (*puluo dazhong*), which clearly reconfirms the class identity of "common people." And he further argues that "*dazhong wenyi*" should not only be tightly connected to common people but also to serve them. His opinion has oriented the later development of Communist literature.

Through the generalization above we can detect that the dominant term to refer to common people is "*dazhong,*" which could be regarded as a word synonymous with "the people", which is highly ideologicalized and tightly bound up with social class identity. While Zhou Zuoren's term "*pingmin*" may not have such a close relationship to politics, especially Communism, it was still formed in a duality prescribed by social class identities. Compared with them, Zhang Ailing's terms "*putong ren*" and "*fanren*" are quite remarkable in terms of the literary category of common people in modern literature because of her unique approach. In "Writing of One's Own," she defines her characters as "*fanren*" who are "equivocal," having "little wickedness and duplicity," or merely "cowardly," "repulsive" and "sluggish" instead of absolutely evil. In her view, "although they are merely weak and ordinary people and cannot aspire to heroic feats of strength, it is precisely these ordinary people who can serve more accurately than heroes as a measure of the times," because "they are real."[5] This remark is an affirmation of the significance of quotidian life and a redefinition of ordinary people (*fanren*), which has been defined as the opposite of hero or superman. We must admit that most characters in her writing, if judged by Marxist class theory, are actually from the middle-class, either from the petty bourgeoisie or an upper class in decline. In leftist literature, strictly speaking, they cannot even be regarded as members of the "masses" (*dazhong*). However, Zhang Ailing defines "*fanren*" according to their personality, spiritual status and living manners instead of the customary criteria of sociology, economics and politics. In other

words, she cares much less about a person's social position, class identity and economic status than his/her inner world.

Here an interesting question arises. It seems that the figures "Ah Q" (in *The True Story of Ah Q*) and "Xianglin sao" (in *Blessing*) in Lu Xun's writing coincidentally accord with Zhang Ailing's category of common people, since in Lu Xun's view they are definitely ordinary and not heroes or supermen who could bear momentous responsibilities. Also, what Lu Xun focused on is precisely their spiritual status and ways of thinking. The point is that, by representing typical figures like A Q or Xianglin sao, Lu Xun, a writer who self-consciously bears the historical responsibility in the face of a national crisis, wanted to criticize the "national character" (*guominxing*) of the Chinese people and to enlighten the vast majority who had not been indoctrinated by traditional culture. In contrast, Zhang Ailing attempts to meditate on universal humanity through the case studies of the separate, ordinary individuals in the background of a turbulent era, which is merely one intense transformation in the whole of human history. It is somewhat ironic that Lu Xun's "Ah Q" and "Xianglin sao" are the "heroes" in Zhang Ailing's vocabulary, because they are figures who are both "extremely perverse," and presented by Lu Xun as representatives of Chinese with a very clear intention of enlightening his readers; the literary works that "people usually refer to as a 'monument to an era'"[6] thus acquire a grand theme. From her perspective, with this fixed grand signification, these figures have become unordinary and ideologically representative despite their originally ordinary identities. As she remarks, "[a]n emphasis on the uplifting and dynamic smacks more or less is of the superman. Supermen are born of special epochs. But the placid and static aspects of life have eternal significance...they remain eternal. It exists in every epoch. It is the numinous essence of humanity, and one might also say it is the essence of

femininity."[7] The word "eternal" implies the profundity of Zhang Ailing thinking despite the apparent emphasis on ordinary daily life: through the narration of stories of the quotidian, what she actually meditates on is the immanent significance of human life, or human history. This is probably why "common people" in Zhang Ailing's view are quite distinctive in modern Chinese literature, differing from most other writers, especially the mainstream ones.

Here I would like to deal with one character in Zhang Ailing's writing to see how her "common people" has been represented, namely protagonist Chen Sizhen in the film script *Taitai wansui* [Long Live the Missus]. Not only is Sizhen a "missus of ordinary people and could be easily found here and there in alleys (*nongtang*) in Shanghai,"[8] but also through my analysis, I want to argue that this script is somehow exceptional when judged along with all of Zhang Ailing's other scripts.[9] Therefore, I choose *Taitai wansui*, precisely through the examination of which, we can further understand Zhang Ailing's thinking of "common people" and also how different her thinking is from that of mainstream understanding.

Most often scripts are only the primary text for filmmakers to shoot movies, and filmmakers contribute much more to the artistic creation than the scriptwriter. For Zhang Ailing, *Taitai wansui* allows her to communicate with the audience her thoughts on common people's life. Zhang Ailing specially wrote the essay "*Taitai wansui* tiji" to elucidate the figure of Chen Sizhen before the film was publicly released at the end of 1947. This is somewhat abnormal especially since the scriptwriter instead of the director wrote the essay. Moreover, after the film was released, an unexpected harsh discussion of it took place, and most essays scolded the film and even Zhang Ailing herself. The discussion began with Hong Shen's (1894-1955) essay in which he commended Zhang

Ailing as "one of the best high comedy writers of our time,"[10] and ended ridiculously with another of Hong Shen's essay in which he self-contradictorily criticized the film and admitted his earlier mistake.[11] Most essays criticized the film and Zhang Ailing from the critical-realist perspective, arguing that the film was too superficial, lacked social significance and did not attempt to enlighten and educate the audience at all. These comments apparently evaluated *Taitai wansui* according to leftist criteria, intentionally or unintentionally ignoring that Zhang Ailing's own perspective and understanding of common people.

In *Taitai wansui*, very commonplace and familiar scenes of daily life are shown to viewers: as the mistress of a medium-sized family, Sizhen is shown busily preparing for her mother-in-law's birthday celebration. Even with trivial troubles appearing one by one, the dramatic conflicts are overlaid and diluted with an intense realistic representation of common daily life. The series of events that follow and run through the whole film are all represented in the same style—more as a random flow of quotidian insignificance than a motivated assembly of dramatic conflicts. "I sincerely admire Zhang Ailing's writing skills—for a story without story quality (*gushixing*) like *Taitai wansui*, she is able to turn it into a film script. It's definitely amazing."[12] Zhang Ailing addresses this "non-story" narrative of *Taitai wansui* in her essay "*Taitai wansui* tiji." She classifies this film into a certain category—"Joho Gassner comments upon *Our Town* with the words that 'it confirms the humanity—a simple kind of humanity, the only target is to complete its circulation of life, love and death quietly.' The theme of *Taitai wansui* is also in this category." Having realized that "the most difficult point to cope with in a Chinese audience is not low-grade taste or poor intellect, but their habits in approaching romances," Zhang nonetheless makes her effort:

> Unfortunately the mistress in *Taitai wansui* doesn't have an uncanny, taxing life experience. Her story is as plain as the texture inside wood; no matter how hard we have tried to add some dramatic elements, in viewers' eyes it is an irreparable flaw. However I always feel that the desire to replace the romances with techniques, gradually diluting the audience's unending appetite for romantic dramas, might be understood to some extent.[13]

The film visualizes an ordinary, trivial life focused on the mistress Sizhen. By representing the insignificance of daily life, Zhang Ailing has expressed her deep conscious concern about common people. In this way Zhang Ailing also satirizes themes prevalent in mainstream literature to a certain extent. For instance, in the film Sizhen's brother and her husband Zhiyuan's sister fall in love and leave home. Similar stories often appear in revolutionary literature and films—awakened young people leave home with great courage abandoning their feudal families, pursuing their ideals of freedom and true love. In *Taitai wansui*, no such noble motives are attached to their departure: the two leave home merely because of the conflict of monetary profit between the two families. Mundane affairs focusing on money replace the sublime themes of the time, such as pursuits of ideals, revolution and liberation.

Distinctly different from the mainstream revolutionary films of her time, such as *Yijiang chunshui xiangdong liu* [Spring River Flows East] and *Baqianli lu yun he yue* [Eight Thousand Li of Clouds and Moon],[14] Zhang Ailing locates the film far away from the historical and social background. She casts light on the ordinariness of human existence that is overshadowed and repressed in mainstream arts, and at the same time questions the overwhelming heroism, idealism and romanticism prevalent since the May Fourth Movement. She is seemingly indifferent to time and politics; in her writing, she investigates human beings' endurance of bare subsistence in the troubled times. From this perspective, while exceeding the temporal space-time limitation in terms of a particular

political and ideological background, her writing is endowed with a peculiar realistic, historical quality to represent human condition in a particular period of human history. In her view, the human historical process can be divided into two categories: times that are smooth and steady, and troubled times. She chooses a "non-story" narrative because "our age is essentially not a romantic one."[15] Therefore, she has decided to "utilize equivocal contrast as a means of writing the truth beneath the hypocrisy of modern people and the simplicity underneath the frivolity." [16] By doing so, Zhang offers another possible perspective to narrate the era through the cinematic form.

The happy ending is another embodiment of the equivocal contrast (in Chinese, the phrase is *Cenci de duizhao*) in Zhang's writing manner .In "*Taitai wansui* tiji," Zhang notes that she is holding an objective, neutral attitude to the characters: "I have no inclination of predilection or affirmation towards Chen Sizhen. What I have done is only to bring a person like her forward."[17] In Zhang's view, Sizhen is also one of the "merely weak and ordinary people." Therefore, she finally compromises to keep the marriage instead of divorcing with absolute determination, although till to the end, Sizhen maintains her courage and beliefs, consistently using her wits to resolve all her troubles... [18] Many viewers might have taken it for granted that Sizhen would unhesitatingly divorce Zhiyuan in the end, pursuing her true love and happiness. Hence her final compromise no doubt came as a surprise. However, as Zhang describes in her essay "Writing of One's Own":

> Times as weighty as these do not allow for easy enlightenment... So my fiction...is populated with equivocal characters. They are not heroes, but 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. They lack tragedy; all they have is desolation. Tragedy is a kind of closure, while desolation is a form of revelation.[19]

As a wife, Sizhen is someone very insignificant in the era. She is at a distance from "the dynamic and uplifting aspects of human life" and the "powerful and grand struggle"[20]; instead, she merely "deals with the trivial things within a medium-sized family, sacrificing herself at any moment to preserve the overall situation. Although she makes great efforts, compared to the cruel sacrifice of the old-fashioned virtuous wives and mothers in ancient times, she lacks the holy and heroic temperament...she looks more amiable than those women."[21] For Sizhen, her life is composed of trivial, insignificant sadnesses and joys, which are irrelevant to extreme enlightenment, and thus, she is utterly ordinary, with no aspirations to the kind of modern enlightenment May Fourth writers advocated. Sizhen, in fact, is similar to another female figure Bai Liusu portrayed by Zhang Ailing in the novel, *Love in a Fallen City*: "Liusu escapes from her corrupt traditional family, but the baptism of the Battle of Hong Kong does not transform her into a revolutionary...Thus, although Liusu and Liuyuan's marriage is healthy in some ways, it remains prosaic, earthbound, and, given their situation, it could be nothing more."[22] Derived from the similarity of their situation, similar endings are granted to each story by Zhang Ailing—"a seemingly happy ending without much true happiness."[23] The structure of the ending earned the film the reputation of a comedy, in which the plot and the scenes are comedic and ironic, while the predicament of the protagonist is somewhat tragic. Maybe this is the essence of Zhang Ailing's "equivocal contrast" and is ultimately in accordance with her aesthetics of desolation.

Writing between the Lines: Realism or Modernism

As I mentioned earlier, it is hard to categorize Zhang Ailing into any literary school of modern Chinese literature. Although some scholars tried to consider her as a member of "Shanghai School" (*haipai*), we have to admit that "*haipai*" is much more like a term

of geographical designation than a real literary school that ever existed, for the term is basically used to refer to the writers who were living and writing in Shanghai. As yet, no one has adequately generalized the common, fundamental literary characteristics of "*haipai.*" Zhang Ailing's unique style and detached pose have made many critics take for granted that she is "isolated" from all the literary currents in modern Chinese literary history and thereby so unique. However, I contend that she did not exist in a vacuum; furthermore, she has achieved her uniqueness by negotiating with the currents instead of completely isolating herself from them.

For many people it seems somehow unacceptable if someone tries to relate Zhang Ailing with realism, especially within the broader context of modern Chinese literature throughout which critical-realist literature is the dominant genre. As in Western literary history, "realism is associated particularly with the secular and rational forms of knowledge that constitute the tradition of the Enlightenment, stemming from the growth of scientific understanding in the eighteenth century;"[24] realism is tightly bound with the conscious responsibility of literature in the process of the historical, social and political transformation in China in the twentieth century. Marston Anderson performs an archaeological investigation of the usage of the term realism from its introduction into China at the turn of the century till 1942, when Mao Zedong established a new literary orthodoxy with his "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and the Arts," in his book *The Limits of Realism: Chinese Fiction in the Revolutionary Period.* Precisely as Anderson has remarked, "it is the ambiguity of the term, its protean quality, that accords it durability and power, enabling it to continually accrue new meaning in response to cultural and historical conditions."[25] In 1917, when Chen Duxiu emphasized the important role of literature in social transformation and called for new literature, he used

the word "*xieshi wenxue*" [realist literature] together with "*guomin wenxue*" [people's literature] and "*shehui wenxue*" [socialist literature].[26] His claim in general terms is viewed as a representative creed and pronouncement of the New Literature Movement. By using the word "*xieshi*", which originally came from Japan and was one of neologisms created by Meiji intellectuals when they translated Western literature and philosophy into Japanese, Chen Duxiu attached significance to the literary representation of crucial reality and the common people's life. In the early period around 1919 when the New Literature Movement was flourishing, writers such as Lu Xun broadly utilized realist literature, in which the crucial reality was vividly and profoundly represented, to enlighten the majority of Chinese people. Contrary to the Western tradition of the Enlightenment, which is an optimistic belief in human beings' rational knowledge and ability to cognize the world, in modern China the literary enlightenment is actually a negative critique of the existing social formation and popular perceptions. Therefore, critical realism became the first and best choice for the writers. In the 1930s, when revolutionary and leftist literature became significant in the literary realm, the utilitarian function of writing to serve political ends was further emphasized. This revolutionary realism was thus organized by political authority, and was bestowed the position of orthodoxy by Mao Zedong's "Talks" in 1942. Finally it was developed into an extreme formulaic creation in the peak period after the Liberation, especially during the Cultural Revolution. During the accumulation of its various connotations, as Wendy Larson has generalized, the term "realism" has also been a topic of heated debate in Chinese literary criticism since the May Fourth Movement, and in this process the connotative definition of the term has changed with changing emphases of different historical periods.[27] Despite the ongoing disputes, in general, the outstanding emphasis on literature's function in

social and historical practices throughout modern Chinese literary history makes people likely to think of critical realism as the only or the most significant form of realist literature.

However, as a mode of writing, realism definitely has much broader implications in both aesthetic and connotative levels than is manifested in mainstream literature in modern China. In his work *Fictional Realism*, having recognized Lu Xun as the master figure in modern Chinese literature, David Wang examines "dialogical voices arising within the discursive paradigm set by Lu Xun" through case studies on Mao Dun, Lao She and Shen Congwen. He thinks that these voices "valorize Lu Xun's position by questioning and even transgressing its boundaries."[28] Wang's discussion of these writers offers a fresh look and re-evaluation of the "realist" canon of modern Chinese fiction. He also further provides illumination in terms of how to view Chinese realism. In his view, realism is a "narrative domain" in modern Chinese literature, but critical realism is not "a single form of realistic expression". Wang's work brings new insight into Chinese realist literature, and thus helps us to understand the relationship between realism and Zhang Ailing's writing. Morris points out that, "[l]iterary realism has traditionally been associated with an insistence that art cannot turn away from the harsher, more sordid aspects of human existence."[29] From this perspective, Zhang Ailing's writing does have the distinct quality of realism to a great extent, even though she uses an alternative approach compared to that of mainstream literature.

First, Zhang Ailing always emphasized that she was pursuing the representation of true life— "I must find a way to rid myself of the fussiness with words of the typical well-read intellectual and begin to look for life through its essentials: wood, rice, oil, salt, soap, water and sun."[30] These things stand for the most ordinary and primary factors of

daily life, and by saying this Zhang Ailing expresses her genuine concern about common people's mundane, everyday life. Furthermore, the characters in her stories are depicted in such a vivid way that they can impress readers with authenticity: they can be selfish, miserly, spineless, cowardly, avaricious, or untruthful; no character in Zhang's stories approximates human perfection. And in Zhang Ailing's novels, descriptive passages always offer elaborate, lifelike portrayal of the quotidian details. The previously quoted passage, which depicts the setting of Zhishou's bedroom exhaustively and in detail, could be a typical example. In this passage, the author does not leave out any details, and thus the verisimilitude makes readers feel like they have personally been presented at the scene. In addition, Zhang Ailing's favorite artistic technique, namely the "equivocal contrast," which she thinks "is relatively true to life,"[31] greatly assists her in completing the representation of the morally equivocal characters that are neither extremely perverse nor particularly enlightened.

The equivocal contrast appropriately suggests a further examination of the realist quality of Zhang Ailing's writing in terms of its connotation and significance, in addition to the aesthetic aspect. Anderson notes that, in modern Chinese literature, "many realist works operate on two levels, one of 'objective' social representation and one of self-conscious allegory. At the allegorical level authors explore the resources and the limitations of the form in which they write."[32] Although he does not include Zhang Ailing in his research, this observation is also applicable to Zhang Ailing's writing. Zhang Ailing claims that tragedy "resembles... an intense and unequivocal contrast" and "yet it is more exciting than truly revelatory"; in her view, desolation resonates with the nature of human life far more profoundly because it creates the equivocal contrast and it is a form of revelation.[33] This opinion reveals Zhang Ailing's profound purpose of writing, which to a

certain extent resonates with the early realism of May Fourth literary enlightenment as in Lu Xun's novels. While the use of the term "revelation" would clearly align her with a project of modern enlightenment, her focus on humanity in its most quotidian form, clearly distinguishes her from the grand themes of nation and revolution. As she has said, "I only demand of myself that I should strive for an even greater degree of realism."[34]

In Western literary history, modernism is an important and complex artistic movement and it emerged in reaction to the realist tradition. In modern Chinese literature however, especially before the Liberation, modernist literature is a product of the direct influence of imported Western literature to a great degree. Moreover, modernism appears much more in the stylistic dimension than the philosophical one. In other words, those writings that can be recognized as modernist, mainly utilize modernist literary techniques; see, for instance, the Neo-sensationalists (*Xin ganjuepai*)' writings.[35] Modernism in China in the first half of the twentieth century never had obtained the opportunity to develop into a mature literary movement dominating mainstream literature.

One risks over-simplification and misunderstanding if one categorizes Zhang Ailing as a modernist writer. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the resonance of modernism in her writing. When Morris compares realism and modernism, he quotes from the novels of George Eliot (1819-1880) and Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) as the respective examples of the two. He points out, "we should notice the very different way in which Woolf uses language to that of Eliot. Rather than understanding words primarily as a means of accurate communication transmission, Woolf foregrounds their creative capacity."[36] In Zhang Ailing's writing this kind of creative capacity of language is also remarkable in addition to her detailed description of things, and the cooperation of the two has greatly contributed to the accomplishment of her unique aesthetic style. The most distinct

manifestation of her creative manner of using words lies in her peculiar application of imagery and metaphor. In Zhang Ailing's writing, the imagery and metaphors usually are intuitive, symbolic, suggestive and colored with a subjective projection, and therefore they always offer deeper implications than the literal meaning. Examples of this characteristic are so numerous that they can be found everywhere in her novels. I would like to offer just one example here. "A dog in the wild is barking. The bell in school is starting to ring. A string of golden rings is hanging down from the sunny sky. Of Qinxiya's blond hair, each curl is a small bell; endearing Qinxiya." This is a passage quoted from the novella *Nianqing de shihou* [*Youthful Time*]. In the passage, the dog's barking, bell's ringing and Qinxiya's blond curls are juxtaposed because of some objective resemblances, including the aural contrasts of barking and ringing, the shape resemblance between bell and curling. More significantly, the juxtaposition constructs a metaphor that indicates an underlying transition of narrative perspective from the objective omniscient narrator to the subjective consciousness of the protagonist Pan Ruliang. The writing aims to convey Pan Ruliang's sensory response, but his thought process is not explained in a rational way as in realist writing; rather, the rhythm of words here is used to directly suggest something of the actual texture and flow of his inner feeling.

The most representative modernist quality of Zhang Ailing's writing is her irrepressible perception of desolation interweaved into the text. As I have examined, this perception of desolation is the core of Zhang Ailing's thinking and aesthetics on the basis of her experience in life. From an aesthetic perspective, we can say that her writing in the later period, such as *Eighteen Springs*, is more inclined to realism with fewer striking modernist literary techniques. However, the presence of her perception of desolation has

ensured the continuity of a modernist resonance throughout her literary works. The "troubling premonition" of the coming "still-greater destruction" of human civilization always underlies her thinking, and thus in her comprehension, history and reality both have to come down to an ultimate impenetrableness and nihilism. Whereas Zhang Ailing has never mentioned the influence of Western modernism on her, her writing does coincidentally evoke it with a very similar complex, ambivalent attitude to the tangible elements of reality and the abstract conceptions in human civilization.

Through the bi-directional exploration above, I conclude that Zhang Ailing has negotiated the literary currents of realism and modernism in modern China with her unique approach and thinking, instead of isolating herself from either of them. Moreover, it is noticeable that this negotiation could be interpreted from two perspectives simultaneously. Stylistically, we can detect the influence and illumination of both modes of writing in her work and her own creation and development that are manifested in her literary techniques, while philosophically, there are many more original features constituting her specific manner of negotiation based on her own thinking on literature and human life. In addition, Zhang Ailing's writing might illustrate a new possibility of how to understand both the complexity of the development of realism and modernism in modern Chinese literature, and the connotations of the two modes of writing.

After the examination of Zhang Ailing's writing itself, in the next chapter I will extend my study to the various interpretations of Zhang's writing in contemporary Hong Kong films. As I have already suggested in the introduction, Zhang Ailing's writing, Shanghai nostalgia and Hong Kong have an interesting and close interrelationship in contemporary time. Through the discussion, I will try to make a contribution to current research on these interrelated issues.

[1] Zhou Zuoren, "Pingmin wenxue," [Literature of Common People] in *Meizhou pinglun* 5 (1911).
[2] Although here Zhou Zuoren does not directly use the general Chinese phrase "xianshi zhuyi" for realism, but according to his detailed argument, we can see that the literary "ism" he claims could be identified as a form of realism.
[3] See Jiang Guangci, "On Revolutionary Literature," ("Guanyu geming wenxue") Li Chuli, "How to Develop Revolutionary Literature" ("Zenyang de jianshe geming wenxue") and Cheng Fangwu, "From Literary Revolution to Revolutionary Literature." ("Cong wenxue geming dao geming wenxue")
[4] Qu Qiubai, "The Realist Questions on Literature and Arts of Proletarian Common People," ("Puluo dazhong wenyi de xianshi wenti") in *Wenxue*, 1932.4; "Questions on Literature and Arts of Common People," ("Dazhong wenyi de wenti") in *Wenxue yuebao* 1 (1932).
[5] Zhang Ailing, "Ziji de wenzhang;" "Wo kan Su Qing."
[6] Zhang Ailing, "Ziji de wenzhang."
[7] Ibid.
[8] Zhang Ailing, "*Taitai wansui* tiji."
[9] I must admit that actually I am very interested in Zhang Ailing's film scripts, which have received considerably less attention than her novels in Zhang Ailing scholarship. But it will be a little irrelevant if I make a complete analysis of all of them in this thesis.
[10] Hong Shen, "'*Taitai wansui* tiji' bianhou ji,"[Afterword for "*Taitai wansui* tiji"] in *Dagong bao·Xiju yu dianying*: 1947.12.3.
[11] The details of the discussion can be found in Chen Zishan's "Weirao Zhang Ailing '*Taitai wansui*' de yichang lunzheng," [A Discussion on Zhang Ailing's "*Taitai wansui*"] in *Zhang Ailing pingshuo liushi nian* [Accounts on Zhang Ailing in 60 Years], eds. Zitong and Yiqing, (Beijing: Zhongguo huaqiao chubanshe, 2001), 111-118.
[12] Sha Yi, "Ping *Taitai wansui,*" [Comments on *Taitai wansui*] in *Zhongyang ribao·Juyi*: 1947.12.19.
[13] Zhang Ailing, "*Taitai wansui* tiji."
[14] The two films were both produced by Kunlun Film Compary in 1947. The first is directed by Cai Chusheng and Zheng Junli and the second by Shi Dongshan.
[15] Zhang Ailing, "Wo kan Su Qing."
[16] Zhang Ailing, "Ziji de wenzhang."
[17] Zhang Ailing, "*Taitai wansui* tiji."
[18] In comparison to Sizhen's capabilities and virtues, her husband Zhiyuan is easily tempted, weak and cowardly. This might be one sign of Zhang Ailing's irony and deconstruction of masculinity and patriarchy, which is prevalent in her novels.
[19] Zhang Ailing, "Ziji de wenzhang."
[20] Ibid..
[21] Zhang Ailing, "*Taitai wansui* tiji."
[22] Zhang Ailing, "Ziji de wenzhang."
[23] Zhang Ailing, "*Taitai wansui* tiji."
[24] Pam Morris, *Realism* (New Fetter Lane: Routledge, 2003), 9.
[25] Marston Anderson, *The Limits of Realism: Chinese Fiction in the Revolutionary Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 6.
[26] Chen Duxiu, "Wenxue geming lun," [On Literary Revolution], in *Xin qingnian* 2 no. 6 (1917.2).
[27] Wendy Larson, "Realism, Modernism, and the Anti-'Spiritual Pollution' Campaign in China", in *Modern China* 15 no. 1 (1989.1): 39-40.
[28] David Wang, *Fictional Realism in Twentieth-Century China: Mao Dun, Lao She, Shen Congwen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 1.
[29] Pam Morris, *Realism*, preface.
[30] Zhang Ailing, "'What Is Essentical Is That Names Be Right' ," in *Written on Water*, 38.
[31] Zhang Ailing, "Ziji de wenzhang."
[32] Marston Anderson, *The Limits of Realism: Chinese Fiction in the Revolutionary Period,*7.
[33] Zhang Ailing, "Ziji de wenzhang."

[34] Ibid.

[35] Neo-sensationalist (*Xin ganjuepai*) is a literary group that appeared in Shanghai in the 1930s and its representative writers are Liu Na'ou (1900-1939), Sh.i Zhecun (1905-2003), Mu Shiying (1912-1940) and Ye Lingfeng (1905-1975). In general it is viewed as a representative modernist group in Chinese literature. Its appearance and development are directly and deeply influenced by Japanese Neo-sensationalists that appeared in the beginning of the twentieth century. Themes of this group's literary works are focused on representing the abnormal human life and twisted spiritual condition in the metropolis Shanghai. The writers have tried creative literary techniques, which are the effect of Western and Japanese modernist literature and also, films.

[36] Pam Morris, *Realism*, 15.

Chapter 3

Dynamic Dialogue Transgressing Temporal and Spatial Boundaries: Zhang Ailing's Writing through Contemporary Hong Kong Films

Literature and film, though separate media, are interdependent and interact with one another at times. In Zhang Ailing's work too we can detect this interesting interrelation, and around half a century later—when films have developed into a mature art in terms of artistic techniques and aesthetic ideas—her novels, colored with a distinct style, interested some Hong Kong directors in the 1990s. Zhang Ailing's novels became possible literary resources for cinematic adaptations. Moreover, filmic adaptations of Zhang Ailing's novels in the 1980s and the 1990s partook of the much broader cultural phenomenon of Shanghai nostalgia in Hong Kong.

Zhang Ailing: A Challenge of Filmic Adaptation

Before elaborating on the film adaptations of Zhang Ailing's novels, I would like to address the issue of film adaptation itself and the comparison of the two media linked by film adaptation.

Until now, more than twenty novels of Zhang Ailing have been published, and four of them have been adapted to film. Except *Rouge of the North* (*Yuan nü*), directed by Fred Tan in Taiwan in 1988, the other three were all shot in Hong Kong: *Love in a Fallen City* (*Qingcheng zhilian*) (1984), *Eighteen Springs* (*Bansheng yuan*) (1997) and *Red Rose White Rose* (*Hong meigui bai meigui*) (1994). Ann Hui directed the first two and Stanley

Kwan the last one. Since my interest is focused on issues related to Hong Kong, I will concentrate on these three later adaptations here. What characteristics in Zhang's novels interested these Hong Kong directors in particular? And how the filmmakers express their thoughts of Hong Kong's history and culture through the filmic adaptations of her writing? These questions will be my central focus as I examine each adaptation respectively in the following sections.

To begin with, I would like to briefly introduce some difficulties involved in adapting Zhang's novel to film, which to some extent are typical of the film adaptations in general. Needless to say, because of the different nature of the two arts, some elements of literary texts are hard or impossible to express adequately in a film medium. I discuss them here so that when I examine each adaptation later we will be able to see how the filmmakers contended with the difficulties. The challenges filmmakers might have to face mainly lie in the following four aspects:

1) Zhang Ailing is adept in handling the Chinese language to create striking aesthetic effects. Readers could gradually detect certain implication underlying the apparently simple literal meaning. For example, in the novel, *Red Rose White Rose* (*Hong meigui yu bai meigui*), when Zhenbao discovers his wife's secret affair with the tailor but does not expose it, the narrator reports: "Zhenbao feels it's not necessary for him to say anything more, so he turns around and leaves, buttoning (his raincoat) on the whole way. Why are there so many buttons?"[1] In the context of Zhang's novel, the implication of Zhenbao's unspeakable embarrassment and exasperation could be detected. The last sentence as a

question is especially interesting: it is confusing since it seems irrelevant to the whole situation. In this episode variable focalization can be detected, namely the focus has changed from the omniscient external narrator to the character Zhenbao. By asking a question, which does not demand an answer, it is indicated that Zhengbao is annoyed with the buttons, while in fact he wants to distract himself from his wife's adultery. In film, this kind of shift is very hard to be expressed well.

2) In Zhang's narration and description of characters' emotions and thoughts, she often uses peculiar allegories and metaphors. Most of them can hardly be presented to the audience through the camera lens due to the primary characteristics of film art. As the Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein has written, "There is no 'common' sorrow (in the film). The sorrow is always concrete, within a plot and along with a carrier—that means the actor is sorrowful; at the same time, the sorrow exists with the people who regale themselves of it—that means the sorrow presented must be accessible to the audience's feeling. "[2] When Zhenbao meets Jiaorui for the first time, some shaving lather on Jiaorui's hand falls on Zhenbao's hand this makes Zhenbao feel that—as narrated in the novel—there seems to be a small mouth sucking the small area of his hand. How could the audience know Zhengbao's specific feeling, which is distinctly inaccessible either through sound or sight, through any scene presented on the screen with general cinematic techniques?

3) In many of Zhang's novels, a narrator with an ambiguous identity often appears to narrate the story, to describe the characters' feeling and thoughts and to make key

comments. Here I use the word "ambiguous" because, though in most of her novels there is an invisible narrator who has the omniscient privilege of presenting almost everything, at the same time, often the narrator suddenly becomes superimposed on a certain protagonist and a semi-omniscient narration ensues. In other words, the narration often shifts unexpectedly between the author-narrator and the character-narrator. Moreover, in narratology, there are two different, yet related notions, namely "narration" and "focalization." The first is related to the question "who speaks" and the latter raises the question "who sees." Although very often acting as agents, the narrator and the focalizer could overlap or even be superimposed, while in some cases "narrators can present events from somebody else's point of view."[3] Zhang Ailing's favorite technique is to freely and continually shift between various narrators and focalizers, thus creating complex yet fascinating narrative effects. In film, filmmakers can choose to use a voice-over as a narrative device or insert the narration in the characters' dialogue, and to realize different focalization through different camera angles. However, it is relatively hard to implement the fluency of verbal texts.

4) Compared to the denseness of narration concerning the characters' inner world, the depiction of the external world (especially the natural environment) in Zhang Ailing's novels is relatively rare. Furthermore, even if we find words about the environment, most of them can be classified as a kind of psychologically colored depiction instead of a realistic, objective description which can show the original features of the environment. Undoubtedly this is something very easy to perform for an author of a novel by arranging

the words, but for a director of a film, it poses a different challenge: if the director tries to transfer the scenes depicted by Zhang Ailing perfectly into shots, the challenge will be enormous.

By listing these difficulties I am not implying that the style of the writer will limit the director's ability to translate the words on pages to images on a screen. Rather, through this generalization, I am trying to indicate several elements of Zhang Ailing's writing that pose particular difficulties to filmmakers. In the forthcoming discussions, I would like to examine how the filmmakers deal with the difficulties in their creative ways.

Tale of Two Cities: Artistic Reflection of a Historical Parallelism

Zhang Ailing spent her most important and productive years in both Shanghai and Hong Kong from 1939 to 1950. It is therefore not surprising that the two port cities provide the setting for all her writing. In the essay "Shanghainese, After All" (Daodi shi Shanghai ren), Zhang says, "I have written a book of Hong Kong romances for Shanghainese readers....the entire time I was writing these stories, I was thinking of Shanghainese people, because I wanted to try to observe Hong Kong through Shanghainese eyes."[4] This reveals that when she was composing the "Hong Kong romances," instead of simply writing stories, Zhang sought to place the two cities in one frame on the basis of her own life experience and personal understanding of the distinctive local cultures of each. Why did she want to observe Hong Kong through a Shanghainese perspective? There is no easy answer. Clearly Zhang Ailing discovered

decisive parallels between the two metropolises and her life in Hong Kong reminded her very much of her days in Shanghai. Furthermore, the essay "Shanghainese, After All" indicates that in Zhang Ailing's view, "Shanghainese are traditional Chinese people tempered by the high pressure of modern life. The misshapen products of this fusion of old and new culture may not be entirely healthy, but they do embody a strange and distinctive sort of wisdom."[5] Therefore she believes that Shanghainese "will be able truly to understand the parts where I wasn't able to make my meaning clear."[6] From these words and the Hong Kong tales she has composed, we can infer that elements of each city's cultural context could be readily translated into the other since the Shanghainese could understand her underlying implication beneath the narration of Hong Kong stories. Secondly, although Zhang Ailing realized that both local cultures shared a hybrid quality, Shanghai, to her mind, was closer to "Chinese." She believed that while Shanghai integrated old and new factors, Hong Kong was far more a Westernized colony where the East and the West both clashed and blended together. She writes in *Aloe Ashes—First Burning* that "China here is the 'China' in Western people's view, fantastic, refined, ridiculous."[7] It is precisely the simultaneous parallelism and opposition of the two cities that have enabled a spatial dialogue between the two in Zhang Ailing's writing.

Indeed, the similar historical and social experiences of the peoples living in these two cities do make a particular parallelism possible. As Ackbar Abbas points out, "the two cities seemed to have been linked at birth, which makes it possible sometimes to read what is tacit in the history of one city in the history of the other."[8] Both cities are the

earliest modernized Chinese cities in the era of semi-colonialism and semi-feudalism, sharing a painful history of being colonies governed by Western invaders and possessing a kind of hybrid culture as a mix of the Eastern and the Western, traditional and modern elements. For both cities, the obliged openness to the West after the Treaty of Nanjing of 1842-1843, and in the meantime, the settlement of numerous foreigners became the crucial determinants of the emergence and maturity of the hybrid culture, which was distinctly different from the local culture of any other Chinese city at that time. Due to the common factors in their histories, when the Hong Kong elites of the present, including filmmakers, meditate on local issues, Shanghai spontaneously becomes the "other" as opposed to Hong Kong (as the "self") in many cases—similar to what Zhang Ailing had done many years before, but in reverse.

Abbas's analysis of the cities may be illuminating from another perspective as well; for understanding the particular relationship between the two cities and the relationship between Zhang Ailing's writing and Hong Kong filmmakers. Abbas draws on what Ludwig Wittgenstein called "description"[10] and appropriated it into his studies of the cities. In Abbas's view, "de-scription" means that to interrogate the spatial history of Shanghai and Hong Kong and see how the particular cosmopolitan culture established there through the friction, disjuncture and "the mobile, fugitive, fragmentary detail."[11] Actually in the historical process of the cities' development, it is precisely through the plentiful mobile, fragmentary details that the traces of cultural formation and transformation have been potentially reflected and can be detected by careful examination.

In spite of the obvious differences between novels and films, one common characteristic of both art forms is that they represent reality with concrete images, figures and stories. Therefore when examining the two cities, the details emphasized in Abbas's "de-scription" become a crucial aspect. In Zhang Ailing's writing, the stories of the ordinary persons to a great extent contain abundant details through which readers could detect certain cultural sediments. As Zhang Ailing has said, ordinary people compose the majority that bears the burdens of times, thus their stories would provide lots of illustrations to people who attempt to explore information of different periods and different places. From this perspective, for the Hong Kong filmmakers who try to interpret Hong Kong through the parallelism between Shanghai and it, Zhang Ailing's writing is an interesting case, likely to attract their sights.

Because of the significant points discussed above, it becomes interesting for us to examine the three Hong Kong films based on Zhang Ailing's novels to clarify the dynamic relationship between Zhang Ailing's writing and Hong Kong film of today.

In the following sections I would like to examine the three Hong Kong films adapted from Zhang's novels, namely *Love in a Fallen City* (*Qingcheng zhilian*) (1984), *Eighteen Springs* (*Bansheng yuan*) (1997) and *Red Rose White Rose* (*Hong meigui bai meigui*) (1994).. By doing so I want to see, firstly how the unique nature and value of Zhang Ailing's writing provides ample space for contemporary interpretation in a variety of different dimensions and from various perspectives, especially within the unique cultural context of Hong Kong. I will also focus on how contemporary filmmakers express their

thoughts on the present and future of Hong Kong and its culture through individualized practices of adaptation of Zhang's novels. In the epilogue I will address the cultural phenomenon of "Shanghai nostalgia" in contemporary Hong Kong on the basis of my discussion of the filmic adaptations. I will also further discuss why Zhang Ailing's writing was able to obtain particular attention in contemporary Hong Kong.

Love in a Fallen City: A Historical Event Interwoven with a Mundane Romance

Ann Hui is an accomplished female director who has been consistently active in the field of Hong Kong cinema since the 1980s. As one of the representative directors of the renowned Hong Kong New Wave—undoubtedly a milestone in the history of Chinese-language cinema—Ann Hui's achievement is widely admired. The comment offered by Elaine Yee-lin Ho is to a certain extent typical:

> The career and films of Ann On-wah Hui over the past three decades have inscribed the transitional history of Hong Kong cinema from domination by imported English-language and Mandarin films to the production of a corpus of indigenous-language films of artistic quality and merit. Hui herself has, in turn, acted to bring this history into being.[12]

Ann Hui is renowned for her humanistic treatment of common people who are witnesses to important historical and territorial transitions. One distinct manifestation of this characteristic is that in her films, Hui often visualizes the particular junctures between individual experiences and historical process by narrating stories of common people in a realistic style.

As I have discussed in earlier chapters, Zhang Ailing is an author who consciously

stayed detached from the mainstream themes of the age she was living in, namely the themes tightly linked to historically and socially crucial issues like foreign invasion and civil war. From this perspective, the novella, *Love in a Fallen City,* is an exception in Zhang Ailing's writing because she directly addresses a significant historical event in this work, namely the Japanese invasion and occupation of Hong Kong in 1941-1945, and uses it as a vital turning point in the protagonists' lives in the plot development of the novel. Bai Liusu is a young, divorced woman who comes back to live with her big family. Facing the hostility of her family members, she has to look for another suitable man to get married to. Fan Liuyuan is a British-born and -raised Chinese man. When he meets Liusu, he is attracted to her, viewing her as a typical Chinese woman. But he does not want to marry her, even though he likes her. The two shrewd people begin to play a "love game" for their individual purposes. Finally Liuyuan takes the superior position and buy a house for Liusu in Hong Kong as recompense. However when he is leaving for Britain Japanese troops attack Hong Kong and occupy it. During this period of vital hardship, Liusu and Liuyuan have to depend on each other and survive together. In the end they get married and become an ordinary couple: Hong Kong's defeat gives Liusu her final victory.

Probably because of the particularity of this story—a perfect integration of an individual story and a historical event—Hui selected this novella to adapt as film in 1984. Undoubtedly, the four years during which Hong Kong was occupied by Japan was a difficult and important period in both Hong Kong history and the memory of the Hong Kong people. For Hui, a local director who consciously looks back upon Hong Kong

history through the camera lens, this period surely cannot be skipped over. Zhang Ailing reflects the interaction between individual life and grand historical events in her writing in a distinct manner. At the same time, Zhang Ailing's purpose in writing ("to look for the common people in the legends and to look for legends among common people"[13]) is in agreement with Hui's manner of composing the story in her film.

However, the perspectives of Zhang and Hui are distinctly different despite the same story plot. This essential difference, moreover, leads to different approaches to narration and performance on a variety of levels. For Zhang Ailing the purpose of composing the story of *Love in a Fallen City* was to express some of her profound thoughts about life, love, and contingency in the destiny of human beings. Throughout the storyline, Zhang Ailing attempts to address the enigmatic interrelationship between larger human history and the seemingly insignificant individual experience, and the unpredictability and trickiness of human beings' fate. Her favorite theme of "fugacity" appears here again. This story is apparently singular out of all of Zhang's writing because it has a happy ending—the protagonists get married at last—and seems contrary to Zhang's preferred tragic mode of popular fiction. However as Leo Ou-fan Lee points out, in her narration Zhang always gives "desolate implications" everywhere and beyond the happy ending.[14] As we can see, Zhang is the narrator who comments with layers of profound irony in the novel:

> Hong Kong's defeat had given her victory. But in this unreasonable world, who can say which was the cause and which the result? Who knows? Maybe it was in

> order to vindicate her that an entire city fell...Liusu did not feel that her place in history was anything remarkable.[15]

Hui quotes this exact section in an intertitle card to end the film. Judging from Hui's style of narration in the whole film we can infer that the interpretation Hui wants to offer the audience through the storyline is distinctly different from Zhang's. What concerns Hui here is the dramatic representation of the crucial moment in history through an individual's personal vision and feelings: the series of images depicting the scenes of the cruel battles between the British and the Japanese, the close-up shot of the characters' consternation and powerlessness when faced with the oncoming war, and the serious damage and destruction seen everywhere. Hui's emphasis is more on the historical event rather than the individual life, thus the characters to some extent become symbols bestowed with a historical connotation in the larger event of history. This does not mean that Hui does not care for human beings; rather, she cares of human beings' living experience on a general level instead of the individual level of Liusu or Liuyuan. In fact, Hui narrates the story in a manner different from Zhang Ailing. Using a hypothesis we can see the difference more clearly. If we change the particular location of Hong Kong where the event in the story took place, it would probably not affect much of Zhang Ailing's original design and target; but for Hui, it would directly deconstruct the foundation of the film.

The distinct difference between Zhang and Hui's work resulted in the film being criticized by many viewers and critics as a failed deviation or even a crude betrayal of the

novel after it was released. For instance Leo Ou-fan Lee thinks that it is an adaptation "without Zhang's taste at all."[16] Even Hui herself thought it somewhat problematic many years later. If the film is judged on the basis of the novel, the film seems to fail in retelling the story in an attractive way: the filmic narration of the story is too flat and fails to include the abundant implications and charm manifest in Zhang Ailing's writing. Also, the actress Cora Miao seems to be unsuitable to play the role of Liusu. Her restrained performance and inflexible style are both inadequate in representing the particular psychology and personality of Zhang's character vividly. With the background of being a divorced woman struggling in a 1940s big, old-fashioned family in Shanghai, Liusu is presented by Zhang as a woman whose personality is a magical admixture of elegance and enchantment, loveliness and canniness, poetry and earthiness. Her distinct personality is one important factor that stimulates the development of the plot. To some degree, Miao's performance destroyed the original internal logic and continuity of the development of the story plot of the novel.

However, if leaving the novel aside, we find that Hui offers a new internal logic and continuity for the story. In the early 1980s, Hui and several other young directors including Tsui Hark, Ronnie Yu, Alex Cheung and Patrick Tam shot innovative films that are regarded as New Wave films of Hong Kong. Among them, Hui manifests a strong consciousness of social and historical responsibility in the context of Hong Kong, and the significant achievements of her other films have testified to the inherent merit of the director's consciousness. In this film, on the basis of her understanding of Zhang Ailing's

original work, Hui tries to express her thinking on Hong Kong history. Although the novel is set in both Shanghai and Hong Kong, in the film the storyline takes place in Hong Kong has been particularly emphasized. The setting of Hong Kong is apparently more significant: the famous Repulse Bay Hotel built in 1920 and the typical view of the Repulse Bay are presented with high frequency in the whole film. In contrast, the scenes of Shanghai are almost indoor ones with very simple setting; furthermore they are somewhat short in portraying the particular sense of 1940s Shanghai. The detectable emphasis on Hong Kong implies that in the film Shanghai's position has been reduced from being one of the parallel settings of the story, to merely working as the heroine Liusu's personal background. Another aspect of this emphasis can be detected from the protagonists. In the film, all the scenes in which Liusu and Liuyuan are both present totally in the background of Hong Kong; Liuyuan (Yun-Fat Chow) is never directly presented in the setting of Shanghai. In addition, despite their respective origins of Shanghainese (Liusu) and British-born and -raised Chinese (Liuyuan), in the film both of them, especially Liusu, are oddly shown with a rapid acclimation to Hong Kong, as if they were completely native there. There is one shoot, which is very interesting: when the hotel is attacked by the Japanese, Liuyuan is working seriously with the British soldiers to restore the defense (!). In the novel as delineated by Zhang Ailing, Liuyuan is someone who cares a lot about his own appearance of dressing and manner. It is hard to imagine that Liuyuan would act in this way. However, precisely this paradoxical shoot might imply Hui's purpose. Liuyuan's behavior could be viewed as a metaphor for the optimism

and sturdiness of Hong Kong culture: when vital tribulations are coming, Hong Kong people will not escape but face them together with their city/home.

The film was shot in 1984, a time before the cultural phenomenon of "Shanghai nostalgia" emerged in Hong Kong. Hui's emphasis on Hong Kong itself thus is quite understandable since Shanghai had not entered the vision of Hong Kong people as a manifest parallel city of Hong Kong. Also with her own concern to "work to cultivate an audience,"[17] Hui might have consciously abandoned Zhang's style of narration and the original connotation of the story.

Zhang created the story, constructing its plot to serve her own purpose as I mentioned in previous paragraphs. In her writing two details deserve great attention. One is the grey wall in front of which Liuyan talked to Liusu about the eternity of affection and destruction of human civilization; the other is the poem in *The Book of Songs* (*Shi jing*): Liuyuan calls Liusu at midnight and recites the poem for her, and then he remarks that people cannot decide their fate at all but ridiculously like to promise eternity. Through these details Zhang Ailing expresses her doubt about human power and signs for the fugacity of human fate especially in the troubled times like the 1940s in East Asia. In Zhang Ailing's view, Hong Kong being occupied by Japanese is precisely a typical example of the fugacity. In the novel, Liuyuan talks to Liusu that, "one day when our civilization is destroyed totally, and everything is over...if we meet each other at that time in front of this wall, Liusu, probably you will have some true love to me, and I will have some true love to you."[19] Liuyuan's words are like a prediction for Hong Kong. For

Hong Kong being attacked and occupied by Japanese could be seen as a form of culture destruction. Since Zhang Ailing herself has experienced the event, she could utilize it in her writing to meditate profoundly on human life and fate. However from the perspective of Hui, who is a contemporary Hong Kong person, this event has a direct, concrete historical signification for Hong Kong and Hong Kong people, instead of being an abstract metaphor in Zhang Ailing's view. How to think about this particular history and what have been its effects on Hong Kong's development, are the questions that Hui is concerned with deeply. Thus, although Hui has maintained the main structure of the storyline in Zhang's novel, she imposes her own interpretation with a historical, social consciousness, trying to look at Hong Kong history through Zhang Ailing's writing

Despite the difference between Hui's and Zhang's approaches, we can detect a profound connection between the two, when analyzed from another perspective. In Zhang Ailing's view, the proper way for an author to compose is to "give the readers what they want to read. Aside from that, give them a bit of something else."[21] What do the readers want? For Zhang, the readers in 1940s Shanghai needed mundane romances to help them temporarily forget the pain and hardship of being occupied; for Hui, the audience in highly commercialized Hong Kong needed a mundane romance to relieve the tension and pressure imposed by a dynamic, relentlessly fast-paced society. Then what is the "something else" given by the two artists to their readers/audiences? For Zhang, it is her profound abstract insight on human history and human life hidden behind the story; for Hui, it is her historical, social consciousness and concern, which represents the particular

juncture between individual experiences and historical process, interwoven with the mundane romance. From this point of view, the unique aspect of Zhang's writing—the successful combination of profundity and commonality— attracted Hui and offered her a space to retell, from another angle in her film adaptation, the story as it happened in the fallen city. Also it could be said that Hui had understood Zhang and her story, and reached the same goal as Zhang through a different route.

Eighteen Springs: A Harmony of Recurrence and Re-Writing

In comparison to *Love in a Fallen City*, *Eighteen Springs*, which is shot by the same director Ann Hui after thirteen years, has obtained more positive reviews. In an interview, Hui comments on the film saying that "what I want to do is just to revert to the original, unlike some other directors, since what they want is not only to revert but also to deduce something else beyond the original work."[22] Here Hui's usage the word "revert" reveals that she chooses to go back to the safer way of directing a film based on a literary work—to maintain the maximum fidelity to the original literary work. Unlike *Love in a Fallen City,* which is a novella, the original *Half a Lifetime Love* is a voluminous novel of seventeen chapters. It definitely was challenging for Hui to visualize the whole story, which takes place over a span of eighteen years, in a two-hour movie. For Hui to revert actually means to concentrate on the essence of the story as narrated by Zhang Ailing in finite images in a *proper* way, with her acute perception, discernment and understanding. Here "proper" means that Hui decided to visualize the story in a style similar to how Zhang narrates it, maintaining Zhang's perspective to construct the original atmosphere of

the novel. Applying techniques of cinematography such as film speed, filters, lighting, focus and ways of visualizing space, time and movement in a mature, stylish manner, this time Hui successfully assembled an absorbing cinematic visuality, which is inscribed with her own distinct style and realizes her initial goal: to revert to Zhang Ailing's writing in cinematic form. Here a series of interesting questions come up: why did Hui choose this novel to adapt and why did she decide to change her way of adaptation from interpreting the story in a discourse contrary to Zhang's to reverting devotedly to Zhang's? Did she really do nothing more than revert to Zhang's narrative? I shall endeavor to answer these questions below.

Half a Lifetime Love is somewhat unique in Zhang's oeuvre, for the story relates an ordinary and normal emotion between the male and the female, instead of the abnormal, misshapen forms prevalent in Zhang's writing. Gu Manzhen and Shen Shijun are two ordinary young people in Shanghai in the 1940s. They are colleagues and fall in love with each other. They are planning their marriage, but a series of accidents in their respective families disturb them and their family members become their stymies. Finally they lose touch with each other for quite a long time. Eighteen years later, when they both have married someone else, they encounter each other in the end. However, they can never go back to the past. The tragedy in this story is the outcome of the theme of "loss." Having been thwarted by objective impediments and the negative side of human beings' personality again and again, the pure, true love between the protagonists is smothered and strangled at last. Definitely this story tallied with Hui's purpose of pursuing a "plain,

ordinary and familiar feeling"[23] in common people's life to begin with and attracted her to make an adaptation. Nevertheless, there might be a deeper level that also brought the novel into Hui's vision. I would like to further discuss it in the process of examining how Hui reproduces and "rewrites" this story at the same time in a film.

To emphasize the theme of "loss," though Hui defines her directing as reverting to Zhang Ailing's vision, she formulates her own narrative in a subtle way. In the novel, readers could witness the story with an omniscient perspective; in the film, in addition to the camera's omniscient narration, Hui also presents the interior monologue of the protagonists. According to Patricia Brett Erens's research, Hui frequently uses voiceover, allowing viewers to experience a character's interior subjectivity.[24] In this film she utilizes this technique again. As alternate voice-over narrators, the voices of Manzhen and Shijun are combined to establish a harmony while retaining their own linear individuality. This strategy proves to be a useful psychographic supplement to extend and deepen the latent signification behind the images. At the beginning of the film the interior monologue of the heroine, Manzhen, indicates that there were four times the protagonists had missed one another before they formally got to know one another. This apparently is an omen for the ultimate tragic ending. The most noticeable shot in this section is of a long, narrow and dim hallway, where the protagonists walk towards one another and pass by without any expression; yet at the moment they are passing by each other, the only light in the hallway lightens both faces in a warm color, distinctly contrasting with the dark background on screen. This symbolic image alludes to the future love between the two,

while setting a sorrowful mood of the story.

In this film, Hui deals with the plot through intermittent flash-forward shots. The "future" episodes spatially overlap with the present in the ongoing plot. Meanwhile, the well-chosen colors, lighting, and music sharpen the atmosphere. One typical scene, for example, shows that when Shijun is waiting for Manzhen outside the evening school where she works, his happiness is expressed by more than just his expression. The director further utilizes warm tones, which give priority to the bright yellow in the frame, and blends various sounds and music, which in turn evoke an upsurge of Shijun's emotion. Suddenly, however, the camera moves backward rapidly and the sound effects are abruptly interrupted, as the tones turn completely cold. The viewers find that now the visual focalization on the same place is traced back to the vision of "another" Shijun, who is sitting in a trolley several years later. This sudden transition from the previous close-up shot to the following long shot jumps over quite a long temporal period. It breaks the comparatively slow rhythm of the narration and establishes a sharp contrast between the past and the present, producing a strong impact on the viewers' feeling and their perception of how sorrowful and suffering the protagonists are when they have helplessly lost each other for so long a time.

For the cinematic techniques discussed above, Hui's comments on Zhang Ailing's literary language could possibly offer an answer as to why she utilized them to supplement the narration in the novel:

> I think that Chang's language is something that is really impossible to surmount as a filmmaker. The characteristics of her language, especially her descriptions and abstractions, are almost 80 percent untranslatable. Also, Eileen Chang's wonderful depictions of people's emotions and her ability to convey very subtle changes in mood and feeling are extremely complicated and almost impossible to visualize. Those are things that you have to give up when adapting Eileen Chang's work, even if you want to be as faithful as possible....[25]

"Untranslatable" and "impossible" indicate that in Hui's view, to be completely faithful to Zhang's writing is ideal but not practicable, even though she wants to. Since she has given up some elements when adapting, she has to supplement with something else to re-perfect the narration.

Compared to Zhang Ailing's other novels, there seems to be less underlying tension in her narrative of *Half a Lifetime Love*. Firstly, as I mentioned before, this story is based on an ordinary, normal, even nice affection between the protagonists; secondly, in this work the author Zhang Ailing does not abruptly insert her own comments in the text, like she does in other works; rather, she retreats behind the scenes and only lets the characters say and act by themselves all along. However, in her seemingly mild, objective narration, the particular sense of "desolation" pervades more broadly and deeply: the protagonists are both kind, unselfish, sincere persons, but they still cannot obtain their happiness. They will probably keep on loving each other for the rest of their lives, but they can never "go back to the past" to get hold of their happiness. From this perspective, their love is something of an unavoidable disappearance.

The film was shot in 1997, a time when "Shanghai nostalgia" had been a prevalent topic in Hong Kong cinema. In the 1990s, several films, in which the particular theme of

old Shanghai (the 1930s-1940s Shanghai) could be found, were shot in Hong Kong, such as Stanley Kwan's *Rouge* (1987), *Centre Stage* (1992), *Red Rose White Rose* (1994), and Kar-wai Wong's *In the Mood for Love* (2000). Hui's *Eighteen Springs* can also definitely be categorized as one of these films. Within the local political, social and cultural context of facing the regress of Hong Kong to China in 1997, the question of how to identify Hong Kong culture in this crucial historical transition rose. Yingchi Chu points out that, from the 1980s to the 1990s, Hong Kong's perspective of itself had changed because of Sino-British Joint Declaration signed in 1984: it has to adjust its identification in the triangular relationship between the British colonizer, the Chinese motherland and itself.[26] The main reason for the great interest in old Shanghai in Hong Kong cinema is that old Shanghai could be viewed as a symbol of Chinese motherland or Chinese culture and, as a parallel city, which seems to be another "self" of Hong Kong.

I will address the issue of nostalgia further at the end of the chapter. Now let us come back to the discussion of Hui's *Eighteen Springs*. Different from *Love in a Fallen City*, the profound connotation of thinking on human life and the diffused sense of desolation in Zhang Ailing's writing interested Hui deeply this time, instead of the concrete storyline of Zhang's novel. Although in Winnie Chung's view generally Hui's films, which include early successes like *Boat People* (1982) and more recent films like *Summer Show* (1997) and *Eighteen Springs*, have set a standard for "down-to-earth tales of ordinary lives in ordinary worlds,"[27] from *Love in a Fallen City* to *Eighteen Springs*, we can detect some latent transformation and development of Hui's thoughts in film directing, which cannot

be isolated from the broader local social and cultural context of Hong Kong. An interesting detail deserves our particular attention in *Eighteen Springs*. As I mentioned in the introduction, the novel has two versions published in 1950 and 1968 with different endings. The former ending is bright and positive in which, after the Liberation, the main characters begin their new lives by participating in the revolutionary work. Yet in the revised version the story ends sorrowfully before the Liberation when Manzhen and Shijun encounter one another after several years and all the political factors are removed. To end the film, of the two, Hui chooses the latter sorrowful ending, which seems more pessimistic. This choice to some extent reveals that this time Zhang Ailing's idea expressed in the novel has resonated with Hui, who is experiencing the complex attitude of Hong Kong people towards the crucial historical transition in 1997. When Manzhen speaks to Shijun that "we cannot go back to the past any more," is Hui implying something about Hong Kong's past and future? Although the answer is unknown yet, we cannot ignore the underlying resonance in terms of emotions and thoughts between Hui and Zhang.

The film was shot in the Mainland cities of Shanghai and Nanjing. Both the carefully selected locations and elaborately designed indoor settings make the very particular atmosphere of 1930s and 1940s Shanghai appropriately recur to viewers. By making this film this way, Hui, a Hong Kong director, actually is looking back at the particular historical period in China from a perspective, which is located within the broader Chinese context, instead of a stander-by's view. This probably reveals that in the inevitable

historical transition, Hong Kong is attempting to reconstruct its historical and cultural identification with China, which is its real motherland.

On the basis of the resonance and recurrence, Hui also makes an effort to "rewrite" the story with her own understanding and thoughts. One particular aspect is that she preserves her humanist concern of common people's life and their spiritual world. In the novel, Zhang Ailing holds her stance of gazing down on the characters' lives, completely restricting herself to be an onlooker. Her narrative tone is always omniscient, explicitly calm with some implicit irony, because in her perspective, these common people are "wretched, unsightly, and disconcerting submission."[28] Different from Zhang's narration, in which the negative traits of many characters' personalities are exposed to readers without mercy, Hui takes another approach to manifest of her characters' personalities. She has a sympathetic attitude to all the characters, even "villains" such as Manlu, who cold-bloodedly helps her husband rape her sister to ensure her own stable life, and Zhu Hongcai, who brutally rapes Manzhen. Instead of being the scoundrel without any compunction , as in the novel, in the film the figure Zhu is represented with a multidimensional personality: he finally is overcome with his inner guilt. By transforming Zhang's text in this way, Hui expresses her own profound understanding of the complexity of humanity. On the basis of Zhang's sorrowful story, which could easily make people feel despair and hopeless, Hui interprets it as something that could still imply the hope of redemption. The sympathetic connotation implied in the film is more like a re-writing than a reversion to Zhang Ailing's original story, because what Hui has

done is actually to rescue the "wretched, unsightly" figures from Zhang. Through this rescue, perhaps Hui tries to rescue viewers and herself from Zhang Ailing's inherent subjective apartness and absolute desperation, leaving some faint yet available light of hope or of the positive side of human life.

Red Rose White Rose: Satire on Patriarchy and Disenchantment of Feminine Subjectivity

Now I want to address the film, *Red Rose White Rose,* directed by Stanley Kwan. Although also adapted from one of Zhang Ailing's novels, this film is distinctly different from the two directed by Ann Hui in terms of narrative, cinematic technology and the underlying connotation. In the credits for *Love in a Fallen City*, Stanley Kwan's name appears as an assistant director. No doubt his experience on the set of Hui's film became one motivation for Kwan to visualize Zhang Ailing's novel in his own manner and style. Kwan acquired his reputation in Hong Kong cinema and then internationally somewhat later than Hui, directing his first film, *Female Heart* (*Nüren xin*), in 1984. From then on he began to build his own cinematic world, focusing almost exclusively on female life and subjectivity. In addition to *Female Heart*, his other main works including *Rouge* (*Yanzhi kou*) (1987), *Full Moon in New York* (*Renzai Niuyue*) (1990), *Centre Stage* (*Ruan Lingyu*) (1992) and *Red Rose White Rose* discussed here. These films are all strong evidence for his talent of skillfully mastering feminine themes, profoundly exploring and vividly exhibiting a female spiritual world, so as to earn him the reputation of being a director of "women's pictures."[30]

As I mentioned, *Red Rose White Rose* which was shot in 1994 is another Hong Kong film with a theme closely related to old Shanghai.[31] The design of the onscreen captions first gives viewers a strong impression of reading an old novel. The images emerging in sequence look like the pages of the novel, with Kwan as the invisible hand that turns the pages to present the gradual development of the storyline in a mild rhythm while appropriate tension is still available.

Generally in the frame of a film, there is only one form of narration in any of the following three forms: voice-over, onscreen and intertitle. From this point of view, *Red Rose White Rose* is quite unique. There are two separate forms of narrators in two different forms of narration available simultaneously, one of which is a voice-over and the other is intertitle. Moreover, it is confusing to a certain extent that, although the voice-over narrator is using the voice of the hero, Zhenbao, the standpoint of this narrator is that of a third person. As for the intertitles, always taken verbatim from Zhang's novel, they are often long (sometimes up to a whole paragraph) compared to those generally used in other films. This intermingling of the narrators makes the film seemingly tend towards the discursive and wordy.

However, if we probe into the signification of this strategy, we discover that Kwan has an elaborate purpose in formulating his peculiar manner and style of narrative. In most cases where the narrators appear, the voice starts first and the intertitle follows right after. Although both use the original words from Zhang's novel, the function performed by the two narrators can still be distinguished upon careful examination. The voice

focuses on the external narration, such as the impression Zhenbao makes upon others and their evaluation of his morality and personality; the intertitle often offers some hints about Zhenbao's interior monologue and real thoughts. Sometimes these two narrators are superficially very similar but some elements imply an interesting ironic contrast. In one scene, for example, the voice first says, "he never discusses his past with others but all his friends know he is a saint. That is his reputation." Following the voice, the intertitle writes, "he is a decent, respectable man who draws a clear distinction between a lady and a whore." Here the ironic, ridiculous point emerges. "A saint" is his reputation among his friends, and yet, though he estimates himself as a "decent, respectable man," what does it mean for a saint to know so clearly the precise distinction between a lady and a whore? A saint will keep his saintly virtues whether the woman he faces is a lady or a whore. We can therefore detect an implied irony here, on Zhenbao's hypocritical nature.

Furthermore, although these two narrators both seem to be omniscient in Zhenbao's own world, when they encounter the issues of the two heroines, Jiaorui and Yanli, they become somehow weak and powerless. There seems to be an invisible wall, which prohibits the omniscient narration of the male from probing into the female spiritual world; this constitutes an implied ridicule of the superficial, offensive self-satisfaction of the figure of Zhenbao. Many critics have commented on gender subjectivity and a feminist concern implied in Zhang Ailing's writing in terms of deconstruction of masculinity. For instance, Lim Chin Chow analyzes the castration parody and male "castration" in Zhang Ailing's writing and points out that this is precisely her

anti-patriarchal strategy in her feminist narrative.[32] With Kwan's direction a much clearer interrogation and subversion of masculinity becomes explicit to the audience. One representative example in the film is when, right after the voice says, "Yanli always loyally defends Zhenbao when she faces others, even Zhenbao has overindulged himself excessively," ridiculously the next shot shows Yanli complaining about Zhenbao's follies to Zhenbao's brother and even mentioning divorce. The opposition is distinctly clear-cut. Instead of directly revealing his personal opinion, Kwan implicitly yet acutely satirizes masculinity.

Extending the examination from the unreliability and limitations of the narrators in the film—based on Zhenbao's standpoint, in terms of understanding and controlling the female world—we can investigate the theme of the story. Obviously the story can be categorized as a representation of the subtle, equivocal relationship between the male and the female, and the unevenly balanced situation inside of which, the subjectivities of the two genders conflict, compromise and co-exist simultaneously. Both being artists who were interested in and sensitive to the issue of gender, Zhang Ailing and Stanley Kwan select different manners and standpoints of narration for the same story and interpret the theme with their own distinct style, namely choosing different narrative approaches. Here I am using the definition of "narrative" given by Celestino Deleyto:

> *Narrative* is a way of comprehending space, time, and causality. Since in film there are at least two important frames of reference for understanding space, time, and causality, narrative in film is the principle by which data is converted from the frame of the *screen* into a *diegesis*—a world—that frames a particular *story*, or sequence of actions, in that

world; equally, it is the principle by which data is converted from story onto screen.[33]

Although in this definition Deleyto is particularly focusing on narrative in film, the definition itself is also applicable for defining narrative in other kinds of art, including fiction due to the underlying common characteristics among various branches of art.

Filmmaking is undoubtedly a process of re-creation even if the filmic adaptation and original fiction are narrating the same story. When a director breaks the original fiction's sequence and structure of elements of the story and rearranges them in a new frame, a different narrative is forged and furthermore a different implicit signification is revealed. Narrating the same love stories of Zhenbao, Jiaorui and Yanli, Zhang and Kwan frame it with their own comprehension of space, time and causality. In written fiction, we can easily detect a distinct line between the two parts of the story—the first half is about Jiaorui and Zhenbao and the rest focuses on Zhenbao and Yanli. But in the film, the two threads are tangled together and by doing this, Kwan purposely interprets the story from a perspective different from Zhang's, showing a distinct feminine concern. The structure in the fiction makes the hero Zhenbao occupy the center of the narration: he is pivotal to link and integrate the two parts into a whole story. The two heroines, respectively as his "red rose" and "white rose", are situated in inferior positions, functioning as supplements to enrich the story focused on Zhenbao's life. In contrast, in the film, since the two threads are tangled together, the three protagonists are represented in an interrelated way. In the climax, Zhenbao first encounters his ex-lover Jiaorui, disappointedly finding that instead of being defeated after he left her, she has obtained mature thoughts about life and love.

Then he is frustrated by his wife Yanli's indifference to his bravado in the family. Juxtaposing the two series of scenes together, Kwan creates an objectively intense impact on viewers' perception of Zhenbao's thorough frustration and failure at the relationship between genders. At the end of the written fiction, Zhenbao suddenly sympathizes with Yanli when he sees her shoes on the floor: "it seems that there is a ghost who dares not to reveal her true features, faintheartedly walking towards him and imploring."[34] Thus he decides to mend his way of life to be a good man again. However in the film, the ending is a remarkable revision: after Zhenbao is enlightened because of his encounter with Jiaorui and frustrated by Yanli's indifference to his bravado, he frustratedly returns to the former way of living as a good man. Although to some degree Zhang Ailing also implies the irony of Zhenbao's frustration, she always prefers to narrate the story as a dispassionate onlooker with her profound thoughts about human life and humanity. This results in the portrayal of characters in her writing as rationally penetrating and incisive, so that the limitation of each person's personality is calmly revealed without any inclination. Compared to her dispassionate stance, Kwan's narrative expresses more explicit interrogation of the rooted patriarchy in traditional Chinese culture.

Moreover, comparing the diegesis structured in Zhang and Kwan's narratives, we can detect some other distinct differences that could also reveal Kwan's particular concern with feminine topics. The first is the manner of dealing with noticeable details in the story. In one scene, Zhenbao and Jiaorui encounter an old lady, who is the mother of one of Zhenbao's friends in England. The original conversation, which reveals the lady's

superficial superiority as a foreigner in the text, is completely replaced by the story narrated in Zhang's essay, "With the Women on the Tram" (*Younü tongche*): the lady tells Zhenbao how her son quarreled with her and apologized to her later. This revision highlights Kwan's attempt to tightly focus the whole plot on the theme of gender, holding a female perspective. This is in harmony with Zhang's profound comments at the end of her essay, "women—women whose lives are consumed in talking about men, thinking about men, resenting men, now and forever."[36]

Another fundamental difference between the narratives of Zhang and Kwan is the issue of disenchantment with the development of female consciousness as embodied by the two heroines. In Zhang's work, we witness how Jiaorui grows up from an impulsive girl in terms of dealing with relationships into a mature and composed lady. In Kwan's film, a very similar progress is successfully represented: Jiaorui tells Zhenbao that she has realized that "anyway love is nice..." and "besides men there are something else...", and these words imply that there is a development in Jiaorui's thoughts about love and life.

However, as for the representation of the other female character, Yanli, Kwan makes great efforts to exceed what Zhang has done. We can detect the distinct trace of disenchantment with the development of female consciousness through this female figure. In Zhang's fiction, Yanli is represented as a cowardly, sheepish and passive female without any ability to struggle when she has to face Zhenbao's abominable disloyalty. When she knows Zhenbao has discovered her affair with the dressmaker, Zhang implies that she is scared, with the following words: "Zhenbao picked up the pedestal of the table

lamp and threw it with the wire towards Yanli. She turned over in a hurry and escaped outside...." After the dramatic conflict, when Zhenbao wakes up at midnight, he finds Yanli's embroidered shoes on the floor, seeming "that there is a ghost who dares not to reveal her true features, faintheartedly walking towards him and imploring."[37] In a word, Yanli is a representative figure of old-fashioned Chinese women who have been deeply influenced and possessed by traditional ideas and values.

Kwan, on the contrary, endows the personality of this female character with the consciousness of an independent individual. This recomposition is colored with some feminist thoughts in terms of her discovery of herself as an individual, especially as an independent female, casting off the shadow of patriarchy.[38] In the film, the scene we mentioned in the previous paragraph is visualized with remarkable implications of a gradual development of Yanli's female subjectivity. When Zhenbao throws things irately, Yanli just slowly walks downstairs in a distinctly calm manner, which shows that she does not care about Zhenbao's anger at all. In contrast, Zhenbao's face is distortedly reflected in the broken pieces of the mirror—a pale face overcome with helplessness and bewilderment. There are many other shots that also reveal exquisitely the germination and development of female subjectivity in Yanli's mind. For instance, there is a series of shots switching between Zhenbao in the bathhouse and Yanli in the washroom: the particular private environment and the partly naked body of both imply, for the audience the germination of Yanli's sexual consciousness, foreshadowing the scene where Yanli consciously pursues her own enjoyment of sexuality with the dressmaker.

Shuqin Cui remarks that, "[t]he orientation of Kwan's cinema toward the feminine and its place in a moment of historical transition call attention to the relatedness of Hong Kong, gender, and history... Kwan takes an unusual slant in examining questions of past and present through articulations of the female image."[39] In this film, through the intertextual conflict and tension between the male and the female, Kwan expresses his concerns about women's disenchantment of their ideal expectation from men and the development of feminine subjectivity in a multidimensional frame, which comprises several dualistic sub-frames of male/female, history/present and China/Hong Kong. As I mentioned before, compared to Zhang Ailing's novel, Kwan's narrative in the film is a more explicit interrogation of the rooted patriarchy in traditional Chinese culture. This attempt is remarkable since Kwan has taken a particular point of view in which bidimensional significance can be detected. On the one hand, Kwan is deploying a thought-provoking self-examination of gender relationships from the perspective of the male; on the other hand, more significantly, he is looking back at a particular period of Chinese history from the position of not only a contemporary person but also particularly, a contemporary Hong Kong person, who holds an ambiguous historical and cultural identity within the specific socio-cultural context, which is deeply affected by Hong Kong's complicated relationship with China. Therefore through a "dialogue" with Zhang Ailing who lived in 1940s Shanghai, Kwan assumes a new interpretation of the story on a broader level in 1990s Hong Kong.

Epilogue: Nostalgia in Contemporary Hong Kong Film

As many critics have pointed out, nostalgia is a significant theme of Hong Kong cinema since the 1980s. Hong Kong, a British colony for 150 years was about to be returned to China in 1997 according to the final results of the negotiation between Britain and China. With a specific local history and reality, Hong Kong encountered the peak of its identity crisis since the late 1980s. "The city is discovering itself at the very moment of its disappearance."[40] The embarrassment of not being entirely attached to either side, China or Britain, and yet needing to be attached to both sides, the anxiety about the future, and the aspiration for a stable and secure well-being are intermixed together, structuring the ambiguous complexity of Hong Kong people's psychology during that period.

"While the concerned public considers the future of Hong Kong since its return to China, serious film productions in Hong Kong have turn to the past, seeking notions of history and identity, questions long ignored in the discourse of Hong Kong."[41] The filmmakers consciously began to pursue a cultural nostalgia probably with two purposes: one, to relieve the feelings of invisible stress and to ponder seriously upon Hong Kong's identity through history and the present in diverse artistic expressions, representations and interpretations; the other is to offer Hong Kong a feasible solution to the identity crisis by figuring out the underlying cultural connections between Hong Kong and China. From this perspective, the theme of nostalgia also has two objects: the Chinese motherland and the other "self" of Hong Kong—Shanghai. Chinese scholar Jingmei Qiu applies Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities" to interpret the complex relationship

between Hong Kong and the Mainland. She classifies five different Chinese political entities that have existed or still currently exist: the Middle Kingdom which existed before 1911, Republican China (1911-1949), Socialist China (1949- now), Taiwan (1949-now) and Hong Kong (1842-1997). She argues that in fact all these "Chinas" in Chinese people's mind are representatives of the same nation, namely the Middle Kingdom. The Middle Kingdom here becomes a symbol of an abstract, imagined community, and it is the motherland of all Chinese people of the past, the present, and the future, who share the same civilization and language, a common culture and continuous history.[42] Qiu's interpretation is illuminating in offering a feasible approach to understanding the relationship between Hong Kong and the Mainland. Nevertheless, at the same time, we must be very careful to apply Anderson's conception on this issue at the same time. Anderson defines nation as an "imagined political community" and suggests understanding nationalism with the larger cultural systems that preceded it, and here what Anderson deals with distinctly is a nation as a unity.[43] But when the issue of the relationship between Hong Kong and China is concerned, we have to note that Hong Kong had been partly independent from China in terms of political identity for a long time and to some extent still maintains the independence in terms of its particular cultural identity, though sharing the same cultural root with the Mainland. It is a part of the whole unity of China, but simultaneously it is a very distinct part. With the particular attention, we could say that the trend of nostalgia existing in Hong Kong cinema may be viewed as an approach to identify Hong Kong in the whole scope of the "imagined community" of

China. One other film of Ann Hui *Song of the Exile* (*Ketu qiuhen*) (1990) is a typical example here. In this film Hui investigates various forms of identity: national, cultural, personal, and the relationship between Chinese communities around the world and the so-called homeland in Mainland China.[44]

On the other hand, Shanghai of the 1930s and the 1940s is a favorite choice for many Hong Kong directors such as Stanley Kwan and Kar-wai Wong when they deal with the theme of nostalgia. Why do these Hong Kong directors represent Shanghai, of a particular historical period, so much more than any other place or time in China? Daisy Ng defines the "old Shanghai" as "a city of fin-de-siècle splendor" with its peculiar flavor and she sees in this image of Shanghai an obvious analogy to Hong Kong: "The lost prosperity of Shanghai easily becomes a parable for the predetermined course of [Hong Kong's] history."[45] Maybe her remark does reveal one important reason for some Hong Kong directors to express their emotional and psychological complexity before the reversion in 1997, but we must notice that even after 1997, nostalgia of old Shanghai is still a significant topic of Hong Kong films. For instance, Kar-wai Wong's *In the Mood for Love* (*Huayang nianhua*) was shot in 2000, and Stanley Kwan made another film *Everlasting Regret* (*Chang hen ge*) on old Shanghai in 2005. Therefore instead of just narrating old Shanghai as a parable for Hong Kong, what the filmmakers seek to obtain indeed seems to be two things. One is to "recreate not a particular historical setting but the cultural experience of a particular period."[46] The other is, to imply or manifest their own thoughts about how Hong Kong people identify themselves in this peculiar historical

and cultural context through the similar cultural experience the two cities have shared. As I quoted earlier, Zhang Ailing writes in her essay titled "Shanghainese, After All" that, for the series of "Hong Kong romances" written for her Shanghai readers, "the entire time I was writing these stories, I was thinking of Shanghainese people, because I wanted to try to observe Hong Kong through Shanghainese eyes."[47] This account undoubtedly is illuminating when we examine nostalgia of old Shanghai in Hong Kong films. For Hong Kong directors, when they visualize the old Shanghai on the screen, underneath the appearance what they reflect on and want to represent as well as the point of view they are taking, are all very closely related to Hong Kong itself.

Then why did Ann Hui and Stanley Kwan choose Zhang Ailing's writing as their literary resource to adapt? One reason might be the cultural phenomenon of Zhang Ailing fever to some degree: the renewed popularity of her writing since the 1980s enabled her work to come to filmmakers' attention. What is more significant is that precisely the hybrid quality of her writing enables Zhang's writing to interest filmmakers from among the numerous literary works on Shanghai, especially old Shanghai of the 1930s and 1940s. Through Zhang Ailing's text, Hui and Kwan actually are carrying out a special and temporal dialogue between old Shanghai and present-day Hong Kong, expressing their concerns about Hong Kong culture itself. Ackbar Abbas defines Hong Kong culture as a culture "in a space of disappearance,"[48] and his argument to a great degree can enable us to think about the specificity and complexity of Hong Kong culture. The history of the city, "in terms that are relevant to what it has become today, has effectively been a history

of colonialism."[49] In the historical process of development, from a British colony to a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong has aspired to an identity of its own as a self-existent unity instead of an attachment to either side through the historical transience, and through its past and ongoing transformations as well. In many respects, Zhang Ailing's writing could correspond to the filmmakers' concerns. Not only the plots, the setting of her stories, but also her focus on common people's life in a turbulent, transformative era, her profound thinking on human civilization and history—these are all relevant points for the Hong Kong filmmakers to deal with; with these points they can resonate her with their own innovation. The previous discussion on Ann Hui and Stanley Kwan's filmic adaptations of Zhang Ailing's novels allow us to explicitly discern both of their distinctive stylistic approaches to the original written texts. As Robert Stam points out, "[e]ach adaptation sheds a new cultural light on the novel."[53] On the one hand, Zhang's novels offer the original plot as a frame for the directors, and when they make their own films, faced with the pre-existing frame, they fill in the content according to their intent, which is colored with their own artistic ideas and insights about life, humanity, history and culture. On the other hand, the hybrid quality of Zhang Ailing's writing offers an indefinite, wide space for the directors to apply all their talent to make the films they desire.

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[1] Zhang Ailing, "Hong meigui yu bai meigui," [Red Rose White Rose] in *Zhang Ailing wenji* [Collection of Zhang Ailing] (Hefei: Anhui wenyi chubanshe, 1992).
[2] Sergei Eisenstein, *The Nature that is Not Indifferent*, trans. Fu Lan (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 1996), 1.
[3] Manfred Jahn, "Narratology: A Guide to the Theory of Narrative." Part III of *Poems, Plays, and Prose: A Guide to the Theory of Literary Genres*. Version 1.1 (Oct 1999), N3.5.

[4] Zhang Ailing, "Daodi shi Shanghai ren," [Shanghainese, After All] in *Liuyan* [Gossips] (Taibei: Huangguan chubanshe, 1968), 57. English translation by Andrew F. Jones, *Written on Water* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 55.
[5] Ibid., 54.
[6] Ibid..
[7] Zhang Ailing, "Chenxiang xie—diyilu xiang," [Aloe Ashes—First Burning] in *Chuanqi* [Romances] (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 1987).
[8] Ackbar Abbas, "Cosmopolitan De-scriptions: Shanghai and Hong Kong", *Public Culture* 12 no.3 (2000), 773.
[10] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974), 46-47.
[11] Ackbar Abbas, "Cosmopolitan De-scriptions: Shanghai and Hong Kong", 773.
[12] Elaine Yee-lin Ho, "Women on the Edges of Hong Kong Modernity: The Films of Ann Hui," in *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World*, ed. Esther C.M. Yau, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 177.
[13] Zhang Ailing, *Chuanqi*, preface.
[14] Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China 1930-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 291-303.
[15] Zhang Ailing, "Qingcheng zhilian," [Love in a Fallen City] in *Chuanqi*, 190; English translation by Karen Kingsbury in *Renditions* 45 (Spring 1996): 92.
[16] Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Buliao qing: Zhang Ailing he dianying," [Everlasting Sensation: Zhang Ailing and Film] in *Huiwang Zhang Ailing: Jingxiang binfen* [Looking Back to Zhang Ailing: Mirror Images in Profusion], ed. Jin Hongda, (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2003), 382.
[17] In an interview, when asked about the Hong Kong director King Hu, Ann Hui said the two greatest things she had learned from Hu are that "a director should work to cultivate an audience" and "should not really regard the film primarily as a commercial product." See Michael Berry, *Speaking in Images: Interviews with Contemporary Chinese Filmmakers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 426.
[19] Zhang Ailing, "Qingcheng zhilian."
[21] Zhang Ailing, "Lun xiezuo," [On Writing] in *Zazhi* (1944.4): Vol. 13, No.1.
[22] *Nanfang zhoumo*, 2004.11.5, http://www.phoenixtv.com/phoenixtv/74035916104007680/20041105/451686.shtml.
[23] Ann Hui, "San'ge fangwen," [Three Interviews] in *Chaoqian yu kuayue: Hu Jinquan yu Zhang Ailing* [Exceeding and Spanning: Hu Jinquan yu Zhang Ailing], ed. Luo Ka, (Hong Kong: Xianggang linshi shizhengju, 1998). 162-3.
[24] Patricia Brett Erens, "The Film Work of Ann Hui", in *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity*, eds. Poshek Fu, David Desser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 178.
[25] Michael Berry, *Speaking in Images,* 430.
[26] Yingchi Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema: Coloniser, Motherland, and Self* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 90.
[27] Winnie Chung, "Hui's Pet Project Springs to Life," *South China Morning Post*, Sept. 8, 1997, 21.
[28] Zhang Ailing, "Chuanqi zaiban xu," [On the Second Edition of *Romances*] in *Written on Water,* 202.
[30] Shuqin Cui, "Stanley Kwan's '*Centre Stage*': The (Im)possible Engagement between Feminism and Postmodernism", in *Cinema Journal* 39 no. 4 (2000): 62. Also, if one checks the information about Kwan on the Internet, one can easily find this reputation affixed to Kwan's name in most cases. But for Kwan himself, he never shows any straightforward rejection or acceptance, and what he only explicitly admits is that he does often unconsciously observe things from the perspective of the female. http://www.phoenixtv.com/home/zhuanti/fhkpzhuanti/fhkpzhuantichinafilm01/fhkpzhuantichinafilm06/200405/28/264214.html.
[31] Not only the director Stanley Kwan is famous for making several films on old Shanghai, but also the cinematographer Christopher Doyle, known for his extensive collaborations with Wong Kar-wai including the film *In the Mood for Love*, is evidently adept at this kind of theme.

[32] Lim Chin Chow, "Castration Parody and Male 'Castration': Eileen Chang's Female Writing and Her Anti-Patriarchal Strategy," in *Critical Studies: Feminism/ Femininity in Chinese Literature*, eds. Peng-hsiang Chen and Whitney Crothers Dilley, (New York: Rodopi, 2002), 42-44.
[33] Celestino Deleyto, "Focalisation in Film Narrative," in *Atlantis* 13.1/2 (1991), 159-77.
[34] Zhang Ailing, "Hong meigui yu bai meigui."
[36] Zhang Ailing, "Younü tongche," [With the Women on the Tram] in *Written on Water*, trans. Andrew F. Jones, 146.
[37] Zhang Ailing, "Hong meigui yu bai meigui."
[38] Discovering the "self" is one important issue in traditional feminist theories. One can refer to many feminists' argument such as those of Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigary. In their works, these scholars discuss the notion of a subject in search of a self in the Western philosophical traditon.
[39] Shuqin Cui, "Stanley Kwan's '*Centre Stage*': The (Im)possible Engagement between Feminism and Postmodernism", 62.
[40] Julian Stringer, "*Center Stage*: Reconstructing the Bio-Pic," in *Cine Action* 42 (1997): 39.
[41] Shuqin Cui, "Stanley Kwan's '*Centre Stage*': The (Im)possible Engagement between Feminism and Postmodernism", 61.
[42] Jingmei Qiu, "Exceed the boundaries: The Representation of the Mainland in Hong Kong Cinema," in *Dangdai Huayu Dianying Lunshu* [Account on Contemporary Chinese Film], ed. Li Tianduo, (Taibei: Shibao wenhua, 1996), 156-157.
[43] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York: Verso, 1983), 15-19.
[44] Patricia Brett Erens, "Crossing Borders: Time, Memory, and the Construction of Identity in *Song of the Exile*", in *Cinema Journal* 39 no. 4 (2000): 44.
[45] Daisy Ng, "Back to the Future: Imaginary Nostalgia and the Consumer Culture of Hong Kong," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the New England Conference of the Association of Asian Studies, University of Vermont, October 19, 1996, 10-11.
[46] Steven Conner, *Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1989), 199.
[47] Zhang Ailing, "Shanghainese, After All," in *Written on Water*, 55.
[48] Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
[49] Ibid., 2.
[53] Robert Stam, "Beyond Fidelity: The Dailogics of Adaptation," in *Film Adaptation*, ed. James Naremore, (New Brunswick: Rutgers U. P., 2000), 63.

Conclusion

The substantial world we live in is reflected in distinctly different ways, with each individual's respective perception and comprehension. Based on and revolving around her personal life experiences, her particular sensations and subjective consciousness, Zhang Ailing has created a specific representative symbol system of the *floating world* (浮世 *fushi*). Her strategy is to seize the numerous momentary, tiny sensations and experiences, zoom in on them and sublimate them into her aesthetic system, seeking out the labyrinthine interrelationships between the particular and the general. Her vision is broad, with the entire human world as her object of representation and meditation in the general and abstract sense (even a little towards a philosophical dimension), and at the same time focused on a single moment or detail. In fact, she cares little about the predetermined, fixed and trenchant boundaries existing in the world when she observes it as a calm onlooker with outstanding wit. From this perspective, I would define her style as a unique one with a considerable hybrid, multi-vocal quality.

Extending from her personal experience of life and world, Zhang always catches the connection between the actual images and subjective or inner understanding. Furthermore, she is adept at extracting fresh yet self-evident insights from quotidian life, and her insights always proved to be penetrating while corresponding to the essential logic of life. On the one hand, Zhang was living in her age—she composed the romances of the time as metaphors for people's spiritual world of that time; on the

other hand, she is still living in the present—in the sense of still offering efficient and thought-provoking insights to us. This valuable quality is the key reason why her writing has attracted the attention of readers, artists and academia for such a long time. The hybrid, multivocal specificity of her works makes it possible for people to give divergent interpretations from various perspectives. Precisely as I have explored in chapter 3, in contemporary Hong Kong cinema, this hybrid, multivocal specificity has offered the filmmakers enough space to interpret her writing as well as express their own thoughts on present-day Hong Kong, a peculiar place/culture coincidently with distinct hybridity. In her own way Zhang Ailing goes beyond the boundaries of space and time and leaves a beautiful, desolate gesture in literary history and cultural memory.

Since it is impossible to say everything about Zhang Ailing and the contemporary cultural phenomena related to her in this thesis, I would like to mention here some issues that interested me that also need further careful research.

In this thesis I chose the notion of "hybridity" to define the specificity of Zhang Ailing's writing, but in fact it is hard to characterize one writer's writing with one or a few words, especially a writer like Zhang Ailing, who presents remarkable multivalence with her own distinct, multi-vocal literary style. The notion of "hybridity" was originally used in the field of biology and was then introduced to ethnology, linguistics and cultural studies. In many scholars' research it was made available for use and acquired its power by rearticulating and reinventing narratives of origin, place, displacement, arrival, culture, transit, and identity. As mentioned in the

introduction, in this thesis I invoke the notion to examine Zhang Ailing's writing through the ideas offered by Homi Bhabha's use of this notion as well as another notion, *the third place*. Bhabha employs the notion of "hybridity" to refer to the construction of culture and identity; according to him, the hybrid third place is an *ambivalent* site where cultural meaning and representation have no "primordial unity or fixity."[1] Using Bhabha's articulation, I try to employ the concept from a different angle, namely in literary research on one writer's writing. An interesting question thus rises: how literary writing like Zhang Ailing's could in turn enrich the development of the notion and maybe offer a broader connotation to the notion of "hybridity".

Another relevant issue is the development of the concept of the "common people" in modern Chinese literature and even possibly a much broader range of literature. Although I have discussed it at some length in the first chapter, more work is needed. In literary practices and theories, "common people" is a familiar notion. Its definition, however, is in many cases ambiguous. For instance, in modern Chinese literature, several writers could be linked to this notion from various perspectives. Zhao Shuli (1906-1970) is viewed as a writer with a distinct style of folk (*minjian*) culture and his writing is tightly linked to masses' life (*dazhong*). In fact, the common people in Zhang Shuli's works are mostly the country folk in liberated areas controlled by CCP. Another writer Lao She (1899-1966) is also famous for representing common people's life and "common people" here actually means Beijing citizens from lower social classes. Therefore further research is necessary on the issue of "common people" to explore how the notion has been bestowed with various connotations in its

development.

Of the cultural phenomenon "Zhang Ailing fever" since the 1990s till now, one aspect that also interests the public is this female writer's first marriage with Hu Lancheng. Zhang Ailing could not have not imaged that how both the nationalists and the communists would view her marriage to Hu, and how nearly everyone in China during and after, except the tiny minority of Wang Jingwei collaborators viewed her personal life during the war as morally suspect. Here I do not want to arbitrarily make any judgment on this marriage or Zhang Ailing's moral standing, because she had kept silent about this short marriage, despite Hu's voluminous memoirs of it in 1990s. Due to the limitation of first-hand material, I have not dealt with this issue in my thesis. However, according to available indirect resources such as Hu's memoirs, Zhang marrying Hu and breaking up with him had nothing to do with politics or morality but rather was tightly related to affective factors. To a great extent this seems contradictory with what she expressed in her writing. This issue might be a future topic in Zhang Ailing research; to explore how this marriage influenced Zhang Ailing's life, thinking and literary career.

The last issue is the research on Zhang Ailing's film scripts. Zhang Ailing's film scripts have comparatively received less attention than her novels, largely due to the loss of the scripts. For example, the script of *Buliao qing* [Everlasting Affection], the first film she wrote, has not been discovered yet. In 2002, a book titled *Zhang Ailing wenji buyi* [Addendum to Collection of Zhang Ailing] was published in Beijing. In the book, five film scripts, including the script of *Taitai wansui*,[2] are gathered in the first

section and this is the first book published in the Mainland to include Zhang's scripts.[3] With further examination of her film scripts, Zhang Ailing's writing and literary thinking can be understood more deeply and comprehensively.

For Bakhtin, entire genres, languages, and even cultures are susceptible to "mutual illumination." It is only in the eyes of another culture, Bakhtin writes, "that a foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly."[4] But we can extend this insight in relation to research on Zhang Ailing. On the one hand, the hybridity offers both the writer herself and other people including readers, scholars and the filmmakers "mutual illumination" in thinking about human life and humanity in a boundary-crossing cultural context. On the other hand, "mutual illumination" can also work towards thinking about the relationship between Zhang Ailing's writing and the contemporary film adaptations of her novels by the Hong Kong filmmakers thus helping us understand each of them more profoundly.

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[1] See Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994); "Frontlines/Borderposts," in *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question*, ed. Angelika Bammer, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

[2] Zhang Ailing, *Zhang Ailing wenji buyi* [Addendum to the Collection of Zhang Ailing], eds. Zitong and Yiqing, (Beijing: Zhongguo huaqiao chubanshe, 2002). The other four scripts are: *Qingchang ru zhanchang* [The Realm of Affection is Like a Battlefield], *Xiao ernü* [Little Children], *Yiqu nanwang* [A Melody Cannot be Forgotten], and *Hungui lihen tian* [Soul Returns to Parting and Regretting Heaven].

[3] Another book that includes Zhang's scripts, available in the Mainland, is the Vol. 14 in the series, Zhang Ailing diancang quanji [A Classical Collection of Zhang Ailing], published by Haerbin chubanshe in 2003. In this book only three scripts are compiled, which are *Qingchang ru zhanchang*, *Xiao ernü*, and *Hungui lihen tian*.

[4] M. M. Bakhtin, "Response to a Question from the Novy Mir Editorial Staff," in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 7.

Glossary

Ah Q	阿 Q
Ba Jin	巴金
Baqianli lu yun he yue	八千里路云和月
baihua	白话
Bai Liusu	白流苏
Bansheng yuan	半生缘
Buliao qing	不了情
Cao Qiqiao	曹七巧
cenci de duizhao	参差的对照
Chang'an	长安
Changbai	长白
Chidi zhilian	赤地之恋
Chen Duxiu	陈独秀
Chen Sizhen	陈思珍
Chenxiang xie—diyilu xiang	沉香屑——第一炉香
Chuanqi	传奇
Chuanqi zaiban zixu	《传奇》再版自序
ci	词
dazhong	大众
dazhong wenyi	大众文艺
Daodi shi Shanghai ren	到底是上海人
Duoyun Xuan	朵云轩
Fan Liuyuan	范柳原
fanren	凡人
Fei Ming	废名
Fuluoyide zhuyi	弗洛伊德主义
fushi	浮世
geren zhuyi de renjian benwei zhuyi	个人主义的人间本位主义

gongnong dazhong	工农大众
gudao	孤岛
Gu Manzhen	顾曼桢
gushixing	故事性
guomin wenxue	国民文学
guominxing	国民性
Guo Moruo	郭沫若
Guihua zheng: Axiao bei qiu	桂花蒸：阿小悲秋
haipai	海派
Haishang hua liezhuan	海上花列传
Hong meigui bai meigui	红玫瑰白玫瑰
Honglou meng	红楼梦
Honglou mengyan	红楼梦魇
Hong Shen	洪深
Hong xue	红学
Hu Lancheng	胡兰成
huaben	话本
Huang Suying	黄素琼
Jiang Jize	姜季泽
Jiaorui	娇蕊
Jie yindeng	借银灯
Jin ping mei	金瓶梅
Jinsuo ji	金锁记
Jinyu lu	烬余录
jiuwang	救亡
Ke Ling	柯灵
Lao She	老舍
Li Hongzhang	李鸿章
Lianhuan tao	连环套
liegenxing	劣根性

Liuyan	流言
Liu Yong	柳永
Lu Ling	路翎
Lu Xun	鲁迅
Manlu	曼璐
Mao Dun	茅盾
Mao Zedong	毛泽东
minjian	民间
Moli xiangpian	茉莉香片
Nianqing de shihou	年青的时候
Nie Chuanqing	聂传庆
nongtang	弄堂
Pan Ruliang	潘汝良
pingmin	平民
Pingmin wenxue	平民文学
puluo dazhong	普罗大众
putong ren	普通人
Qian Zhongshu	钱钟书
Qu Qiubai	瞿秋白
shehui wenxue	社会文学
Shen Shijun	沈世钧
Shiba chun	十八春
Shijing	诗经
Shi Zhecun	施蛰存
Shouhuo	收获
Siyu	私语
Taitai wansui	太太万岁
Taitai wansui tiji	《太太万岁》题记
Tan hua	谈画
Tan yinyue	谈音乐

Tong Shifang	童世舫
Wang Anyi	王安忆
Wang bu liao de hua	忘不了的画
Wang Jingwei	汪精卫
Weicheng	围城
wenxue dazhong hua	文学大众化
Wo kan Su Qing	我看苏青
Xianglin sao	祥林嫂
xieshi wenxue	写实文学
Xin ganjuepai	新感觉派
Xin jing	心经
Xu Xiaohan	许小寒
Yan Danzhu	言丹朱
Yanli	烟鹂
Yan Ziye	言子夜
yangchang	洋场
Yangge	秧歌
Yao ji Zhang Ailing	遥寄张爱玲
Yijiang chunshui xiangdong liu	一江春水向东流
Yingong jiuxue ji	银宫就学记
Yu Dafu	郁达夫
Yuanyang hudie pai	鸳鸯蝴蝶派
Zhang Ailing	张爱玲
Zhang Henshui	张恨水
zhanghui ti	章回体
zhanghui xiaoshuo	章回小说
Zhang mi	张迷
Zhang Peilun	张佩纶
Zhang Tingzhong	张廷重
Zhang xue	张学

Zhao Shuli	赵树理
Zhenbao	振保
Zhishou	芝寿
Zhiyuan	志远
Zhu Hongcai	祝鸿才
Ziji de wenzhang	自己的文章
Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu congkan	中国现代文学丛刊
Zhou Shoujuan	周瘦鹃
Zhou Zuoren	周作人
Ziluolan	紫罗兰
Zi ye	子夜

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