

**ZHANG AILING'S EXPERIMENTAL STORIES AND  
THE READER'S PARTICIPATION IN HER SHORT STORIES AND NOVELLAS**

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### ABSTRACT

This thesis is an in-depth analysis of three later short stories "Lust and Restrictions" (色,戒), "Flowers and Pistils Floating on the Waves" (浮花浪蕊) and "Happy Reunion" (相見歡) written by the 1921 Shanghai born Chinese author Zhang Ailing. The analysis takes a look at the structure of these short stories and discovers that they differ from her earlier short stories, that is those she wrote ten years earlier in the 1940s, in their structural and narrative approach and thereby place a greater demand upon the reader's participation.

These three stories are the only short stories by Zhang Ailing that do not develop in a linear fashion. The author introduces them in the preface of the anthology Sense of Loss by calling the second story "Flowers and Pistils Floating on the Waves" an "experiment." Because of their similar structural and narrative approach, I called all three of them "experimental" which really means the same as "modernists", to distinguish them from her earlier linear stories.

The three major characteristics of the experimental stories, that is--the narrative happening in the character's minds, the chronological distortion of the narrative and the almost invisibility of a narrator large subordinated to the character's presence--all have the effect of bringing the reader close to the characters' subjective thoughts and reflect the characters' state of mind in the stories' present time, depending on the frequency of the switches between the times, that is between the past happening in the characters' minds and the stories

present time. The reader's participation in these three stories is largely due to the narrative structure while in some of Zhang Ailing's liener stories, as examined in this paper, it is based on the stories' content.

The political changes in China, and the author's move away from the mainland could account for her increasingly pessimistic outlook on life reflected in the disjointed structures of the "experimental" stories.

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## ANALYSIS

## Introduction

Ever since the 1921 Shanghai born writer Zhang Ailing (張愛玲) started to publish her short stories in magazines at the age of 22, her work has been introduced and analyzed first by Chinese critics in Chinese<sup>1</sup> and later in English (see the often quoted A History of Modern Chinese Fiction by C.T. Hsia, 1961 and Unwelcome Muse by Edward Gunn, 1980). There has, however, not been much said about her latest collection of short stories and novellas Sense of Loss (惘然記) published in 1983. Zhang Ailing wrote the seven stories in this anthology (among them one movie script) in the 1950s and as early as 1944 ("Yin Baoyan Brings Flowers" (殷寶滢送花榭會) and published almost all of them in various magazines (for example "So Much Hate" (多少恨) in Da Jia, 1947). Well versed in English she published one of the stories first in English ("Stale Mates" in The Reporter, 1956) and one year later, with slight modifications, translated it into Chinese (五四遺事). The three stories "Lust and Abstinence" (色戒), "Flowers and Pistils

<sup>1</sup>See for example "Discussing Zhang Ailing's Fiction" by Xun Yu in Wan Xiang, May 1944).

In his article "About Xun Yu's 'Discussing Zhang Ailing's fiction'" Tang Wenbiao refutes C.T. Hsia's statement that no serious research was done on Zhang Ailing's work during the years she was popular in Shanghai (1942-1945). Tang lists a number of serious articles he found by "randomly leafing" through magazines published during those years. (In Tang Wenbiao, Zhang Ailing Yanjiu (Researching Zhang Ailing), p. 108). C.T. Hsia made the statement in his preface to Shui Jing's Zhang Ailing de Xiaoshuo Yishu (The Art of Zhang Ailing's Fiction, p. 3).

floating on the Waves" (浮花浪蕊)<sup>2</sup> and "Happy Reunion" (相見歡) are published in Sense of Loss for the first time together (except for "Flowers and Pistils" which has its very first appearance in the collection) and have up to now not attracted a lot of attention. Zhang Ailing writes in the introduction to the book, expressing her obvious fondness for the three stories:

Actually the three recent works were also all written in the 1950s but have repeatedly undergone major revisions. After "Happy Reunion" and "Lust and Abstinence" were published, I added and changed them again in many places. While making the last major changes in "Flowers and Pistils Floating on the Waves" I referred to the methods of social literature. The subject matter is more scattered than the recent stories; it was an experiment. These three stories all pleased me with the result that I was willing to change them repeatedly over the years, and when I call them to mind I only think about the happy surprise of initially getting the material and the course of rewriting them, and do not feel at all the thirty years that have passed in between.<sup>3</sup>

Compared to her earlier short stories and novellas (compiled in The Collected stories of Zhang Ailing (張愛玲小說集) and Zhang's Outlook (張看)) all three of the stories mentioned appear "experimental" and will for the purpose of this paper be so called as distinct from her earlier, conventional stories. The purpose of this paper is to focus on all three stories in a comparative approach to her earlier stories (Chapter I) in terms of the reader's participation and furthermore to show why the 'scattered' material in the three stories

<sup>2</sup>Hereafter "Flowers and Pistils".

<sup>3</sup>"Sense of Loss", p. 8.

suits the theme of each. (Chapters II, III, and IV).

Zhang Ailing's experimental stories are characterized by a greater demand for the reader's collaboration in that the reader has to follow a narrative happening mostly in the characters' minds and thereby, as the narrative catches the moving thoughts of the characters, has to piece together a story chronologically distorted. These three stories are the only stories which do not have a linear development but present the material in jumps between various times, hence the description 'scattered.'

In order to get a deeper enjoyment from any piece of art the reader (or viewer or listener) has to get involved closely with the piece and will with each repeated reading (or viewing or listening) find some new enjoyment in its workings. This is the kind of participation the reader needs to bring to Zhang Ailing's linear stories, in order to both grasp the basic plot of the story, and savour her detailed characterization and rich imagery.<sup>4</sup> It can be said, however, that the reader's participation in these stories is more passive (except for the few I will introduce in Chapter I, in which a bit more active collaboration is demanded from the reader as part of the plot). The atmosphere of the stories through the various techniques of commentary, imagery and symbols is spooned to the reader, who can sit back and indulge in pure aesthetic enjoyment. In her

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<sup>4</sup>The author has been commended on as "boast[ing] the richest imagery of any contemporary Chinese writer" (Hsia, A History, p. 295. See also Stephen Cheng's detailed analysis of Zhang's techniques in his article "Themes and Techniques in Eileen Chang's Stories", pp. 180-89, Xun Yu's article and Shui Jing's study of Zhang's use of the imagery of mirrors. (The Art, pp. 129).



conventional stories (that is in those with a linear development and minimum reader contribution) these techniques are provided by an omniscient narrator (more or less visible) whose function is to present the characters to the reader and provide an exterior atmosphere into which to embed the characters. (See the comparison of "Happy Reunion" with "Waiting", Chapter IV). In the experimental stories the characters provide this atmosphere through their thoughts about the present and the past. The narrator is less active in describing a character or an atmosphere, and only does so when the moment, that is the character, brings it up in his/her thoughts or speech. In other words, rather than standing in front of the narrative, the narrator now lags one step behind the action.

In the order in which the three stories appear in Sense of Loss, there is a reduction in the use of symbolism and imagery and hence a noticeable departure from the author's techniques used in her earlier stories. The first story, "Lust and Abstinence" contains most of these earlier literary devices such as recurring symbols of lights and glass in various shapes and sizes to point to the final meaning of the story. They support the sensation of Jiazhi's move away from a life on stage to an existence in real life. These symbols are partly provided by the narrator and partly by Jiazhi's own observations, embedding her into the narrative and in effect reflecting her desire for financial and emotional security. In the second story, "Flowers and Pistils", the frequent mention of countries from around the world gives a sense of space, they suggest Luozhen's mobility and her independent mind. "Happy Reunion", the third

story, appears barren, with hardly any comments by the narrator to convey a sense of the environment the characters are situated in, as an extension of their inner lives. The characters provide this atmosphere themselves, through their words and mostly their thoughts, as in a dramatic performance. The narrator here is subordinated to the characters' presence, his task is to merely illuminate their thoughts and provide some brief "stage directions". This absence of adorning, mood-creating comments around the action, reflects the uneventful lives the characters lead and their dulled states of mind after a life of ups and downs.

This brings us to the structure of the stories which, when analyzed from an external point of view, provides an additional sense of "atmosphere." It does this by the particular arrangement of the temporal changes in each narrative in accordance with the demands of the final story-meaning. Due to the temporal switches, the structure here is more apparent than in the linear stories and therefore detachable from the meaning. Contextually, however, the two, structure and meaning, are interdependent. In order to understand what is meant by "temporal switches" we need to define the various times that govern the structure of each of the experimental stories. We differentiate between a present time-action which is accompanied by dialogues and thoughts about that present moment,<sup>5</sup> and various pasts which occur in the characters' minds in the form of memories complete with dialogues, and the thoughts the

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<sup>5</sup>It should be noted that the "present time" is actually a "present past time" or a "historical present" because although the action in the story happens for the characters in the present, the narrative (as translated into English) appears in the past tense.

characters had at that time (flashbacks). The interdependence of structure and meaning in "Lust and Abstinence" is marked by the quick switches back and forth between the present and the past. This helps to provide the impression of the main character's anxious mind. During the few hours of the afternoon in the present action, time seems to stand still, almost all actions Jiazhi performs are recorded, giving a sense of intense concentration. In "Flowers and Pistils" the limited present action but more extensive action in various pasts reflect Luozen's mind at rest as she relinquishes all responsibilities on the boat. The present time in the story is extended over a period of more than ten days, only a few actions are mentioned, thus increasing the illusion of stretched time and ease. In "Happy Reunion" the static present action (that is almost absence of action and story development) contrasted with the dynamic thoughts in the four characters' minds represents their current dull, sedentary lives compared to the more exciting years of the past.

The thoughts within these switches are filtered through the voice of the narrator, as the characters thinking are themselves presented in the third person and past tense. Throughout the stories, however, the illusion is maintained that the thoughts are those of the characters due to the situation at that particular time. ("It is said the Chinese are not on time, but once they reached official circles, it was even worse. If she had to keep waiting like this, the stores would all be closed", p. 23).<sup>6</sup> On rare occasions the thoughts seem to appear in the form of a

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<sup>6</sup>All page indications of the experimental stories refer to Sense of Loss.

"stream of consciousness," that is if we understand this term to be "the illogical, ungrammatical, mainly associative patterns of human thought."<sup>7</sup>

In the first story for example, the reader follows Jiazhi's observations as she enters a coffeeshop and notes various things around the shop. Or when she thinks about a happy memory, the sentences appear disjointed without connecting conjunctions (See Chapter I, p. 44). The bulk of the characters' thoughts, however, are presented by "narrated monologue" whereby the "'narrated' accounts for the indirect features - third person and prior tense" "and 'monologue' conveys the sense of hearing the very words of the character."<sup>8</sup>

As the independent voice of the narrator creating the atmosphere gradually disappears from the first story to the third, there is also an increasing separation between the past and the present in terms of the cause and effects of one time on the other. There is a tight interaction between the narrator's external voice (describing the environment, the characters and intensifying the moments by use of imagery and symbols) and the temporal switches in the first story. The interaction loosens up in the second story and is almost absent in the third story. In "Lust and Abstinence" the past and present are closely interrelated, the reader cannot understand Jiazhi's present without her memories of the past. This of course works well for the plot; other characters and the reader are kept ignorant up to a certain point of Jiazhi's real identity. As this

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<sup>7</sup>Scholes and Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative, p. 177.

<sup>8</sup>Chatman, Story and Discourse, p. 203.

story involves spies and a plotted assassination, the narrator does not explain the situation, nor any of Jiazhi's thoughts, making it appear incongruous at first. Clarity develops gradually when Jiazhi has a moment to herself in the present time and thinks about the past. The past in "Flowers and Pistils" contains passages which could exist as separate entities from the present time, but the various pasts are all related to the present in that they explain Luozhen's presence on the boat and more importantly give a picture of Luozhen's character. In the third story both times (past and present) could theoretically stand by themselves but the present time would amount to a very shallow story as there is virtually no action and the characters do not tell each other very much. The past provides the necessary depth to the story and explains much of the characters' present situation.

It appears that also in terms of success, or at least in keeping the reader's interest, the three experimental stories decrease in appeal in the order they appear in the collection. Zhang Ailing is successful at constructing stories which have their emphasis on narrated monologue, but while the reader is kept in suspense by the gradual disclosure of information in the first story and intrigued by the jumps between the various times in the second story, in the third story, besides perhaps enjoying the thought patterns, the reader is in danger of falling asleep over the slow pace and the dullness of the characters' lives, which even their several pasts is not able to enliven very much. The reader is not compelled to feel any sympathy for the characters but remains indifferent to their chatter and their 'hard lives'. As far as these three stories

are concerned, Zhang Ailing seems at her best on the middlepath between the conventional and the experimental. On the one hand, she makes use of her talent in creating a mood around the characters, which reflects their inner lives or which forebodes what life has in store for them, and on the other hand she uses the structure of the narrative to represent the characters' state of mind.

It has been commented that Zhang Ailing writes mostly about variations on the theme of love and marriage.<sup>9</sup> This is only partly true of her experimental stories. As all of them portray a relatively short period of a character's or some characters' lives cut from the overall span of their fictional existence (slice of life), love and marriage, or relationships between men and women appear in each story in various forms, but only the first story deals with love as the central theme. Jiazhi sleeps with a 'traitor' to her country in order to gain his trust so that her group can trap and kill him, but in the process she falls in love with him and saves his life. The nature of her relationship with Mr. Yi and the other men of her group points to the fact that she sacrifices her life (and her body) for a cause she intellectually supports when emotionally she wants a secure life with a house and a family. In the second and third story, mentions of relationships between men and women are part of the plot but are only there to point to a meaning beyond these passages. Luozen's thoughts about Fanny visiting the captain on the boat at night, and her thoughts about Mr. Kali teasing her, reflect her personality (and

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<sup>9</sup>Tang, Researching, p. 178; Cheng, "Themes and Techniques", p. 173.

in particular her idea of "love") rather than develop a story about love. The three women in "Happy Reunion" are either unhappily married, resigned to a stale relationship--Mrs. Xun--or separated from their spouse--Mrs. Wu and Yuanmei--. The repetition of the story Mrs. Xun tells about the man following her in Peking (one of the forms of a relationship between a man and a woman) appears in the narrative to show the two older women's loss of memory, not because the event is of central interest to the story. It can thus be said that while Zhang Ailing has used the themes of love and marriage in her earlier stories for her observation of human behaviour, in particular the relationships between the sexes, her emphasis in the experimental stories has shifted to conveying a sense of participating directly in the characters minds. A sensitive reader may also interpret the disjointed structure of the stories as the author's attempt to impart her view of Chinese society as it was during the turbulent years of the revolution. Although she notes in the introduction to the anthology that she was influenced by social literature, the reader does not feel aroused into action by the stories, there is a stronger impression of the author's pessimistic outlook on life, of stating without "calling to arms".

The difference between the first and the last two experimental stories may be in the dynamics of the plot, that is the connection of the changes the characters undergo in relation to the external action. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellog in The Nature of Narrative distinguish between developmental and chronological characterization. In the developmental "the character's personal traits are attenuated so as to clarify his

progress along a plot line which has an ethical basis", in "the chronological, . . . the character's personal traits are ramified so as to make more significant the gradual shifts worked in the character during a plot which has a temporal basis. This latter kind of plotting and characterization is highly mimetic."<sup>10</sup> Zhang Ailing's short stories and novellas, most especially her experimental stories, are of the latter kind. While the first of these three has, as discussed before, more narrative elements such as plot, commentary and descriptions, and while all three of them give the reader the sense of "peering directly into the mind" of the characters, in the last two stories less action and more character study takes place. Rather than placing emphasis on plot, the emphasis is on character study by revealing the character's mind as it travels through time.

The inward turning of the narrative, the effacement of the author "to let the characters work out their own fates"<sup>11</sup> and the emphasis on time (chronological rearrangement) are the characteristics of the modern story. "With the coming of the twentieth century," write Scholes and Kellog "plotting in narrative became dominated by time as it never had been before . . . plots began to be developed which were based on rearranging time so that the resolution became not so much stasis of concluded action as stasis of illumination, when the missing pieces of the temporal jigsaw puzzle were all finally in place and the picture therefore

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<sup>10</sup> p. 169.

<sup>11</sup> Wayne Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p.7.



complete".<sup>12</sup> In such stories the reader, by the fact of not being given narratorial evaluation and by following the movements of the characters' thoughts as it distorts the temporal sequence of cause and effect, is challenged into active participation. The nature of the narrative is such that the reader, in order to find a particular event in the story, cannot open the book at any page and follow a line of "what happens after what" to find the event, but has to have the whole narrative in mind to know at what point which character thinks about what. It is the reader who in his mind by the end of his reading joins together a story of a narrative in "disorder".

As Zhang Ailing is said not to have commented much on which western literary works have influenced her writing, it is difficult to look for any specific work. She is, however, said to have read Stella Benson, Somerset Maugham, Aldous Huxley, modern western plays and English popular literature and to have been aware of such writers as Chekhov, Tolstoy, H.G. Wells, Kafka, Joyce and Brecht.<sup>13</sup> In her experimental stories there is, however, a clear break away from the influence of the Chinese classical tradition found in her earlier stories as far as the writing techniques are concerned (I will mention more about these in Chapter I) toward an exploration of more modern techniques found in western literary

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<sup>12</sup>The Nature, p.235.

<sup>13</sup>Shu-ning Sciban mentions that Zhang "never seriously discussed any of them [nor] commented on any western literary writing techniques" and that therefore "to trace who or which works have influenced her writing is just like searching for a needle in a haystack." See "Chang Eileen's Love in the Fallen City, p.52.

works. C.T. Hsia mentions "just as [Zhang Ailing] is absolutely uninfluenced by the leftist modes of Chinese fiction, she is little tempted to follow the dazzling fashion of present-day western fiction--to pursue, for example, stream of consciousness to the neglect of weightier moral concerns"<sup>14</sup> and although we have noted that it is not exactly stream of consciousness she uses in her three stories, we have seen (and shall explore in greater detail in Chapters II, III and IV) that, at a later date, she actually toyed with some of the more recent literary techniques. For now we turn to a structural overview of her collected short stories and novellas and the reader's role in some of her earlier stories.

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<sup>14</sup>Hsia, A History, p.397.

## CHAPTER 1

## The Readers Participation in Zhang Ailing's Linear Stories

Zhang Ailing's short stories and novellas have been classified into groups of various kinds. Edward Gunn grouped her stories into two classes: "Those in which an impersonal force in the environment acts out an individual's fantasies, and those in which an active protagonist attempts directly to impose his or her will."<sup>15</sup> Stephen Cheng grouped her stories into three categories according to their narrative technique (omniscient narrator, concealed narrator and the central intelligence)<sup>16</sup>. While these two readers grouped her stories in relation to the stories' content and the narrator's position, I would like, for the purpose of this paper to group her stories (that is the twenty-five stories appearing in the three anthologies) into four groups according to their structure, a classification which in some cases is related to the narrator's voice. Each group is again subdivided into two branches. The first group is characterized by an overt narrator who addresses the implied reader with his own voice and introduces the story he "tells" but may not close it and who disappears within this story. In the first branch, the stories "Ashes of Descending Incense, First Brazier" (沈香屑第一爐香) and "Ashes of Descending Incense, Second

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<sup>15</sup>Unwelcome Muse, p. 205.

<sup>16</sup>"Themes and Techniques", p. 189.

Brazier (沈香屑片第二爐香) are enveloped by the presence of such a narrator, appearing in the introduction and in the closing paragraph of the story. To the second branch of this group belong "Jasmine Tea" (茉莉香片) and "So Much Hate" (多少恨). They are introduced but not concluded by the narrator outside the story. To the second group belong most of her stories. The omniscient (and covert) narrator embeds the character into the atmosphere of a story by either a) framing the story with similar actions or comments at the beginning and the end of the story ("Blockade" (封鎖), "The Golden Cangue" (金鎖記), "Love in the Fallen City" (傾城之戀) or by b) providing preludes of various lengths to suggest the general mood or atmosphere of the story ("Waiting" (等), "Lingering Love" (留情), "Happy Matrimony" (鴻鵠禧), "Indian Summer: A Xiao's Autumnal Lament" (桂花蒸阿小悲秋), "Stale Mates" (五四遺事), "Glazed Tiles" (琉璃瓦), "The Youthful Years" (年青的時候), "Genesis" (創世記) and "The Heart Sutra" (心經). The third group consists of stories which include anachronics as part of the overall narrative structure. To the first branch belong stories whose narrative begin at the end of the story and then revert back to the past to explain how that end came to be. These are "Red Roses and White Roses" (紅玫瑰與白玫瑰), "A Withered Flower" (花凋) and "The Interlocking Rings" (連環套). In the second branch are the three "experimental" stories. Their chronology is distorted throughout the narrative and thereby places a greater demand on the reader to piece the story together in his mind. The fourth group stands somewhat apart as a "miscellaneous" category. It includes on the

one hand the movie script "The Courting game like a Battlefield" (情場如戰場), a story developed chronologically without any interfering or atmosphere-creating narrator (other than the cinematographic instructions), and on the other hand stories whose narrator is part of the story. In "Yin Baoyan Brings Flowers" (殷寶蓮送花樓會) the narrator reports the story the main character is in the process of telling her with a few flashbacks to her own memories of that character. The main character addresses a narrator with the name Ailing which could make us assume that the story is a real event although this does not necessarily have to be the case. This is thus a story which incorporates a few elements of the other groups: a frame story (with a long afterword) a few flashbacks and an implied anachrony: The beginning of the story shows Yin Baoyan telling Ailing what happened to her in the past. Stephen Cheng maintains that "Days and Nights of China" (中國的日夜) is not a story,<sup>17</sup> and although the narrative does seem more like an essay of some impressions of nature and people, there is still a story line (the narrator notices certain things in her environment on her way home) and a conclusion (the poems that emerged out of these observations). The story unrolls chronologically in its small jumps from impression to impression.

The structural arrangements of the stories in these groups, and the absence or presence of the narrator's voice in each case support the final meaning of the story. I will look at a few stories of the first three

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<sup>17</sup>"Themes and Techniques", p. 189.

groups. In the twin stories "Ashes of Descending Incense, First" and "Second Brazier" of the the first group, the downfall of both Weilong and Roger Empton is symbolized by mention of the incense slowly burning down in the prologue and the epilogue which happens while the narrator tells the story to the implied reader. Weilong's incense at the end "will soon be burned down,"<sup>18</sup> suggesting her spiritual death with her marriage to George. Roger Empton commits suicide at the end of the story, the incense on the brazier therefore is already extinct by the end of his narrative. ". . . at the same time Roger Empton's incense has gradually cooled off. The incense has burned down. The fire is extinct and the ashes have cooled off."<sup>19</sup> In addition to the symbolic element of incense burning down, the prelude of the narrator and Clementine talking about sex-education foreshadows the motif of gossip in the story (the narrator records the story Clementine told her), the very thing Roger is harmed by. Also, Clementine's role functions to explain Susie's otherwise inexplicable role in the story. Both feel that, once informed about sex: "all the beauty [of falling in love] has been destroyed"<sup>20</sup>. The symbol of the incense in both stories creates less narratorial distance: the reader knows that he is about to read a 'sad' story because the narrator herself feels the story is sad and lets the reader know about this. In "Jasmine Tea", a story of the second branch, Zhang adopts the same

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<sup>18</sup>Zhang, The Collected Stories, p. 339.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 382.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 341, 360.

technique for the beginning of the story. The narrator offers the (female) implied reader a hot cup of tea which tastes bitter but has an attractive aroma at the same time. These contrasting sensations foreshadow the main character's indulgence in his bitterness. "He has been wronged by the world, his vanity lies in his desperate insistence that the world owes him his fantasies."<sup>21</sup> Chuanqing is a character physically and mentally locked into a position from which he can see no way out. The story ends with the statement "he could not escape"<sup>22</sup> suggesting that his life will go on in the manner told in the story. The narrator does therefore not close in his/her own voice but leaves it open, conveying thereby a sense of Chuanqing's loneliness. The "embedding" comments and descriptions of a covert (or effaced) narrator in the stories of the second group may, as for example in "The Golden Cangue" suggest the idea of the never-ending handing down of bitterness from generation to generation. The author uses the image of the moon to support the atmosphere of the gloomy human situation.

Shanghai thirty years ago on a moonlit night . . . the best of moons is apt to be tinged with sadness.

The moon of thirty years ago has gone down long since, and the people of thirty years ago are dead, but the story of thirty years ago is not yet ended--can have no ending."<sup>23</sup>

In "Fengsuo", another story of this branch, the similar words and details at the beginning and the end signal the transition into and out of the

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<sup>21</sup>Gunn, Unwelcome Muse, p. 228.

<sup>22</sup>Zhang, The Collected Stories, p. 278.

<sup>23</sup>Joseph S.M. Lau, C.T. Hsia, and Leo Ou-Fan Lee, eds., Chinese Stories and Novellas (Columbia University Press: New York), pp. 530, 559.

psychological state of the characters, that is, the contrast between the dreary routine of everyday life and the fantasies the two main characters indulge in during the blockade. Stories in the second branch of this group have preludes of varying length and even though some of them seem to start with descriptions of the characters' actions ("Indian Summer") or their spoken words ("The Heart Sutra"), the narrator immediately afterwards provides lengthy situational explications and character descriptions. As an example of a story from the third group, in "Red and White Roses" the structure of the story, by the systematic introduction of Chenbao's life in the present time before the narrative retreats ten years into the past, reflects Chenbao's orderly mind and his desire to project the appearance of a responsible citizen. The language of the first part of the story adopts an ironic tone, indicating to the reader from the beginning that Chenbao's judgements are faulty.<sup>24</sup> We have already dealt with the characteristics of the three experimental stories in the introduction; it is, however, significant that in all the stories of this group, that is, in both the first and the second branch, the characteristic anachronics give a direct impression of the characters' minds in their present situation and this either prior to the past (first branch) or interchangeably with the past (the experimental stories in the second branch).

In his study of "The Interlocking Rings" Tang Wenbiao states that the technique of writing a short summary at the beginning of this story and in

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<sup>24</sup>Brown, "Eileen Chang's Red Rose and White Rose", p. 78.



fact the summaries acting as interludes before each new "ring", reminds one of the traditional 章回小說 technique of story telling in Chinese novels, in which each chapter is headed by a couplet giving the gist of its content.<sup>25</sup> A traditional influence on Zhang Ailing's stories is also recalled in her use of the opening and closing paragraphs in the first group and the first branch of the second group, paragraphs which are "similar, in some ways to prologues and epilogues [in traditional hua-ben (話本) stories] to convey certain information related to, but not an integral part of the narrative proper."<sup>26</sup> The influence of the Classic Chinese novels on Zhang Ailing's work in terms of language, physical descriptions of characters, setting and objects, and the portrayal of characters has been shown to be very strong and mostly related to Dream of the Red Chamber.<sup>27</sup>

Despite some of the technical differences we have noted to exist between the author's conventional and experimental stories, we can assert that the characters in both story types remain very Chinese as a result of the author's in-depth knowledge of many of the Chinese classics.<sup>28</sup> C.T. Hsia's following comment thus applies to both of Zhang Ailing's story types:

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<sup>25</sup>Tang, Researching, p. 76.

<sup>26</sup>Adkins, "The Short Stories of Chang Ai-ling," p. 7.

<sup>27</sup>See Hsia, A History, p. 396 and Sciban, "Eileen Chang's Love in the Fallen City", p. 55.

<sup>28</sup>See, for a list of these, Sciban's Thesis, p. 53.

The characters in Romances [an earlier and shorter edition of The Collected Stories] are solidly and in some instances frighteningly Chinese; they are therefore solidly and frighteningly real. While she is primarily concerned with the world of her contemporaries, her study of Chinese fiction has led her to stress the strong persistence of traditional sensibility even in an apparently uprooted and cosmopolitan set. Sensibility evolves slowly, old manners die hard even during a period of unprecedented technological and economical change.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, the combination of the author's thorough knowledge of both Chinese literary works and her indebtedness "to Freud and western novelists for the psychological sophistication and metaphorical enrichment of her stories"<sup>30</sup> result in stories which have their emphasis on character study. "Many modern heroes win our allegiance because their aesthetic sensibilities will not be denied, or because they live life to the hilt, or simply because they are victims of their surroundings."<sup>31</sup> This is certainly true of her short stories and novellas. In these stories there is "little effort to engage our feelings strongly for or against one or more characters on the basis of their moral or intellectual traits. Instead the value of 'sensibility' has been placed at the core of things; those characters who, . . . , have a highly developed sensibility are sympathetic; the 'villains' are those who are insensitive."<sup>32</sup> Examples of such characters are Cao Qiqiao in "The Golden Cangue", Roger Empton in

<sup>29</sup>Hsia, The History, p. 397.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 132.

<sup>32</sup>Booth on Virginia Woolf's 'novel of sensibility' in The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 143.

"Ashes of Descending Incense, First Brazier" and others, as victims of their surroundings. Mrs. Xi in "Waiting" has our sympathy because of her sensibility we recognize through the many inside views we have of her (while the inside views of the other characters are purposely withheld to make them less sensitive). As a 'villain' we can for example single out George in "Ashes of Descending Incense, Second Brazier" for his lack of sensitivity toward Weilong.

Having looked at a structural overview of Zhang Ailing's short stories and novellas, and their underlying focus, we now turn to the reader's participation in some of them. Techniques that engender the reader's contribution may appear both in her linear and her experimental work. The difference between the two types, however, is that Zhang uses such techniques as a major structural device in the latter stories, devices which in turn contribute to the meaning of the story, whereas her earlier stories may only contain fractions of such techniques. The author has for example used the technique of flashback in "The Golden Cangue" (Qiqiao remembers her younger days in her father's sesame oil shop). This flashback is tagged by the narrator, indicating to the reader that Qiqiao is thinking about the past. ("The things of the past came back again"<sup>33</sup>). In the experimental stories there are no such indications, the character's perception of something in the present time may act as a springboard to a memory in the past. In "Lust and Abstinence" for

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<sup>33</sup>Zhang, The Collected Stories, p. 168.

example, Jiazhi sits in the coffee house waiting for Mr. Yi. She sees the man observing her across the table who probably tries to make out whether she is an actress. The narrative jumps without a tag to her memory "She had actually performed in plays" (p. 24). The reader's contribution can consist in supplying a piece of information which was left unmentioned. In "Lust and Abstinence" for example Jiazhi hails a pedicab (p. 21), the narrative diverts to her thoughts and a short flashback, and on the next page the information is given that she has been sitting in the pedicab while thinking about the past ("It took a while to drive to the public concession." (p. 22). She is not mentioned entering the pedicab, in the reader's mind she could have been standing by the side of the street waiting for the pedicab to arrive. When the above information is finally given, the reader has to rearrange the sequential information after the actual and implied event of mounting the cab.<sup>34</sup> The reader's contribution in this example is different from such temporal indications as "After the dinner" ("Happy Reunion", p. 99) or "When the movie ended"<sup>35</sup> which make clear that the narrative has skipped over an (unimportant) action in the story and which the reader therefore fills in as he/she reads along.

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<sup>34</sup>In the second story, "Flowers and Pistils" there is a similar example: the reader does not receive the specific information that the boat, which Luozhen has boarded as the story opens, has started its journey. It is only toward the end of the narrative that we learn the boat has been sailing for a while "This boat took ten days from Hong Kong to Japan turning left and turning right, . . ." (p. 76). These examples show that in these stories the characters' thoughts typically prevail over the outside action.

<sup>35</sup>"So Much Hate," The Sense of Loss, p. 118.

In some of Zhang Ailing's linear stories, the demand for the reader's contribution is built into the plot of the story and can be as challenging as finding one's way in an anachronic narrative. These can be supplying a crucial action purposely obscured or omitted from the story and evaluating the main character's personality ("Ashes of Descending Incense, Second Brazier"), entering the mind of a disturbed character ("Jasmine Tea") or following a double line of action ("So Much Hate").

In "Ashes of Descending Incense, Second Brazier" the reader has to evaluate Roger Empton's psychological health (is he a sexual pervert or not) and the attitude of his bride, Susie Mitchell (is she the victim of a sexual attack or not, is she genuine in her love for Roger, or is she calculating, especially on the evening of the second day when she fails to tell him about her activities on that day, the outcome of which will eventually ruin him). Throughout the story the reader is given information about Roger Empton's personality in the form of comments by the narrator and thoughts in Roger's mind both of which could make the accusations of the people around him almost legitimate. At the same time, however, enough information about Roger's actions and thoughts are revealed at crucial moments to bring the reader onto his side and understand that he is a sensible man in the midst of a hysterical crowd. His personality is described as a bit restrained and overly law abiding. "He was an Englishman and always felt that any revelation of feelings, unless it was absolutely necessary, was superfluous. He was afraid of genuine, flesh and blood life. Unfortunately people were alive but the

less this was mentioned the better" (p. 345).<sup>36</sup> His reputation as a correct and upright person gives rise to all kinds of speculations after a frightened Susie has woken up the men's dormitory in the middle of the night. "The more they pose for high morals, the more undisciplined their personal lives is. I always felt that Empton was too disciplined, he'll probably become a pervert " (p. 357). His own passionate thoughts about his future wife on the morning of his wedding could give hints of a man not in complete control of himself, thoughts, however, which for a man in love are only to be expected and would not arouse any suspicion in the reader if the incident with Susie were not to take place. "He was . . . pitiful to love her so uncontrollably. When they were together he was always afraid he would do some foolish un-English thing, maybe cry, or kiss her hands and her feet" (p. 350). The reader nevertheless, does not doubt the main character's psychological health; Roger's reactions to all the events happening during these few days correspond to those of a sensible person. The reader understands his 'selfish' feelings when he does not want to listen to other people's problems on his wedding day (Susie's sister Millicent's and Mrs. Mitchell's); he wants other people to be excited and happy. Eventually the reader knows Roger is the only sensible person, and not a sexual pervert, amidst a gossip-hungry crowd of small-minded people, because we follow his thoughts as he tries to make sense of what happened. "He took the picture frame in both hands and kissed her face. Between them was only the ice-cold glass pane. No, it was not the glass, his burning lips were separating them. . . . But then,

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<sup>36</sup>All page indications of the stories in this chapter refer to The Collected Stories.

was he not right? No, no, there was something else . . . when he went back to bed, it struck him like a thunderbolt, he realized something: actually Millicent's husband was a very normal man!" (p. 361). The fact that the reader gets an inside view of his mind and sees that he really cares about Susie (he worries about her well-being when she runs off on their wedding night) shows that he would not think of harming her. The reader hopes that everything will work out for Roger if he and Susie can only leave on their honeymoon to Hawaii, even though Roger does not know all the things that have happened behind his back ever since she ran off.

A few times the reader wants to poke Roger to help him straighten out the situation. Roger is too shocked by the news Dean Bach brings him on the second evening (Mrs. Mitchell and her daughters went to all their relatives and his colleagues to spread the 'awful news') that he feels he cannot explain the huge misunderstanding that has taken place. By repeatedly bidding Dean Bach goodbye at the end of the visit without replying to his visitor's attempts to clear the situation, he has lost his only ally. Now isolated from everybody, he becomes confused and overly sensitive to human touch in his fear of appearing suspicious, which in fact makes him more so. On top of that some people are exploiting his reputation as an overly sexual man (women feel attracted, men take their revenge for previous disputes). By that time, however, the reader is already firmly on Roger Empton's side and fears the attacks on him as much as he does. "She was walking behind Roger, when he suddenly felt as if a hand were tapping twice on his shoulder. He was filled with disgust, his whole body shuddered. He turned his head around to look and saw that it actually was not her hand but the moss green scarf wound around her neck

that was fluttering in the wind and hitting his shoulder a few times" (p. 377). When a few moments later Dolinda does put her hand on his shoulder "because she has difficulty walking on her high heels in the dark" he thinks it is her scarf. As soon as he realizes the truth he hastens to place her hand on another woman's shoulder to give Dolinda the "support" she needs.

Two sides of Susie Mitchell's personality appear: childlike and coquettish toward Roger, and decisive and in charge of the events around her when she feels wronged. These attitudes seem natural for the person she is described to be but appear incoherent in the sequence of the story's events. Why does she not tell Roger what happened that afternoon at school? (She went to see both the Dean and the Headmaster to ask them to get in touch with a lawyer to file for divorce, and got the whole campus gossiping). Does she not realize the seriousness of her actions? Does she go back with Roger the second evening because her love for him is stronger than her fear of his 'animal nature'? Her actions and the narrator's comments seem to point to her genuineness ("Susie leaned her head on his arm and said with a small voice 'Hawaii' . . ." (p. 305)), but when Roger returns from downstairs, where Dean Bach told him of her activities that afternoon, to the bedroom where Susie packs her clothes for the up-coming honeymoon trip to Hawaii, her actions seem inconsistent. Roger at that point knows about all the activities of the last twenty-four hours, and while he naturally is filled with anger, she innocently believes that he wants to kiss her just as he did before he left the room. In light of his knowledge of her actions during that day,



her coquettish attitude now seems ludicrous. "She inclined her head slightly to the side, yawned, almost closing her blue eyelids and said: 'I want to go to bed. Now you can kiss me, but only once!'" (p. 372).

Susie's transformation gives the sense of a sinister conspiracy that seems to have taken place between mother and daughter that afternoon, the event omitted from the story and the result of which is Susie's strange behaviour. Has her mother manipulated her to go back with Roger to, with the news, and the effects of their activities during that day eventually reaching him, destroy him? The real 'villain' in the story thus is Mrs. Mitchell (she is not a far cry from Cao Qiqiao in "The Golden Cangue"), restricting any natural sexual activity around her by keeping her daughters overly sheltered and uninformed about the realities of sex. Mrs. Mitchell is elusive: on the outside she appears friendly and supportive of her daughter's marriage though a bit mysterious (twice she wishes Roger good luck, comments which unsettle him). Her extremely sheltering presence toward her daughters is only hinted at by other characters, but none of them reveal (Millicent) or know of (Roger Empton) the extent of her strict education, only Roger and the reader see the devastating effects. Whereas at the beginning of the story Roger thinks he is a 'fool' marrying such a young and naive woman, he does not know into what deadly trap he has placed himself. Already before he is married to Susie he is caught in the atmosphere of madness that surrounds the three women. He yells at Millicent: "Even though I am a most normal man you would manage to drive me to madness!" (p. 349).

Susie thus proves to be completely innocent but manipulated by her

mother. Her malleability is evoked in the symbolic transformations she undergoes during their wedding. In the church Roger sees her slowly coming towards him. "When she walked past a rose-red window she changed to rose-red; when she walked past a blue window, she changed to blue; and when she passed a yellow-golden window, she and her hair seemed to be ablaze." (p. 352). Because of the delicate subject of sex in the social environment of a white middle class living in Hong Kong, the gossip tends to spread faster and be more malignant. Nobody questions Susie's integrity, especially since she happened to walk into the men's dormitory at night and the students are more likely to take pity on a beautiful young woman who seems obviously shaken, than to find out the real reasons for her behaviour.

The elusive, unspoken element of sex appears in the story here and there in a hush, surrounding the characters like some invisible presence. The element of wind in the form of fans, clothes fluttering in the wind or just the impression of gusts of wind supports the impression of an intangible threat. "Mrs. Mitchell sat down next to him and asked slowly: "What were you and Millicent talking about?" Roger took the napkin to wipe his mouth, he answered" 'About her husband.' As soon as he had uttered these words, a gust of dark wind seemed to blow through the room, Mrs. Mitchell did not talk for a while." (p.350).

In the story "Jasmine Tea" the reader's participation is also that of evaluating a character's personality, in this case that of the secondary character; but, more importantly, it involves entering the main character's mind and following a narrative which, for the most part

focuses on the thoughts of an introverted adolescent. There is no question about the personality of the main character, Nie Chuanqing. All indications for the reader to understand his outlook on life--distorted by his resultant bitterness about his unhappy family life--are given in the narrative. The repeated discouraging comments by his father and stepmother have made him a physically and mentally immature teenager. Indications about his situation are given both by the narrator and Chuanqing himself; he knows how things stand with him. He reasons: "He had lived with his father for twenty years and had already been made into a mental cripple so that even if his father gave him freedom, he could not escape" (p. 264).

The reader follows Chuanqing's thoughts in passages placed between the present action. He thinks about the present (the more he idolizes his teacher Yan Ziye, the more he hates his daughter Yan Danzhu) and about a hypothetical past which leads into a hypothetical present (he imagines that if his deceased mother, Feng Biluo had married Yan Ziye, his whole life would have been different.) He reconstructs the past through the bits and pieces of information he has gathered about his late mother and ruminates about it so many times that certain passages momentarily become the present losing their appearance of imagined past. One such particular example is exactly the moment which would have been so decisive for his mother's future and ultimately his existence.

The Yans found somebody to act as a matchmaker. Biluo's mother did not say anything. But a former concubine of her grandfather, sitting at the side smoking opium, giggled and chipped in: 'It is much too early to talk about that now!' The matchmaker said: 'But Miss Biluo is not so young anymore--' The old concubine said: 'I am not talking about her age! No

matter how good the Yan's from Changshu are, they're still a merchant family. If their young master was a scholar who got on and they came to propose marriage after two or three more generations, then we might have something to discuss. But now . . . it is much too early!' The matchmaker saw that nothing could be done about it and went back to the Yan's. (p. 262).

These decisions were made before Chuanqing's time, but the conversation gives the impression of him as an onlooker.

The reader has to evaluate the personality of Yan Danzhu, his classmate, to see whether she is as kind and friendly as she appears on the surface, or whether she is satisfying her vanity by trying to win Chuanqing for herself, to have him court her like so many other boys do in her school. The narrative provides instances which could make the reader believe she has selfish reasons in showing him friendship.

She said smiling: 'The day before yesterday I told you about the letter Dequan wrote me, please forget about it. Pretend I never told you.' Chuanqing asked: 'Why?' Danzhu said: 'Why? . . . But it's obvious! I should not tell people these things. I'm too childlike, I can't keep anything to myself!' Chuanqing leaned forward pressing both arms on his knees, he smiled. Danzhu also leaned forward and moved closer toward him. She asked in a serious voice: 'Chuanqing, you did not misunderstand my meaning, did you? If I'm telling you this it is not to brag about it - I have to tell to people, because some things are too painful to keep inside. . . ' (p. 254-255).

Even though she tells him she is not bragging about her popularity at school, her very insistence that he not misunderstand her intention could reveal that she actually is trying to make him jealous. In the sharp contrast between both characters her personality seems overly outgoing and compassionate, but, from the story's point of view, reasonable. Her

openness sets off Chuanqing's suffering to simultaneously increase his pain by the realization of his unhappiness and his jealousy and to give a sense of his distorted view. For example, he is aware of the harmonious family she lives in, compared to his abusive and unhealthy family surroundings. Imagining himself in her position he thinks, "A child that lived in a family with love, no matter how unstable their lives were, would still be full of self-confidence and compassion--as well as be vigorous, enterprising and courageous. He probably would have all of Danzhu's qualities and those that she did not have he would have too" (pp. 266-267). The narrator clearly presents one image of her and sets off Chuanqing's distorted view against it. "Her lively face and the golden colour of her skin were set off by the white gauze of her jacket, like some glistening amber-coloured wine in a glass. But in Chuanqing's eyes she did not merely evoke an aesthetic feeling of purity" (p. 264). Chuanqing's sickly appearance as an exteriorization of his inner pain is even more obvious with the impression of her health around him. His physical appearance signals his feelings of inadequacy. "Chuanqing inclined his head lower and lower until it almost reached the floor" (p. 258). She wants to draw him out by showering her friendship on him, but he wants to reduce her to his level of pain. When he hits Danzhu on their walk at night he pushes her head down, forcing her into a similar posture as his own. "With one hand he grasped her shoulder, with the other hand he pressed her head down with all his might, as if he wanted to press her head back into her chest. She should never have been born into this world, he wanted her to go back" (p. 277). After he has beaten her to the point that she lies crouched on the floor, he runs away and thinks "For

that short instance, their hearts were interlinked" (p. 278). He feels that they have reached the same level of pain, and although she is physically hurt, in reality the difference between them remains, he cannot take away her happiness.

Again the reader is inclined to want to poke the main character to help him straighten out the situation. The reader feels that Chuanqing's lot would be easier to endure if only he would confide in somebody. Yan Danzhu offers to help him clear up things between him and her father, but his mental state has worsened to the point that he can see no other outlook than his own, he has lost all sense of perspective. "'Tell Danzhu? Tell Yan Ziyue? Did he still remember Feng Biluo?' . . . Chuanqing only felt the pent up injustice he could not get off his chest. Danzhu drew closer again, she asked: 'Chuanqing, do you have trouble at home?' Chuanqing laughed flatly: 'You're too fond of minding other people's business!'" (p. 272).

Yan Danzhu thus turns out to be genuine in her attitude toward Chuanqing, she really wants to be his friend. Even if there is a small amount of vanity in her (in his desperation to find someone to love and understand him, he tells her that he loves her. Thereupon she thinks "Even this eccentric person loved her--this satisfied her vanity. Danzhu was a good woman, but after all she was a woman." (pp. 276-277)), it does not outweigh her sincere efforts to include Chuanqing in the group. Her ability to make friends gives her the slack to try to help Chuanqing, the very thing that makes him angry. In his anger he mistakes her genuine need to infuse him with some of her overflowing happiness to be that of "brushing . . . bread crumbs from the table to feed the dog" because she

"has too much of it" (p. 273).

"So Much Hate" is a linear story unrolling on two lines of action. The line of the older generation, represented by Jiayin's father (Old Mister Yu) and the Amah in the Xia household, runs parallel to the line of the younger generation, that of Jiayin and Xia Zongyu, and sometimes meets it. The actions of the older generation's line happen behind the back of the younger generation and therefore behind their line of action. This technique is consistently used throughout the narrative and points to the theme of the generation clash (as well as to the clash of country versus city dwellers) in the story. The two lines converge each time Jiayin's father meets Zongyu, his opposite member in the younger generation. They meet and interact three times in the narrative, each time Zongyu's attitude toward the old man changes markedly, while Old Yu himself stays the same throughout the story. Zongyu changes from politeness on their first meeting, to restrained impatience on the second (Old Mister Yu visits Zongyu early in the morning to borrow some money) and to open anger on the third meeting. Zongyu on that occasion expels him from the factory for breaking the trust of the Company, and never wants to see him privately again due to his indiscreet and overly familiar attitude toward him.

The characters' "true identity" in this story is clear from the beginning, the reader is quickly on the side of the younger generation and although he can understand why the older people act the way they do, the reader wants the happiness of the couple and completely rejects the attitude of the older generation. Both these characters are disagreeable because, as mentioned above, they stay the same throughout the story (flat

characters) in their extreme frame of minds. The Amah is presented as a narrow-mined, gossipy and suspicious woman from the countryside, the old man wants to organize his daughter's life out of "goodwill" but also out of opportunism and greed. He finds himself completely justified in his role, partly because of his status as father and senior, and partly because he has become senile, a fact which also contributes to his insensitivity toward his daughter. On the other hand, the two young people are both seen in various kinds of emotions (round characters). The reader is willing to excuse their volatile attitudes (Jiayin shows no forgiveness towards her father for having divorced her mother and having remarried, and Zongyu has violent outbursts toward his wife who has arrived from the country side), because all the reader wants is to bring these two apparently well matched people to a happy union.<sup>37</sup>

Actions that happen behind a character's back (for example Susie in "Ashes of Descending Incense, Second Brazier" taking refuge in the student's dormitory and looking up the Dean and the Vice-president the next day, and in this story Jiayin's father giving the piece of fabric to the landlady so that she would spy on his daughter) have the same time in the story repeated with the "unknowing" character later in the narrative. The narrative goes back in time, unrolling the particular moment from a different perspective. While stories, however, may have the same features

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<sup>37</sup>It should be mentioned that in a short introduction to this story the author notes that she fashioned "So Much Hate" after popular novels, so-called "non-books". The characters therefore are simpler, that is, they have a less subtle inner life and can be more easily divided into 'good' and 'bad' characters. That is the reason why the reader is so quickly on the side of the two 'beautiful young people' in his hope for their happiness.



with similar significance, their proportion in the plot may differ, according to the effect sought. In both "Second Burning" and "So Much Hate" the repetition of narrated time shows one character completing actions without the knowledge of the second character and thereby creating an irony. In "Second Burning" Roger Empton spends the day thinking and worrying about Susie, completely unaware of the scandal building around him; in "So Much Hate" Jiayin spends the evening with Zongyu in a restaurant and a movie theatre, equally unaware of her father's secret activities. In the first story the effects of the double action are much more far reaching, not only in the time the action takes but also in the devastating repercussions on Roger's reputation that eventually will lead him to his death. In "So Much Hate" the double action is shorter and shows one of her father's many schemes, but there is a sense of continuity to it and parallel thoughts permeate the story. Old Mr. Yu's other covert moves happen consecutively between the actions of Jiayin and Zongyu. The reason for the temporal repetition in the narrative of this particular tactic though, is because the result of it will finally bring him to meet Zongyu, and thereby accelerate Jiayin's and Zongyu's separation.

The couple is not to consume their love, the reader's hopes are disappointed. It is ultimately the father's presence and his pushy attitude, as well as Jiayin's own attitude towards divorce and the present model of her father that makes her decide to leave Shanghai and Zongyu. This time the reader wants to poke the main character not only to clear the matter by telling Zongyu her real reasons for leaving the city but also by making her change her mind about divorce. The reader wants her happiness even though he can understand her dilemma.

It is the demand for the reader's involvement which brings these three stories close to the experimental stories. "Second Brazier" is similar to "Lust and Abstinence" in its manipulation of the reader, in both cases this is due to the element of secrecy involved in the plots. In the linear story the manipulation is achieved by giving the reader two kinds of information about the main character without, however, confusing the reader to the point of leaving the character's real personality ambiguous. Because the story is developed in a linear fashion and has a strong narrative presence (to supply "adorning" comments and elaborations around the action), the narrative achieves the necessary sense of secrecy (and possible ambiguity as to the personality of the secondary character) by omitting a scene, the events of which the reader has to supply. In "Lust and Abstinence", suspense is achieved by retarding the disclosure of information with the flashbacks, but more importantly by constructing the narrative in such a way that it unrolls for the most part in the main character's mind and the reader therefore is manipulated into assuming different truths about the characters at different times. "Jasmine Tea" is the one linear story which comes closest to the experimental stories, in that large parts of the narrative report the main character's thoughts and the reader in this case can follow the development of the character's distorted thoughts. This story is particularly close to "Lust and Abstinence" because in both the main character thinks about a hypothetical time. To Jiazhi the hypothetical future is of importance, it determines whether the man she loves will be killed, to Chuang in "Jasmine Tea" thoughts about the hypothetical past and present give him the possibility

of imagining what his life would be have been if his mother had married Yan Ziyue. The last of the three stories we looked into is the least complex, the lines of action of each character are clear; but, because various characters do different things at very close intervals (while Jiayin and Zongyu try to figure out their future, the Amah goes off to the countryside to fetch Zongyu's wife, the old man wants to make a concubine out of his daughter, who herself in turn is making plans to leave Shanghai), the reader has to think along these various lines of actions and in particular on the line of the older generation behind the line of the younger generation.

As we have noted in the course of the discussion, in all three linear stories there were moments where the reader wanted to "poke" the main character to help him or her straighten out the situation. This phenomenon, however, is of course not limited to these three stories in which, as we have seen, the reader is asked to participate. In "The Golden Cangue" for example, there are a few instances when the reader wants to intervene to mitigate Cao Qiqiao's or her daughter Changan's agony. This is, I would assume, one of the basic kinds of participation the reader is manipulated into, one which keeps the reader's interest. It also seems that this kind of participation would be more characteristic of a dynamic rather than of a static plot. "Lust and Abstinence" being the most similar to Zhang Ailing's linear stories in terms of the narrator's presence and the dynamism of the plot, could involve a few of these moments. When Jiazhi realizes she loves Mr. Yi, the reader may theoretically wish she would tell him everything about her spying history

and she would become his "real" mistress. This, is not so, however, because the reader is always only partly informed about events and about, for example, Mr. Yi's personality. When the reader thus, as in the linear stories, receives an early overall impression of the situation and of the characters' personalities, he is more likely to be able to want to guide the character he is siding with in the right direction. Also in the other two experimental stories the reader at no point is enticed into wanting to help the characters. The reader in these stories lags, like the narrator, one step behind the action and if there is to be some kind of helping hand, it is the character who is helping the reader to understand her gradually as the story progresses.

## CHAPTER 2

**"Lust and Abstinence": An Anxious Mind**

Of Zhang Ailing's three experimental stories "Lust and Abstinence" bears most similarities to her earlier stories in that its imagery, symbolism and comments by the omniscient narrator all point to the final meaning to form an artistic whole. The difference lies in the distortion of the temporal order the author uses as a technical device to give the story a sense of mystery. More importantly though, the difference lies in placing the bulk of the narrative into the main character's mind, thereby enabling the reader to follow Jiazhi's thoughts and observe the gradual change she undergoes from passivity to a position of control over the events of her immediate surroundings. Her thoughts move between the present as she reflects on external events, the past in her memories, and the approaching (hypothetical) future. The chronological distortions are created through the interplay of these various times, whereby the memories of the past provide the reader with important background information as to the development of the past events related to the present without which the reader would not be able to understand the correlation to the present action. The information of the past (cause) often appears after the events in the present time (effect), requiring of the reader to place the events into their proper order. The "scattering" of the material in this story therefore lies more in the distortion of the chronological order than in its content.

The present action of the narrative takes place between three o'clock

in the afternoon to around midnight of the same day during which a great deal happens: a man is almost assassinated, a road block stops the activities of a city for some time and a whole group of underground workers is arrested and executed. Because of the general atmosphere of war and the secrecy of the spying activities, on the surface pretense is kept as if nothing were happening or nothing has happened. The incidents of these few hours would be important for a plot of social realism relating a story of intrigue and plotted assassination; they are not important, however, for the type of psychological realism the author wants to construct: a narrative turned inwards, with the minds of the characters opened at various times to reveal their attitudes on the different "levels of reality" according to how much they know of the secret activities. These actions therefore, that is, the blockade and the arrest of the gang, are not developed as actions in the story but are inferred, reported offhand by another character (at the end of the story Mr. Yi remembers the events of the last few hours). The actions the reader experiences at the same time as the characters (for example buying the ring in the jewellery store) give a more immediate impression than the actions reported at a later date through memory and therefore also coincide with narratively decisive scenes in terms of revealing the characters' attitude toward the action.

There is a distinction between a past in relation to the present time of the story, that is, anything that happens prior to where the narrative opens at the mahjiang table and occurs in form of memories (Jiazhi in Hong Kong) or report (Mrs. Yi telling the other women that Mrs. Liao had a party "yesterday"), and a past occurring within the brackets of the

present action-time (Mr. Yi remembers the events of the afternoon). The past prior to the present action-time reaches back to about two years with some glimpses to even earlier times (there is mention of Jiazhi as a child and of her early teens, which must be about five years earlier than the beginning of the past action-time of her memories). The future extends beyond the boundaries of the story in a time span of not more than a few days: Jiazhi plans to live with her cousin on Yu Yuan Street for a while to see how things will develop; Mr. Yi plans to have the curtains in his home taken down.

Before we continue to look into the various times and their interrelations we need to distinguish the parts of the story which will give us structural clues. The story has four parts that are determined by their locations and the actions in the present time of the narrative, each part providing the background decor toward the denouement of the story. The first and the last part both take place in Mr. and Mrs. Yi's house under very similar circumstances (mahjiang game) and thus structurally have a framing effect. Whereas the first part serves to lead into the suspense of what will follow, the last part helps to set off the secrecy of the spying activities of that afternoon, with the ignorance of the women at the mahjiang table in that regard. Their talk in this part now seems frivolous and too self important. "'Mr. Yi, invite, invite!' The three women dressed in black cloaks were getting louder and fiercer, all talking at the same time" (p. 43). The second part focuses on Jiazhi as she makes a phonecall in one coffee-house and then drives to another to wait for Mr. Yi. This part serves to provide the necessary background

that led to her present situation as the reader follows her thoughts. The third part which includes the climax and the turning point of the story, takes place in the car on the way to the jewellery store and in the store itself. It shows Jiazhi and Mr. Yi in interaction and reveals the core of their relationship against the background of Jiazhi's changing attitude toward Mr. Yi and her mission.

The last part then, visually separated by the preceding parts, has not only the function mentioned above, but also completes the narration through the mind of Mr. Yi now that Jiazhi is not present anymore to do so, and thereby reveals his position on the events of the day. The four parts thus have the functions of introducing, providing background, climax and denouement in the narrative.

The story is partly rendered by descriptions of actions, dialogues and thoughts in the present time, and memories in the form of flashbacks in which the past momentarily becomes present with the appropriate dialogues, thoughts and commentaries. One such example is Jiazhi's first memory flash while waiting in the coffeeshop. She thinks about how she will have to use her breasts to keep Mr. Yi interested. The narration jumps without introduction into the past ("Two years ago they weren't this way" (p. 22), and two lines further into another past ("She seemed to be stung by a needle and immediately saw the detestable looks of these people . . ."). All her memories and thoughts are rendered in the third person singular by a covert, omniscient narrator. They are thus filtered through the narrator's words, but the impression is always given that she is the one who is doing the thinking (except for in the fourth part when Mr. Yi



takes over), either by an introduction ("Jiazhi suspected that Mrs. Ma was jealous . . ." (p. 17) or simply because her action in the present time suggests that she is thinking (for example, waiting in the coffeehouse). The narrator takes on a separate identity when he comments on something we know Jiazhi will not think because she knows it already ("It was the secret signal" (p. 20)). Be it in the present or past time, the reader is given the impression of following Jiazhi's subjective view. When she enters the first coffeeshop (p. 20) her thoughts move from the general (not many people in the coffeeshop) to the specific (the apricot-red shades of the lamps) and to the general again (the place was large) giving long strings of short impressions separated by commas. The syntax in these sentences support the impression of her subjective thoughts. When in the past action she is in Canton, for example, her thoughts jump from sentence to sentence without connecting conjunctions ("She was so excited after the performance that she could not relax, they celebrated through the night, she was still not willing to go home, with two friends she took a double-decker bus to sightsee the riverbank . . ." (p. 24).

The bulk of the narrative is, as mentioned, locked into Jiazhi's mind, taking comparatively more narrative space than the actions stated (looking at her watch, taking the pedicab) or implied (the shooting of the gang). Thoughts both in the present and in the past, are either interpretative ("This mahjiang table was really a diamond exhibition, Jiazhi thought" (p. 18)) or hypothetical about the immediate future (wondering whether and when Mr. Yi will come, worrying about the correct timing to shoot Mr. Yi) and the present of that particular time ("At the

door of this coffeeshop there was probably somebody on the lookout . . ."

(present, p. 28) ". . . she left behind her phone number, he must have taken the chance, . . ." (past, p. 26). This changing back and forth between the various times reflects Jiazhi's anxious mind. She is relatively relaxed when she waits in the coffeeshop and lets her mind wander off into longer stretches of memory, only interrupted by short returns to the present (the coffee gets cold, the man watching her across the table) and by hypothetical thoughts about the present and the future. Her mind is more agitated at the climactic moment just before Mr. Yi is to be assassinated, at which point her thoughts erratically jostles between the various times (past, present, future). In her panic a moment of short duration in the story may appear longer to her than a moment of longer duration. The narrative captures this atmosphere by stretching the length of the text. The long period of time she waits for Mr. Yi for example (pp. 22-29) and fills with thinking, takes the same amount of pages (seven) as the "tense moment stretching into eternity" (pp. 31-38) which starts when they look at the rings and lasts to the moment when she tells him to leave.

The climactic moment (Jiazhi's change of mind) brings about the turning point in the action of the story (Jiazhi tells Mr. Yi to leave). As the unavoidable moment of shooting Mr. Yi draws closer, Jiazhi's mind moves faster. Thoughts about the immediate past and the hypothetical future follow each other closely ("When just now she had come up the stairs she had been thinking that (immediate past), when coming down they really would be going after an easy prey (hypothetical future) . . .")

(p. 32) to prepare for the climactic moment, the point when she starts to resist the thoughts about the immediate future. Thoughts about the present and the hypothetical future at that moment appear in the same sentence. "But because in a moment there would be gunshots (future) and in front of her eyes all this pink was glistening (present), what was there still to lose face over? Although she knew it would happen this way (future), in her heart she did not believe it, because she was resisting it with all her might (present) . . ." (p. 34).

Jiazhi is misled by a moment of harmony between herself and Mr. Yi. "She felt even more that there were only the two of them alone under the light facing each other, close and restrained, it had never been this way" (p. 37). This impression has been supported by the narrator earlier on to increase the weight of her mistake. "At that very moment it seemed that only they were here together" (p. 36). The reader, however, gets an inside view into Mr. Yi's thoughts soon after Jiazhi's impression to show how pitifully mistaken she is. His thoughts, revealing that she is just one woman among many for him, are bracketed by her tender interpretation of his smile.

He was not looking at her, the smile on his face was a bit sorrowful. He never imagined that he would have an adventure like this one after having passed his middle age. . . . His profile was facing the light, the beam falling on him, his eyelids looked like cream coloured moths resting on his thin cheeks, to her it was a warm, pitiful expression. (pp. 37-38)

As a result of her thoughts she takes charge of the situation, brings about the turning point of the story and ultimately her death.

As a story with a plot of high secrecy, all characters move on different levels of realities separated from each other by misconceptions about each other's true identities. They are all able to see each other but do not function on the same level of understanding. Some characters deliberately assume various roles to deceive other characters and even though their true identity may be revealed to someone at some point in the story, they all remain separated throughout. Mr. Yi for example knows Jiazhi's true identity at the end of the story but he is separated from her by her death. The result is a story with various levels of reality (what one character believes to be true does not represent reality for another character) and irony (one character is aware he/she knows more than another character, the reader has more knowledge than a character.) To include the reader in the list is not self-evident, as the information of the plot is released gradually and so even the reader either knows more or less than some characters.

Which character's mind is opened to the reader at what particular time gives a clue to their position in the story and their distance from the secret actions going on. Jiazhi is established as the main character early in the narrative because we see her reflecting on the situation more often than the other characters (as well as because of the detailed physical description). Seeing all the flashing rings she thinks "This is really a diamond exhibition" (p. 18). Mrs. Yi's thoughts are disclosed once at the beginning of the narrative to show her version of her relationship with Jiazhi. "Somebody introduced her to this Mrs. Mai who accompanied her shopping" (p. 16), a version which of course differs from

Jiazhi's side of the story as revealed later. For a moment also the attitude of the women in black towards Mrs. Yi is made clear. "While poking fun they were still quite careful" (p. 19). They respect the wife of the head of Intelligence and know her weaknesses. Mrs. Ma is the most watchful of her friends and she makes a comment in the first part which makes Jiazhi wonder whether Mrs. Ma could be suspicious ("I just know that Mr. Yi is always busy" Mrs. Ma said. Was there a meaning in Mrs. Ma's words or was she overly sensitive? Jiazhi thought" (p. 20). The last part of the story confirms these doubts by giving the reader a view into Mrs. Ma's mind. ("Judging from his expression it must be his first affair" (p. 43)).

There are seven recognizable levels of reality and their implied ironies. These move concentrically away from Jiazhi depending on how deeply involved they are in the intrigue (reality) and how much they know about Jiazhi's involvement in the plot (ironies). On the first level the reader is initiated into Jiazhi's development of the past through her memories in the necessary amount (how much she tells) and timing (when she tells it) to understand her present situation. She obviously has more information than the reader but for the understanding of the plot she reveals all the reader needs to know to be on the same level as herself. In the present action the reader follows her development step by step as she makes her assumptions and draws the wrong conclusions (thinking that Mr. Yi loves her). The reader at this point knows more than she does and is in a sense on the same level as the narrator. The reader and Jiazhi on the second level know more than the members of the gang who believe she is

a committed underground worker determined to kill a traitor to their country. They find out about her change of mind at a later date but they do not know she has a cousin to stay with in Shanghai. On the third level Mr. Yi believes Jiazhi is Mrs. Mai who sleeps with him out of revenge against her husband for going out with dance girls. By the end of the story he knows about the whole plot to assassinate him and Jiazhi's role in it, but of course he only knows the external factors, he does not know her inner psychology. Still on that same level, he will tell his wife some story that Jiazhi was a member of a secret spy ring in Chongqing (p. 43) and that she in turn can tell Mrs. Ma that "Mrs. Mai" had to return to Hong Kong for an urgent matter. He will also invent a story to defend his position against Zhou Fohai, his superior. On a fourth level Jiazhi and Mr. Yi know more than his wife and the women in the black cloaks who think that Jiazhi has come to Shanghai to sell goods from Hong Kong and lives as a casual visitor at the Yi's residence. They also believe that Mr. Yi has a business meeting that day when in actual fact he meets Jiazhi in secret. A subdivision on that level is the surname "Wang" Mrs. Yi gives Jiazhi (p. 19). The nickname gives Mrs. Yi a sense of being closer to Jiazhi but an additional name on Jiazhi's false identity creates in reality more distance between both characters. Mrs. Ma on a fifth level is correct in assuming that Jiazhi and Mr. Yi are having an affair, but she misinterprets his facial expression as his happiness about his first affair, whereas the reader (and Jiazhi) know that he has had several affairs before. His happiness stems from having escaped death by a narrow margin. In the first part Jiazhi wonders whether Mrs. Ma has avoided coming over to Mrs. Yi's house the last few days because she feels

jealous. This may be a reason why Mrs. Ma is more watchful and suspicious than the other women. In the next and sixth level we may include all characters who in the present action of the narrative appear in close connection to the intrigue but about whose thoughts we have no direct information. The clerks in the jewellery store are probably under the impression that Mr. Yi and Jiazhi are a straight forward couple buying a ring, but they are seen wavering in that opinion. (The shopowner checks whether they substituted the ring). The man in the coffee shop observes her; she thinks for him ("He couldn't make out what kind of person she was?" (p. 24), but the last sentence could be taken as his assumption ("She didn't seem too much like a dancegirl, if she was acting in movies or dramas, she didn't look familiar" (p. 42). The waiter in the first coffeeshop from where Jiazhi makes her phonecall is made to believe she is phoning her "second eldest brother" (p. 21). And finally to the last and seventh level belong those characters, mentioned and implied who are not involved in the plot in any way. Among these are the young pedicab driver, the man who repairs his bicycle and all the people passing Jiazhi on the street from whom she feels separated by a pane of glass. Visually the different levels may look something like this:

1. Jiazhi

2. Jiazhi and the gang

3. Jiazhi and Mr. Yi

4. Jiazhi and Mrs. Yi

5. Mrs. Ma

6. Clerks, man in café

7. Pedicab driver, people on street

The schema represents the levels of reality in which the characters (or groups of characters) move within the context of the story. From a structural point of view the narrative begins on the fourth level, moves down step by step to the first level and then moves up to the fifth, sixth and seventh level. The question needs to be addressed at what point the narrative discloses clues for the reader to clearly see through the various levels. By misleading the reader, keeping the reader uninformed or imparting the information bit by bit as the character(s) proceed through the story, irony and thereby the tension of suspense is heightened.

As the story opens, the narrative gives the impression of a simple game of mahjiang (supported by the short view the reader has into Mrs. Yi's mind), up to the moment Mr. Yi gives Jiazhi the signal with his chin. The reader believes Jiazhi and Mr. Yi are having an affair and trying to leave the house to meet outside. (Transition from the fourth to the third level). Without any explanation from the narrator Jiazhi thinks three times: "If it did not succeed today . . ." (pp. 20, 21, 24.) Whereas Jiazhi is preoccupied with the thought whether Mr. Yi will fall into the trap or not, the reader the first time still believes these thoughts refer to herself and Mr. Yi. ". . . if they had to drag on any longer, Mrs. Yi would know." By the time she thinks it a second time the narrative has commented on her mysterious phonecall ("It was the secret signal") giving the reader the notion of another level of reality. The transition from the third level to the second is obscured by the lack of explanation and slowed down by the momentary flashback. When she waits



for him in the coffeeshop and thinks "He himself was in the Secret Service and even though he had not grown suspicious, he was a crafty person with many hideouts, he must be quite unpredictable" (p. 23) and shortly after worries for the third time "If it did not work out today, there would be no other chance", we know she is somebody different from whom she pretends to be. The second level of reality is gradually made clear by the long stretch of memory in which the information unrolls chronologically and joins her present time. Beginning from the end of her memory (p. 29) in the mind of the reader Jiazhi is clearly the underground worker pretending to be Mr. Yi's mistress. The moment she starts to have doubts about her role in the intrigue ("Although she knew it would happen this way, in her heart she did not believe it, because she was resisting it with all her might . . ." p. 34), she changes to Jiazhi the young woman who has become attached to Mr. Yi.

What then is the relationship between Jiazhi and Mr. Yi? A relationship of "hunter and hunted" (p. 167) in which the roles in the end are reversed and played out in a fair game: either he or she will get killed. She saves him for humanitarian reasons (love) but he thinks he has his reputation at stake and has her killed.

Jiazhi sacrifices her body to kill a 'traitor', she acts as is required of her, she is "completely passive" (p. 36). She takes a step from being ordered what to do, to expressing what she wants (save the life of somebody she has become attached to). As the main actress of her troupe she is chosen to act out the role of approaching Mr. Yi, the head of the Secret Intelligence Service. In their own group both Mr. Yi and Jiazhi are in a primary position, but they are still subordinated to

somebody still more influential. Jiazhi has to wait for instructions from her group and the agent Wu, Mr. Yi has to render account for his actions to Zhou, his superior. Despite these similarities, however, Mr. Yi is in a much more powerful position than Jiazhi because his role is part of the actual world of the story whereas she is just a student acting out a role.

The reader initially perceives Jiazhi from a purely external aspect, in probably the very same way Mr. Yi sees her: physically beautiful and sexually attractive. Mention of her breasts occurs on several occasions; they are the medium she works with to keep Mr. Yi interested. As an underground agent her job is to make him trust her sufficiently so that he will blindly run into the trap laid for him. At the same time she needs to remain detached from him to make the plan work. Her failure to do so and the reasons leading up to this change is what the narrative is about. She keeps her real personality hidden from him, only the reader has access into the innermost spheres of her mind. It is only after the drastic change of action that Mr. Yi can infer from her actions how Jiazhi must have felt about him.

Mr. Yi is a shrewd man. His physique suggests the elusive professional secret agent who even in the walls of his own home merges with the background. "Projected onto the fern print of the curtain he became dwarfed in a land of giants" (p. 17). He has incorporated the skills of his trade into his daily life, a man inconspicuous at any time. When he bought gifts for women on previous occasions he "was only at the side in attendance, making sure he was not noticed" (p. 38) and also when he buys the ring for Jiazhi he only looks at it in her hand (p. 34)

suggesting how little he gets involved. His position gives him the authority to order a road block, to stop the activities of a city, and he explains his affair with Jiazhi as resulting from his power (pp. 38, 42). He does not know, however, that he is being manipulated by the basest of his instincts, his lust. He deludes himself into believing he is in control of the situation when in actual fact his emotions get the better of him. "On the surface he was sitting so straight, but in the dark he was all emotions, feeling excited" (p. 30). He kills a group of students to save his name in front of his superior and personal role model, Zhou Fohai. The greed of the Yi's and also a certain small mindedness is apparent in connection with the curtains covering the whole wall. "Because Zhou Fohai's house had them, they had them too. The imitation French curtain style which reached the floor had recently come out in the West but because during wartime imported curtain material was in short supply, they used a whole bolt, and then the flower pattern still had to be matched, it was really a bold move" (p. 17). The curtain pattern which previously had suggested his unobtrusiveness and had provided him with a camouflage even in his own home, reminds him of his lack of control after the murder attempt. "They had the whole wall covered like that, could an assassin be hiding in it? . . . He would remember to have them taken down tomorrow" (p. 41).

Jiazhi's experience on stage during her school years has provided her with the necessary skills to successfully play her role as Mrs. Mai and mistress of Mr. Yi. In fact, she is so skilled that she can hold these two different roles at the same time. In front of Mr. Yi's eyes she pretends to Mrs. Yi that she has forgotten the time for an appointment,

without Mr. Yi becoming suspicious that her performance may be too smooth. She has moved from a drama group performing "rousing patriotic historical plays" (p. 142) to acting in real life for equally patriotic reasons; this time, however, together with non-actors. Her task is more challenging now as she, unlike on stage, has to improvise her part along some guidelines, constantly faced with Mr. Yi's unpredictable responses and partly uninformed about the gang's next moves. "She was imagining all these things, although she clearly knew they had nothing to do with her and that she was not to worry about these things" (p. 33).

She and her friends never seem to have left the stage of the drama troupe. They still see the whole procedure as a play, in the sense of a game. When she thinks about their first moves in Hong Kong she remembers that Huang Lei "raised funds, rented a house, borrowed a car and got the actor's costumes (p. 25)." Even two years later in Shanghai the members of the gang do not seem to be aware of the difference between fiction and reality. "'They all put the muzzle of the gun on the person's body and then shoot, it's not at all like in the movies at all where they aim from a great distance.' Kuang Yumin had told her one day laughing" (p. 29). They are too inexperienced and idealistic for the danger involved in the plotting. The real underground worker is Wu, not seen and untracable. He is taking advantage of the idealism of these young people who take part in the action with zeal but without adequate training.

Jiazhi knows she is involved in a dangerous game, one in which she could lose her life or at least become wounded (p. 29), but she is too vulnerable and ultimately too self-centered for the job. Compared to the precariousness of the situation, her thoughts are not focused enough, she

has become too personally involved. At the crucial moment, when she should be cold-blooded and calculating, her desire for love and security becomes stronger than her sense of duty to her group, so strong that she even deludes herself into believing Mr. Yi loves her. "That man really loves me, she suddenly thought; her heart jumped, she felt distracted" (p. 38). The jeweller's attic transforms into a cosy "comfortable nest" and the reflection of her feet in the poenies drawn on the mirror reminds her of "a market place . . . in goodnight stories" (p. 35). Also paying with gold ingots for the ring seems like a story from 'A Thousand and One Nights' to her (p. 35). Overwhelmed by her emotions she wants to block out the brutal reality of the imminent moment from her mind by numbing her senses. "The heavy warmth and sweetness of the air covered her face like a cotton quilt" (p. 34). These are all images which remind one of the idyll of family life, a house with a garden, with the purchase of the diamond being the symbolic action leading toward that life.

Subconsciously she may want to take the role of his wife, as she remembers from the conversation of that afternoon that pink diamonds "are valuable but have no market" (p. 34). Mr. Yi had not been willing to buy his wife a ring with a valuable gem but he is buying Jiazhi a red diamond of even higher value than his wife had wanted. For him this is just a routine that has to be absolved with women. "Presents had to be given to women, but if they were given too early, it could appear as if he were looking down on them" (p. 37). When she waits for him in the coffeeshop and is still focused on her mission she knows she can count on that attitude in him and so lead him into his trap. ("Moreover, jewellery had always been a weak point in women" (p. 23)).

Jiazhi thus undergoes a change. Her carrying these two personalities within her, however, one duty-bound and one security-seeking, is foreshadowed and supported by various literary devices from the beginning in the narrative and reveals that she had this duality before her change occurs in the story. She is associated with contrasting elements of brightness and darkness, whereby the brightness points to her public, external life on imaginary stages in the present time and the darkness represents her private, personal side that she has not been aware of herself and discovers herself in the course of the narrative. Her public, bright side outshines her dark side with the sharp contrasts gradually disappearing as the strong lights dim and give way to colours (the green, white and red pin wheel on the pedicab at the end of the third part). The lights are the brightest after she has successfully attracted Mr. Yi in Hong Kong and she feels her brilliance is so strong it illuminates the others (p. 26). The fact that she is the light source herself shows her enthusiasm for the cause. It is so ardent that she even has enough brilliance to make the "detestable Liang Runsheng" (p. 27) appear not so detestable and have her first sexual experience with him. This happens "off-stage" from the present action. When she goes "on-stage" in the present time she is illuminated by (or in the presence of) lights. They shine from strong overhead lamps onto flat surfaces (stretched tablecloth) (p. 15) creating a strong contrast between the dazzling white of the table cloth and the cleavage of her breasts (Jiazhi in action). Or they shine at a distance from her onto uneven distances (brown corridor wall in the second coffeeshop) bringing out lesser contrasts (Jiazhi by herself but still on stage). The lamps in the first

coffee shop from where she makes her phone call to 'Second brother' are under apricot-red shades. The warmer colours may suggest the warm feelings she has toward her mother tongue. Also the contrast in temperature between her ice-cold hands and her sentiments towards the sounds on the phone at that moment underline her conflict between the role she plays and the person she really wants to be (and of course her nervousness). Another instance with contrasts in temperatures occurs in the jewellery store between the "cold wind at the back of her head" (p. 34) coming from the store down stairs (immediate future, danger) and the "heavy warmth and sweetness of the air" in the attic ('house', safety). When Mr. Yi and Jiazhi look at the diamond ring in the third part she has to move toward the light to get a good look at the stone, suggesting that the lamp is not very strong. As the narrative approaches the turning point, the light is very weak, it has no strength to illuminate her public role on the stage anymore. "There was only now, this tense moment stretching into eternity, the glimmering light in this small verandah, setting off the snow-white space of daylight downstairs in the door and the window" (p. 37).

For each of her imaginary stages she has spectators: the women and Mr. Yi at the mahjiang table, the man at the counter when she makes her phonecall, and the man watching her while she waits for Mr. Yi. In the jewellery store she alternates between being looked at by the clerks and Mr. Yi, and becoming a spectator herself as she starts to change from being Jiazhi the actress to Jiazhi the person in real life. The stagelights change their focus from shining onto her to shining onto her to shining onto Mr. Yi during the short and only time in that part the

reader gets a view into his mind and this probably because Mr. Yi at that moment is himself on stage. While Jiazhi is relinquishing her role, his calculating thoughts are revealed. He does not buy her the ring because he likes her but because "present had to be given to women" (p. 37). After he has been warned and has sprung up, he plunges into the darkness of the narrow stairways, moving momentarily into her world. Meanwhile, however, the stage for an act in the real world has been prepared, the artificial lights have changed to natural daylight. ("... the snow white space of daylight downstairs" p. 37). Jiazhi's faltering life on stage is threatened to be destroyed by an act of violence in the real world. "[D]ownstairs were the two shopwindows with the door in the middle, one whole glittering space, it seemed like a huge window stretching two floors up which could explode at anytime" (p. 34). Now that Jiazhi is not so convinced anymore about her mission, she feels incapacitated in her role as actress and is reduced to a mere spectator looking down from a balcony onto a scene of murder. The attic which a moment ago seemed like a "comfortable nest" to her, now changes into a balcony in a movie theatre. The black and white cartoon film she imagines unrolling behind her back represents the terror she feels of what could happen to her in the near future. "On that dim verandah, bright windows and the glass door behind her were the screen on which a black and white cartoon film was projected, she could not bear to look at the bloody scene, or a spy being questioned under torture" (pp. 34-35).

There are several mentions of movie theatres, things being projected onto screens and props for the stage to intensify the atmosphere of unreality Jiazhi lives in, a life removed from the real world by



glass panes. When she and Mr. Yi drive to the jewellery store (the fact that the car first drives away from the store and has to make numerous turns to get back to it, may symbolize Jiazhi's subconscious unwillingness to drive to the place where he will be killed) Jiazhi watches the Ping An theatre through the window. "It was the only clean movie theatre in town operating with two reels, the greyish red, dark yellow two-coloured door front had a warm feeling of some coarse knitted wool" (p. 30). Before the climactic moment she is at ease in her world of stages (therefore Jiazhi's positive and warm impression of the Ping An theatre), she knows she is acting and accepts the props around her. Items around her are a "wooden model of a three layered white wedding cake in the shopwindow" (p. 29) and "wooden models striking different poses behind the neon lights" (p. 31). Shortly after the climactic moment, when she has changed from Jiazhi the actress to Jiazhi the young woman, she would like the stage props be part of her life. "Too bad [the ring] was just a stage prop, and that it was used for such a short time, it could make one feel disconsolate" (p. 35). When she leaves the jewellery store after the turning point, she feels separated from the leisurely and free world by a window pane, including from the "beautiful wooden figures in the shopwindows displaying furcoats, bat sleeved sweaters, and flowered shirts which could be looked at but not approached" (pp. 39-40). From that point on she knows she has left the stage-(underground) life behind her and although she may not know it herself, her sensation of being "locked on the outside" (p. 40) may foreshadow that she will never reach the real world.

The symbol of glass appearing in various shapes and forms (the perfume bottle, the glasstick, mirrors, glass counters) but especially recurring

as windows, creates an atmosphere of things and people being visible but intangible. The glass walls separating the characters at the various levels are often associated with cold sensations intensifying the impression of distance: a refrigerating glass counter, the cold space the perfume leaves behind on Jiazhi's earlobes and just the very element of glass.

Another aspect of the glass symbols are the diamond rings. While they too (together with other jewels mentioned) have a function of separating characters, in this case economically (Jiazhi regrets wearing her jade ring because she feels the other women will laugh at her (p. 18), and the women in the black cloaks wear gold chains to display their wealth, (p. 16)), they also have the function of bringing the secret agents closer to their foe. Precisely because a stone is missing from her earring, she can lure Mr. Yi into the store. The diamond ring he buys for her is red, standing for the lust he feels for her. The ring symbolically represents a union, but theirs is not to be, as the ring is only a stage prop.

As the atmosphere of secrecy prevails, none of the characters are able to perceive each other's true identity. Listening devices are installed, a physical distance is created by conversations made by telephone, and the language barriers of Cantonese, Shanghainese, Mandarin, English and Hindi demand some additional crossing of barriers. They create difficulties for the characters to communicate on the same level. The underground workers again use these complications to their advantage: because Jiazhi speaks Cantonese, her friendship with Mrs. Yi is legitimate in helping her shop.

Jiazhi's inability to be part of the real world is supported by an additional contrast of presence and absence of sounds. Her life on stage is only an imitation of real life and can therefore not have the same intensity. The sounds are subdued. "On this side the store was in a deep sleep, one could only faintly hear the city's noises" (p. 34). This absence, or muffled presence of sounds is rationalized with the condition of wartime, its aesthetic function, however, is to increase the sense of Jiazhi's numbed panic and to suggest the unreality of the situation. Just after the turning point there are sounds of feet stumbling down the stairs, of leather soles running on linoleum, the shrill sound of a car, the sound of a whistle and bells. These are supported by similes, "Yi shot out like a bullet" (p. 38) and the car door shutting close like a gunshot. Jiazhi has come to life, even if it is for a short moment, she hears sounds and sees colours (the three-coloured pinwheel on the pedicab she hails). These moments are short, however, because although she has taken charge of the events around her, there is no return, her underground life has carried her too far away from the real world. After she leaves the jewellery store she feels visually separated from the ordinary people on the street by a glass pane and auditorily by the chiming of ironsheets. The blockade is called and Jiazhi knows this means her end. "The street was wide, the sound of the bells like thin ironsheets floated heavily in midair over the road; the sound did not carry over, but seemed very far away" (p. 40).

Jiazhi has in other words made an attempt to break through two levels of reality at once (being the fake mistress of Mr. Yi on the third level and the dutiful underground worker on the second level) to become

herself. By revealing herself at the wrong moment, however, she has ironically only managed to separate herself completely from the world she wanted to return to. In her move to save Yi she has unconsciously doomed herself.

The author's skilled use of imagery and symbolism in this story enhances the impression of Jiazhi's move away from passivity in the theatre world to a position of control over her life, even though, as we have seen, this decision comes at the wrong moment. By the author's adept arrangement of the various times seen mostly through the main character's eyes, Zhang Ailing is also able to control the perspective of the reader and thereby increase the suspense. The information about events and characters is only gradually disclosed making the narrative at first seem incoherent, it is only at the very end of the story that the reader has a complete picture.

## CHAPTER 3

**"Flowers and Pistils Floating on the Waves": A Mind at Rest**

In the short story "Flowers and Pistils Floating on the Waves" the technique of scattering the material in a chronological distortion has the function of reflecting a mind at rest, a mind relatively free of pressures in the present time, able to roam into the memory of various pasts and give some thoughts to the future. The story has no unity of plot in that the main character's scattered thoughts do not point to a theme or to a truth within the story. There is no drastic change in the present action, no enlightenment of the character. All the narrative does is create the illusion of the movements of a mind under relatively relaxed circumstances, challenging the reader to piece the chronological order together and get an approximate picture of the main character's personality. Luozhen's thoughts about the past are not a concentrated pondering to resolve a problem nor is their main function to provide information about her past in order to explain her present situation but rather to reflect her present state of mind. She uses the time at her disposal (ten days) in a peaceful location (a small freighter) to think about various aspects of her past, a past she is prepared to leave behind emotionally and physically, as she travels toward her future, the start of a new life in Japan.

With the present action in the story (and the accompanying thoughts)

limited to a few short passages,<sup>39</sup> the past takes precedence over the present both in narrative content and textual space. This is because the scope of the events in the past is larger and more intricate than the events in the present. The present action serves as a springboard for thoughts to dive into memories by providing objects or similar moments in the present that trigger associations, which in turn trigger further associations. The present also has the function of supplying reference points, of providing a sense of continuity when the narrative emerges from long passages of memory. Towards the end of the narrative Luozen's thoughts about the past connect in almost perfect chronological sequence to the present, that is at the inception of the narrative. Nevertheless, for the content of the story, the past and the present time are not mutually interdependent. The present action could theoretically stand by itself, but the story would lose in technical and artistic depth by having all the memories omitted.

Luozen's thoughts are rendered in "narrated report" in the third person singular through the presence of the narrator who, however, does not interfere with the illusion of attributing the thoughts and their movement to Luozen. The narrator's presence can be clearly perceived

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<sup>39</sup>In fact, the present action can be listed in fifteen steps: 1. Luozen watches the waiter carry her luggage into her room 2. she carries her typewriter 3. she lifts the sofa cushion 4. she observes the foreigners 5. she has lunch with the other two passengers 6. she looks out into the sea 7. she types 8. she greets the Norwegian sailor 9. she pulls the letter out of the typewriter 10. she looks at the photo album with Fanglin 11. she observes the workers on the pier 12. from her room she observes Japanese passengers board the ship 13. during the meals her contact is not as good with the Li's 14. she keeps eating during the high waves 15. she wants to wash her hand, leans on wash basin (listens).

at the beginning of the narrative when the action seems to halt for a moment and the narrator brings in some information about Luozhen's position in her family ("Luozhen was, what in her native dialect was called, 'the daughter of an old man' . . ." p. 48). Thoughts about her family might flash through her mind at that moment, but the information seems to be coming too much from the exterior as to be part of her thoughts. Thus, a narrator presents enough to put Luozhen into the picture for the reader, and at this point also foreshadows the content of the thoughts (her family) that will most occupy Luozhen's mind during her journey.

As Luozhen lets her mind wander, she thinks about her own past, and that of other people. The information she has about them is either supplied by her imagination (she imagines how the couple with her on the boat met), by mentioned report (Miss Solomon tells her in Shanghai how Mr. Kali and Miss Fan got married) and by implied report (her older sister and probably Fanny herself told Luozhen about their days abroad). Her own past and the story of other characters' pasts may occur simultaneously but may have no impact on each other. Some of these, for example (Mr. and Mrs. Kali, Mr. Kali and Miss Fan) are of no importance to her situation either in the past or the present within the context of the story; they get lost somewhere in the narrative and have no function other than revealing something about Luozhen's personality. Other characters' pasts (Fanny and Adrian abroad in Shanghai and Hong Kong) are connected to her past, they merge, interact with her story and play a role in her decision making that will lead to her current situation.

On the boat Luozhen's thoughts move back into three pasts that are geographically related to her own story and one past that is geographically removed. The various pasts are, starting with the remotest point from her present:

IV. Fanny, Adrian, another sister and her brother abroad (probably England), Fanny and the captain on the boat.

III. Shanghai: Fanny and Adrian upon their return, the marriage of their daughters, Adrian by himself in Shanghai for more than a year (work, prison), Luozhen's job, her visit to Miss Solomon's house, the man following her, Luozhen obtaining her exit-visa by shedding tears, Luozhen and Adrian on the bus to the British Embassy.

II. Canton: She takes the train from Shanghai to Canton, men on the streets assault her, the bridge over Lake Luo, the porters at the end of the bridge.

I. Hong Kong: Luozhen stays one day with Fanny, she finds a room in a crowded boarding house, she moves to a better place, she decides to go to Japan, she receives notice of Fanny's death, she attends the funeral, she receives a small envelope with money from the servant.

As we can see from these four groups, Luozhen's memories move within four blocks which, when put into their proper chronological order as I have done here, form a continuous story.

The past and the present are connected by a common theme of travel, that is of physical displacement toward the present (the boat) and the present moving into the future (Japan). The remotest past (Fanny and Adrian abroad) is connected to the third past (Shanghai) by the boat



(Fanny and Adrian return to China) which in turn is connected to the second past (Canton) by the exit visa and the train. Canton is connected to the first past (Hong Kong) by the bridge over Lake Luo and this last past to the present by Luozen's announcement that she wants to go to Japan. The uncertain future is brought into the narrative by mention of Luozen's former classmate in Japan (who helps her with the entry visa into Japan) and her worried thoughts about her life there without any knowledge of Japanese. The narrative touches Luozen's future (becomes present) by mention of the boat, passing the small Japanese islands, and by the temporal statements in the narrative such as "When they had almost reached Japan . . ." (p. 78). The theme of travel throughout the story and the frequent allusion to foreign countries give the story a broad, international scope<sup>40</sup> and at the same time give a sense of Luozen's independent character. More about her character will appear toward the end of the discussion.

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<sup>40</sup>This story could be called the most international of Zhang Ailing stories: the Norwegian boat company travels between Japan, Hong Kong and Thailand in the South China Sea. The train to Canton is Russian. The streets in Canton look like markets on pictures from India, a Russian documentary film on orchards in Turkestan is accompanied by music that sounds like Indian music, the whiskers on the woman's face are a characteristic feature reaching from the Middle East all the way to Italy, there is a film about the Swedish Queen, there are people of mixed races at Luozen's job (English Jews, British Indians), Fanny and Adrian live abroad, he had his clothes made in England, the house they build has a 'modern Danish style', they have Mexican candleholders and Dutch foodwarmers, Adrian works for an East European businessman, somebody brings mangoes from Taiwan, Fanny's son has gone to Brazil, Adrian gesticulates like an Italian, he goes with Luozen to the British Embassy to apply for an entry visa into Hong Kong, the wife of the British Indian man is Japanese, after the Pearl Harbour incident the Japanese Army enters Shanghai, the British and Americans enter concentration camps, Luozen tastes Malaysian food.

Within the numerous switches between the various histories we can break the narrative down into four parts according to the action of the present time. The first part starts with Luozen in the present time on the boat, springs back to the second past in Canton (actually the very transition point between the second and the first past on the bridge over Lake Luo), moves to the beginning of the second past (train from Shanghai to Canton), alternates between the third and the second past (men bothering her both in Shanghai and Canton) and joins the present again on the boat. The second part has a long memory placed between the brackets from when she starts to type and pulls the finished letter out of the typewriter. This memory starts with her sisters and their husbands abroad (fourth past) and alternates between Fanny and Adrian in Shanghai and Hong Kong, and Luozen in relation to them either in Shanghai or Hongkong. The third part starts with Luozen and Fanglin looking at the photo album in the present time, alternates between Luozen's thoughts about her job in Shanghai (third past) and thoughts about Fanglin and Li Chaxun (their relationship, how they met). - It continues in the present time with the cockroaches in her cabin and is followed by a flashback of her stay in Hong Kong (first and closest past), chronologically reaching the present time when she boards the ship (implied). The past reaches the present time of the story, but this present time has already become a past in its relation to the time in the narrative when Luozen thinks about that moment (she is about ten days ahead of that "present"). The last and fourth part unrolls chiefly in the present time (it starts with the boat winding round the small islands and ends with Luozen's thoughts about the

future) with a short return to the third past (Adrian's pleading look on the bus in Shanghai). We define thus the present time as the actions and the corresponding thoughts which the reader experiences at the same time as the character and of which he/she knows only as much as (or more) than the (main) character. Accordingly, we define the past as the time which the character remembers (relives for the reader) and in which case the character knows more than the reader.

We now turn to a detailed look at the different ways the narrative renders temporal switches between the various blocks of times, switches which can be either almost invisible or clearly recognizable to the reader. In all of these shifts the reader has to orient him/herself within the chronology, as the narrative, in its endeavour to record the flowing thoughts of the character, does not give explanatory comments by the narrator to help the reader find his way.

Switches between the various times can occur so imperceptively that the reader may not notice them in a first reading. They are embedded inside a paragraph without any temporal indications of the transition. There are two such examples, one in the beginning of the narrative and one towards the end.

They seemed to be going through a hotel passage way, an old building kept in good repair with a carpet swallowing the sound of feet, a wind still quiet place--a round tube shaped tunnel travelling through time,/under her feet it was slippery and difficult to walk, when walking her knees felt weak. The bridge over Lake Luo also had a roof . . . (p. 48)

Luozhen compares the body of the boat to the passageway of a hotel which in turn reminds her of the bridge by Lake Luo without any further

elaboration as to where the lake and the bridge are situated and at what time she crossed it. Before the bridge over Lake Luo and its roof are mentioned in the above passage, the reader gets a sensation of the atmosphere which both the boat and the bridge share without Luozen clarifying the location. The reader at this point does not know whether her knees are weak on the boat because of the troubled sea (or some other reason) or on the bridge because she is afraid she will be caught and brought back to the mainland, as it is later revealed. This is what makes the transition fuzzy. We can see that this particular narrative technique conveys well the quick movements of the mind in which present and past merge, an impression increased by the absence of the narrator's (or Luozen's own) efforts to bring the reader into the picture.

The second example occurs when she is afraid about the cockroaches at night in the present time.

She was also worried they would crawl into her luggage and she would carry them onto land./The room she had rented in Hong Kong had no furniture, she had gone to buy a strawmat and a spray can of insect repellent. (p. 71)

The link between the two times is the spraycan of insect repellent, something she is probably wishing for at night on the "living sofa". The cockroaches themselves appear in the same first past but under different circumstances one page later (she thinks about the unhygienic situation of the public washroom in the first house she stayed in in Hong Kong). The transition in this passage is also embedded inside a paragraph but is a bit clearer to the reader than the first example because memories of Hong Kong have occurred earlier on in the narrative.

Time shifts are the easiest to discern when they start abruptly with a new paragraph and are marked with a clear temporal indication. The reader then knows the narrative turns either backward in time in relation to the present time or a past, or moves forward from a past. One such obvious example occurs in the beginning of the narrative, right after the first "fuzzy" transition. Luozhen's thoughts have moved from the present to the second past (bridge at Lake Luo, story transition from the second past to the first past) and then abruptly jump to the beginning of the second past.

She thanked him again and again and wanted to give him some money, but he waved his hand and refused to accept it.

On the train to Canton she had travelled on hard seats, . . .  
(pp. 49-50)

For this passage the reader needs to have some knowledge of China's geography in order to know that the incident in Luohu (bridge from Canton to Hong Kong) takes place earlier in the story than her trip by train to Hong Kong, although it appears later in the narrative.

Temporal transitions can occur either within the same time (in the past or in the present) or chronologically from one time to the next. In the latter case there is no temporal distortion. The narrative jumps from one event to a later event within the chronological order of the story but accelerates the narrative by omitting an event or implying it (ellipsis). In Hong Kong for example, Luozhen receives the obituary notice about Fanny's death. In the next line (without an explanation) she is already at the ceremony.

On the obituary notice was the place of the funeral, it was in the cellar of a large commercial building in Zhong Huan./ The double winged large old teakwood door was unlatched, she pushed it open and went in. (p. 74)

The reader does not know whether she goes to the ceremony the same day or a few days later, but the period of silence between her reading the notice and going to the ceremony conveys well her feeling of numbness at Fanny's unexpected death.

In the same time block of the above example the past joins the present smoothly yet without exact indications about Luozhen's actions during the transition. A general statement about travelling takes the place of explanations as to when and how Luozhen boarded the ship.

. . . in her emotion her nerves had confused her so that her action had been unreasonable. Luckily she left not long after that. Boarding a ship and having the distance of an ocean behind oneself, and sometimes the space and the time can make people forget things. No wonder in foreign novels . . .

This boat took ten days from Hong Kong to Japan, . . .  
(p. 76)

General statements thus can function as timeless links to smooth transitions over, either within a chronological order as in the above example or in an anachronical shift. Luozhen's general thoughts about Communism for instance link an abrupt jump from the third past (the man following her in Shanghai) to the present time.

A terrified face has no individualized features,  
it is a thousand faced person.

General  
statement

The waiter came calling for lunch (p. 53)

Present  
time

As "fillers" in the present or past action we can also include the previously mentioned elaborations by the narrator on Luozen's position in her family. The narrative action seems to come to a halt, thereby providing space for the narrator (or Luozen in other examples) to supply some additional information. These are mostly short passages inserted within a temporal section of the narrative. Luozen's short memory flash in the past about another past (the mangoes from Taiwan (p. 62)) and the short thought in the present in regard to her sister's words about typing (p. 67) do not distract from the main action of that particular time; they are brief views into another time with a quick return to the initial time. While these short sentences may have no special meaning in the story other than emphasizing a point in the initial time, Luozen's recurring thoughts about Communism, on the other hand, appearing within any time section, reflect her underlying opinion about Communism. Short sentences of the present time, for example, are inserted into her memories into her memories of the past and show Luozen commenting in the present time on these past events.

There were some scattered laughs which stopped almost as fast.

third past  
(Shanghai)

In a film on the Swedish Queen Jiabao had a famous love scene . . .

memory without  
time specification

Two, three years ago, even Shanghai was like that, Luozen thought.

present time

After the show, when the lights were lit . . . (p. 52)

third past  
(Shanghai)

The short thought in the present time refers to men following women on the streets as induced by, in her view, the Communist regime. Another instance occurs as the only link to the present time inside the long memory (in the second part of the narrative) which otherwise moves only between various pasts.

Just being poor was all right too, she had thought

third past  
(Shanghai)

That was later, first the city people did not know the harm to come.

present time

The reason why her sister and her husband moved to Hong Kong was also because they were not young anymore . . . (p. 60)

third past  
(Shanghai)

In this case the comment refers to the harsh conditions under the new government. These quick returns to the present give a sense of how strongly Luozhen resents the Communist regime in China. Even when her thoughts are immersed in the past and occupied with other events, they remind her of the reason why she left her country. We will note more about her attitude toward Communism later on.

Temporal shifts may in some cases initially appear as short memory flashes but then continue with a whole series of events without returning to the original position. Such memory strands occur following the two examples of the "fuzzy" temporal transition within a paragraph. Her comparison of the boat to the passageway of a hotel and to the bridge of Lake Luo retreats to another past in Canton which in turn leads to an earlier event in Shanghai without coming back to her observations of the



boat. The memory of her room in Hong Kong which was triggered by her thoughts about the cockroaches never returns to the same time at night on the boat but develops the memory into a stretch of consecutive action in the past ending six pages later and reaching the present time at a different point than the original start. An analysis of the temporal shifts within the narrative represents still an "outside" approach to the story in its attempt to see how the narrative structurally reflects the movements of the mind. When we later turn to the thoughts themselves, that is, first how they trigger each other and then in which order they appear, we will get closer to the "inside" of the story and can see how the thoughts reflect Luo-zhen's personality.

Memories of the past can be triggered by similar events in the present time or by similarities in the past time, in which latter case the memory brings her back to an even earlier past. In the present time for example, the British Indian man on the boat remind Luo-zhen of people of mixed races at her job.

At first sight Luo-zhen had a kind of mutual recognition with him--of somebody working as a low clerk in a foreign firm. In the firm where she was working there were people of mixed blood, . . . (pp. 53-54)

In the second past in Canton Luo-zhen is annoyed at men bothering her, an incident which triggers her memory of a similar event in Shanghai (third past).

If these were only Cantonese discriminating against people from other provinces, . . . , how could it be like that in Shanghai too? . . . Once there had been a tall thin man . . . (p. 51)

The long memory stretch in the second part of the story is narratively hinged to the present time by Luozen starting to type (p. 55) and pulling the finished letter out of the machine (p. 66). The action framing this part is Luozen typing; the thought setting it off is the Norwegian sailor.

She started typing again. The blond man finished rolling up the rope and left.

action

Northern Europeans were very casual in their relations between the sexes, they thought of nothing of it, he had actually lived up to their reputation.

thought

She could not help thinking about Mrs. Niu that time on the ship. (p. 55)

association

Both elements, the outward action (typing) and the thought connection to the present (the blond sailor) occur again at the end as her thoughts dip into the past.

She had finished typing the letter, pulled it out of the machine and read it once over. Somebody knocked at the door. She was startled. Could it be that sailor coming for her? (p. 66)

action

thought

The narrative within this part runs smoothly between the fourth and the third past (Fanny and Adrian abroad, their life in Shanghai upon their return) and then alternates between the third and the first past (Luozen in relation to Fanny in Hong Kong and to Adrian in Shanghai). After her return to the present time her memory spills over into the third part of the narrative, this time triggered by links in the present, showing that what happened between Fanny, Adrian and her preoccupies her mind most.

Similar to other parts of the narrative, the various pasts inside the memory are connected either by associative links of similarities, or by logical sequential jumps. The difference with the rest of the body of the narrative is that the pasts do not link up with the present within the memory stretch. In the first category for example is Adrian's bed which Luozen sees in Hong Kong, reminds her of Adrian in Shanghai.

It seemed the two white lacquered single beds had been the daughters' beds when they were small, the empty one must be Adrian's. In Shanghai Adrian was living at his brother's house, . . . (p. 62)

Into the second category falls the moment when her sister tells her about Fanny on the boat (p. 60) succeeded by Luozen's thoughts about the same event ("She had probably gone only once, . . . sister had probably never told her brother-in-law . . .") and followed by the temporal jump but narratively sequential connection. "Because she was respecting that secret, when Luozen saw Fanny in Hong Kong, she had actually forgotten about the incident--" (p.61). The narrative jumps from the third to the first past but is logical within the content of the story.

One gets the sense that the narrative could be cut into sections at the temporal junctions and rearranged into the chronological order of the story (see such an exercise on pages 92-97). One such clear example is the first mention of the second past, the incident by the bridge at Luohu (on page 48) which chronologically continues on page 61.

She thanked him again and again and wanted to give him some money, but he waved his hand and refused to accept it.  
(p. 49)

As soon as Luozhen had left the mainland she had gone straight to Fanny's place . . . (p. 61),

or the example cited previously of Luozhen starting to type on page 55 and finishing on page 66 with the action in the present time continuing where it left off eleven pages earlier.

There are twenty-three temporal shifts in the narrative (thoughts triggered by similar events in the present or the past, or logical sequential jumps) of which seven are temporal breaks. In a schema, the narrative links would look something like this:

- |  |                  |   |
|--|------------------|---|
| A. luggage stickers on sister's trunk                                  | 1. +<br>(p. 48)  | B. (Luozhen's position in her family) + foreigners . . .              |
| C. . . . boat like tunnel  | 2. +<br>(p. 48)  | D. bridge from Canton to Hong Kong (over Lake Luo)                    |
| E. 3./Train to Canton, streets in Canton, men                          | 4. +<br>(p. 51)  | F. man followed her in Shanghai                                       |
| G. 5./Lunch with couple, be of mixed blood                             | 6. +<br>(p. 54)  | H. people of mixed races at her job. English customs . . .            |
| I. . . . on deck, room, <u>types</u> , Norwegian sailor                | 7. +<br>(p. 55)  | J. Fanny on boat with captain . . .                                   |
| K. . . . Fanny and Adrian abroad, sister tells her about Fanny on boat | 8. +<br>(p. 61)  | L. in Hongkong forgot about it . . .                                  |
| M. . . . Fanny's life has changed (poor)                               | 9. +<br>(p. 62)  | N. Adrian already told them in Shanghai (mangoes from Taiwan) + . . . |
| O. . . . Fanny shows Luozhen her room Adrian's bed                     | 10. +<br>(p. 62) | P. Adrian in Shanghai . . .   |
| Q. . . . he accompanies to British Embassy, pleading look              | 11. +<br>(p. 64) | R. in Hong Kong she tells Fanny . . .                                 |

- |  |                  |  |
|--|------------------|--|
| S. . . . daughter's reaction                                 | 12. +<br>(p. 65) | T. Luozhen does not want to get married, parties at work.      |
| U. 13./Finished <u>typing</u> , Fanglin visits Luozhen       | 14. +<br>(p. 67) | V. (Sister's words about typing) + they look at pictures . . . |
| W. . . . Fanglin respectful towards husband, mixed marriages | 15. +<br>(p. 68) | X. mixed marriages at work, Fanglin resembles Miss Fan         |
| Y. 16./Louzhen asks Fanglin how she met husband              | 17. +<br>(p. 70) | Z. imagines how, finish book                                   |
| A' 18./At night afraid of cockroaches                        | 19. +<br>(p. 71) | B' Cockroaches in her room in Hong Kong                        |
| C' . . . Fanny has died                                      | 20. +<br>(p. 74) | D' She attends ceremony travel to forget . . .                 |
| E' 21./Boat winds around islands, waiter looks worried       | 22. +<br>(p. 76) | F' Adrian had looked worried                                   |
- G' 23./at table contact worse . . . thoughts about the future.

( + temporal shift /temporal break . . . temporal continuation  
 + return to time on left side).

Many of the temporal shifts are scattered thoughts (bits of memories and hypothetical thoughts as for example those about Fanglin's and Li Chaxun's past) without any exact time placement in the past or chronological follow-up. All the memories recurring in the narrative about Shanghai related to her own past, for example, are not linked together, and the reader can only roughly place them into a chronological order. The event of the man following her in Shanghai for example would probaly have happened after she lost her job because it is mentioned she came back from tutoring, an occupation she might have taken on to get some income. The event though, is mentioned earlier in the narrative than the bits of memories about her job. The long memory stretch within the

various pasts in the second part of the narrative give more the impression of a story with a chronological follow-up which eventually reaches the present time beyond the boundaries of the memory stretch. Fanny's and Adrian's past merges with Luozen's past to form the story within the story of the present time. They provide all necessary (and less necessary) background to understand why she is on a boat trip to Japan.

There are some strands of continuation within the memories of her job in Shanghai in spite of the fact that each of these is triggered by a different event in the present or the past (6. people of mixed blood, 12. Luozen's thoughts about marriage, 15. mixed marriages at work). In all of these memories a bit more information is revealed about Mr. Kali, the manager of the firm where she worked. He seems to have a liking for her because he "always liked to look for her and tease her" during the Christmas parties (p. 65) and although she finds him good looking (p. 54) and would have brought him parcels to the concentration camp like his secretary Miss Fan who eventually got married to him did, she does not seem to have any further interest in him. The thoughts about him always cross her mind in passing, among all the other events of that memory. If she has an interest in him at all ("After the war she had often thought about this conversation. If she had been his secretary, she thought, she would also have brought him parcels." p. 70), it is not strong enough for her to marry him ("She had not married, . . . and she . . . did not want to" (p. 65).

The strands of loose chronological follow-ups within the separated memories dealing with her job in Shanghai are some of the clues that

provide us with information about Louzhen's personality (her position toward marriage and men). Her memories about Fanny and Adrian in Shanghai and Hong Kong on the other hand are held together more in their follow-up (alternate switches between third and second past), and are embedded into the links of Luozhen typing without returns to the present in between. This shows that these thoughts preoccupy her more (the events are also more recent than those at her job in Shanghai). Nevertheless, there are also some jumps from thought to thought within the retreat into the past in the second part of the narrative, strands which first seem to lead nowhere but are picked up later in the memory. "Adrian had a slow way of talking, when he phoned home he would open his mouth and say: 'Eh', dragging out the 'Eh' (p. 58). This piece of information about Adrian exists at that point without further elaboration. At a later moment we learn that away from his wife he "can talk now, he is really blossoming" (p. 62), implying that maybe he really has no desire to return to his wife in Hong Kong because he feels overpowered by her.

What kind of thoughts go through Louzhen's mind and in which order they appear in the narrative, may give us clues to Luozhen's personality and her present state of mind. In the first part of the narrative Luozhen is kept relatively busy in the present time (the waiter, the "living sofa" and the other passengers on the boat) so that her thoughts switch to pasts (her journey out of the mainland, her job situation) and the immediate future (she hopes for a quiet trip), thoughts which are all associated with each other or to the present, but have no chronological connection with each other. Once she sits down by herself in her room (or is about

to fall asleep in the evening), her mind has the freedom to think about things that have affected her in the recent past (Fanny and Adrian in Shanghai and Hong Kong). The fact that her outward action is typing does not seem to distract her thoughts because she is an experienced typist.

From the arrangement of Luozen's thoughts about Fanny and Adrian for example, the reader can infer that Luozen is a modern and independent woman. The first memory she has about Fanny is "Mrs. Niu that time on the ship" (p. 55) thoughts which point to Fanny's sexual encounter with the captain as revealed later in the narrative (p. 60). Her initial thoughts about the incident, however, stop there and swing back to a much earlier time of Fanny's and Adrian's days abroad and the period in Shanghai after their return, providing some background to these two characters. This could point to the fact that Luozen is not preoccupied or shocked about Fanny's secret visit with the captain. When her thoughts further in the narrative reach the actual moment of her sister telling her the news, her reaction is to be relaxed and slightly intrigued.

Luozen heard this and smiled too, she did not say anything. She did not want to ask which country the ship was from, if she asked she felt the secrecy would be broken, it would not seem a female ghost had walked quietly around uninvolved in any moral question. (p. 60)

When she sees Fanny later in Hong Kong the incident has slipped into her subconsciousness.

Because she respected that secret, when Luozen saw Fanny in Hong Kong, she had actually forgotten about the incident (p. 61)



Her arrival in Hong Kong in the above example (in fact, it is mentioned twice on the same page), coincides temporally with her arrival in Hong Kong appearing four pages later in the narrative in a slightly different context. The narrative has switched to Luozhen and Adrian in Shanghai. She had noticed his pleading look on the bus not to tell Fanny about his life in Shanghai, and although she decided not to say anything, she changed her mind.

She did not expect that in the first night in Hong Kong she would be talking with Fanny in the dark bedroom . . . That Adrian was really annoying. . . . She soon told her everything.(p. 64)

We can thus infer that by the time Luozhen arrives in Hong Kong, she knows that Fanny's and Adrian's marriage is not harmonious. She also knows their personal secrets, things which both would rather keep from each other: she knows that Fanny went to visit the captain at night on the boat and that Adrian (in Fanny's words) "says there is no way for him to [leave the mainland] but actually . . . he does not want to come out" (p. 64). Because of the time that has passed between the moment she learns about Fanny and the captain, and her arrival in Hong Kong, plus her initial attitude toward the incident (respect for the secret and not much interest), she never tells Adrian about it or embarrasses Fanny with her knowledge of it. She does, however, reveal Adrian's secret because of her sense of "having a mission" ever since reaching Hong Kong (p. 64) and because she might have thought in a manner similar to her sister and her brother-in-law who looked down on Adrian for accepting the job in Shanghai (p. 63) rather than making efforts to join his wife in Hong Kong.

The fact that the very first memory she has about Fanny is "Mrs. Niu on the boat" and not the most recent event, that is, Fanny's death and the death ceremony, might suggest that Luozhen does not feel responsible for Fanny's death by having told her about Adrian in Shanghai.

Luozhen's sense of independence is obvious by her very decision to leave her country and her family behind for Japan and by her views about marriage. "She had not married, her sister blamed it on the fact that she had not entered university . . . she herself did not want to [get to know somebody]" (p. 65). Also in the present action we can see that she has a mind of her own and likes to be by herself.

. . . But she valued this time in the vacuum tube too much, with nothing to worry about, euphorically comfortable, it only seemed like once one sat down one could feel how totally exhausted and tired one was. (p. 77)

After all the years of working and the last agitated months of preparations to leave her country, the ten days on the boat represent a period in which she can "completely relinquish any responsibility and feel carefree" (p. 54) before a life of new challenges and work await her in Japan. The boat trip thus represents for Luozhen a transition from a past she wants to leave behind to an uncertain and rather scary future.

Boarding a ship and having the distance of an ocean behind oneself, and sometimes the air and the time can make people forget. (p. 75)

The terror of leading a wandering life was locked outside, so near and yet so far, so very far away and uncertain. (p. 78)

Luozhen may wish to leave the troubles of her family behind her, her initial move though, was because of the new government in China. She voices her clearest statement against the Communist regime when she ponders about men assaulting women in the city streets.

She thought it was a feeling of the apocalypse. When the Communists first came, the simple townspeople did not know how terrible they were, but in two or three years they knew how things stood. After putting their own fates in someone else's hands, they were held firmly by the neck, they sort of wriggled like insects, and they would do whatever they could when they had the chance. (p. 53)

The same thought appears in a shortened version in her longest dip into the past (part two) as the only return to the present, giving a sense of how strong she feels against the new government. ("That was later, first the small city people did not know what was going to happen" (p. 60)).

While the atmosphere of mutual distrust and fear under the Communist regime as portrayed in the story may reflect the actual experience of city people ("... in these years even a good friend did not dare say a few more meaningful words." (p. 63) and see quotations above), her thinking of the Communist regime being the particular cause for men following and bothering women on the streets, seems far-fetched.

... in Shanghai this was happening now too, in broad daylight in the crowded streets with the Liberation Army on sentry, men dared to be frivolous toward women. (p. 50)

But those without the trick of the photograph would tail one too, it was becoming a fashion of the times. She thought it was a feeling of the apocalypse. When the Communists first came the simple townspeople did not know how terrible they were, but in two or three years they knew how things stood. (p. 53)

The actual reason seems to find an explanation in the conversation of Mrs. Xun and Mrs. Wu in "Happy Reunion". ". . . when women were first coming out onto the streets they often complained that somebody was following them but afterwards it was not heard so much anymore" (p. 109). Thus what Luozen is experiencing might still be a holdover from the period when men were getting used to seeing women walking freely on the streets rather than the new government imbuing in them a new 'women hatred'. It does, however, perhaps make sense that when people are put under pressure from "above" they will look for somebody seemingly weaker than themselves to oppress.

Luozen is quite well read. In the present time she compares Mr. Li on the boat to a character in a novel by Charles Dickens (p. 68), and she views the world and the people around her mindful of Somerset Maugham's prose. The boat with its 1920s to 1930s atmosphere, its crew and passengers, and the food served remind her of the atmosphere in Maugham's prose. When she cannot figure out the personality of Mrs. Li she thinks: "There must be a story inside, one that was missing from a collection of Somerset Maugham's stories" (p. 54). She seems a bit too gullible, a bit too easy in her evaluation of life around her based on what she has read. "Maugham had said that, because of a self-abasing psychology, people of mixed races were all overly sensitive." (p. 78). She reasons thus as she thinks about Mr. Li: "He must have talked to her in private, blaming her for bringing shame onto herself." Also in her assumptions about his past she seems overly harsh. "His father had begotten this little dark person, it was not likely he had wanted to keep him at his side, but at least he had given him some education--" (p. 70).

The reader has access into Luozhen's mind during the whole of the narrative, receiving thereby pieces of information about her personality and her past. Whenever she wonders how she appears to other people (to the waiter (p. 47) and to the Cantonese (p. 50), the reader obtains a picture of her physical appearance. Twice the minds of other character's are opened to give the reader an outside opinion of Luozhen, the true value of which the reader has to evaluate according to what s/he knows of her. When Luozhen is about to leave Fanny's funeral for example, the maid blames Luozhen for Fanny's death. "Hadn't she heard it from young Mistress and Young Master: it had been she who who had told Mistress everything . . . How could she be that a person!" (p. 75). The reader knows that Luozhen herself thinks she does not know how to deal with people ("She behaved so unharmoniously and so unexpectedly toward people . . ." p. 61), and that she thinks she acted too rashly whe she was handed the envelope at the ceremony (" . . . in her emotions her nerves had confused her so that her action had been unreasonable" p. 75), but the reader is not inclined to blame Luozhen for Fanny's death because we know that Fanny appreciated Luozhen telling her. "Ever since she had rendered Fanny a service by telling her about Adrian, Fanny talked to her in a gentle voice" p. 72). Had Fanny been perturbed by the news to the point of it driving her to her death, she probably would not have made the effort to talk to Luozhen in a "gentle voice". The reader, however, can believe the waiter's view of Luozhen on the boat.

The waiter, seeing that the meals were so bad, but that she was eating everything, and that she had no companion, but was so satisfied with it all, was wondering how she could possibly be an experienced world traveller. (p. 77)

We can believe the waiter's view of her because we have found out that Luozhen is happy on her own and we know from her own words that she enjoys the period of ten days "living in a vacuum tube" (p. 77).

The "experimental" format of this story provides the reader with an approximate idea of Luozhen's personality at the time of her journey to Japan. The picture is left relatively vague as the impression is given of Luozhen's random thoughts, without enough repetition in the information (acting as reinforcement) to supply a definite image of her. Her personality is, like real human beings, a bit ambiguous, a mixture of many personality traits. She is on the one hand a modern woman with quite a free and independent mind, and on the other hand a bit fast in her judgements.

## APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 3

## FLOWERS AND PISTILS FLOATING ON THE WAVES

Narrative

1. On boat, rooms, Cantonese waiter. Luozhen's thoughts.
2. Luggage with stickers - her position in her family.
3. Cockroaches in bed, Norwegian freighter travels in Asia.
4. Observes two foreigners boarding, hopes for quiet trip.
5. Boat with 1920s, 1930s atmosphere, like tunnel - Bridge over in Lake Luo.
6. Bridge in Lake Luo, porters at end of bridge, her porter runs, they reach Hong Kong.
7. Train to Canton, man's eyes, young woman sings, her thoughts.
8. In Canton, description hotel and streets, men assault her, thoughts.
9. In Shanghai men act frivolous towards women on streets.
10. Man hits her head on, others whistle, she goes back to hotel, her description.
11. Man followed her in Shanghai (photo), movie, he disappears, her thoughts.
12. Waiter calls for lunch, only three people in second class, her impression of the couple (description, no conversation, he of mixed blood).
13. At her job, people of mixed blood.
14. No names addressed at table (English custom). After lunch she looks into the sea.
15. In her room she types, Norwegian sailar, thoughts (picture, Europeans and sex).
16. Thinks about oldest sister on the boat, she and her husband abroad. Fanny buys a car, they invite guests for dinner.
17. Return to Shanghai, house cook, children, Adrian and suits.

18. Luozen and sister talk about Fanny and Adrian.
19. Description Fanny, parties for daughters to marry.
20. Niu family moves to Hong Kong, her thoughts about those with money, and Communism.
21. Luozen loses job, prepares to leave the country.
22. Sister tells her about Fanny on the boat, her thoughts.
23. In Hong Kong Luozen has forgotten about the incident (Fanny on boat).
24. She goes straight to Fanny, looks for room, Fanny's life has changed.
25. Adrian returned to Shanghai, says business in Hong Kong slowed down.
26. Meagre dinner at Fanny's, thoughts.
27. Somebody had brought mangoes from Taiwan for Fanny.
28. Fanny shows Luozen her room, she sees Adrian's bed.
29. Adrian in Shanghai for more than a year, dancing, works in a factory, he is attacked, tells them about hard times in prison.
30. When Luozen goes to Hong Kong, Adrian has been in and out of prison many times.
31. Luozen gets her exit-visa by shedding tears.
32. Luozen and Adrian on bus to British Embassy, his pleading look.
33. In Hong Kong she can not help but tell Fanny, Fanny's reaction, next day she tells her daughter, her reaction (spinster).
34. During last year of middle school chose typing, never married, does not want to marry.
35. Her job, international spinster business. Lives together with her sister and her brother-in-law.
36. Christmas party at work, Mr. Kali likes looking for her, his description.
37. She has finished typing her letter, somebody knocks. Fanglin takes her letter to show her husband, memory of sister's words about typing.
38. Fanglin brings photo album, pictures of her family, one of husband, Luozen's thoughts.



39. Mixed marriage at job, Cantonese secretary (Miss Fan) with Mr. Kali.
40. She heard news from Miss Solomon when she visited her (description her and her sister).
41. Asks how she met husband, imagines how, thinks about language.
42. At night afraid of cockroaches.
43. In Hong Kong she had bought spray can for cockroaches in her room, slept on floor, the Yi's, young couple.
44. Takes showers at Fanny's, moves to new place, no contact with Fanny, then tells her wants to go to Japan, Fanny's reaction.
45. Does not visit her for a while, receives death notice, wonders, goes to death ceremony, servant's envelope, servants thoughts.
46. Boards a ship to forget, thoughts about travel.
47. Boat winds around islands, she observes workers on pier.
48. Boat stops at small island, Japanese board.
49. She enjoys ten days on boat, waiter worried.
50. Adrian had looked worried, believed she would not say anything to Fanny.
51. At table contact with Mr. and Mrs. Li not as good, because she did not return visit. Thoughts about what she could have done.
52. Before boat reaches Japan, high waves (at dinner table talk again).
53. She hears them spit after dinner. Thoughts, fearful of world outside (future).

## FLOWERS AND PISTILS FLOATING ON THE WAVES

StoryABROAD

16. Thinks about oldest sister on the boat, she and her husband abroad. Fanny buys a car, they invite guests for dinner.

SHANGHAI

17. Return to Shanghai, house cook, children, Adrian and suits.
18. Luozhen and sister talk about Fanny and Adrian.
27. Somebody had brought mangoes from Taiwan for Fanny.
34. During last year of middle school chose typing, never married, does not want to marry.
19. Description Fanny, parties for daughters to marry.
20. Niu family moves to Hong Kong, her thoughts about those with money, and Communism.
22. Sister tells her about Fanny on the boat, her thoughts.
25. Adrian returned to Shanghai, says business in Hong Kong slowed down.
29. Adrian in Shanghai for more than a year, dancing, works in a factory, he is attacked, tells them about hard times in prison.
13. At her job, people of mixed blood.
35. Her job international spinster business. Lives together with her sister and her brother-in-law.
36. Christmas party at work, Mr. Kali likes looking for her, his description.
39. Mixed marriage at job, Cantonese secretary (Miss Fan) with Mr. Kali.
40. She heard news from Miss Solomon when she visited her (description her and her sister).
9. In Shanghai men act frivolous towards women on streets.

11. Man followed her in Shanghai (photo), movie, he disappears, her thoughts.
21. Luozhen loses job, prepares to leave the country.
31. Luozhen gets her exit-visa by shedding tears.
32. Luozhen and Adrian on bus to British Embassy, his pleading look.
50. Adrian had looked worried, believed she would not say anything to Fanny.

#### CANTON

7. Train to Canton, man's eyes, young woman sings, her thoughts.
8. In Canton, description hotel and streets, men assault her, thoughts.
10. Man hits her head on, others whistle, she goes back to hotel, her description.
6. Bridge over Lake Luo, porters at end of bridge, her porter runs, they reach Hong Kong.

#### HONG KONG

24. She goes straight to Fanny, looks for room, Fanny's life has changed.
30. When Luozhen goes to Hong Kong, Adrian has been in and out of prison many times.
23. In Hong Kong Luozhen has forgotten about the incident (Fanny on boat).
26. Meagre dinner in Fanny's, thoughts.
28. Fanny shows Luozhen her room, she sees Adrian's bed.
33. In Hong Kong she can not help but tell Fanny, Fanny's reaction, next day she tells her daughter, her reaction (spinster).
43. In Hong Kong she had bought spray can for cockroaches in her room, slept on floor, the Yi's, young couple.
44. Takes showers at Fanny's, moves to new place, no contact with Fanny, then tells her wants to go to Japan, Fanny's reaction.

45. Does not visit her for a while, receives death notice, wonders, goes to death ceremony, servant's envelope, servants thoughts.
46. Board a ship to forget, thoughts about travel.

#### PRESENT TIME ON BOAT

1. On boat, rooms, Cantonese waiter. Luozhen's thoughts.
2. Luggage with stickers - her position in her family.
3. Cockroaches in bed, Norwegian freighter travels in Asia.
4. Observes two foreigners boarding, hopes for quiet trip.
5. Boat with 1920s, 1930s atmosphere, like tunnel - Bridge over Lake Luo.
12. Waiter calls for lunch, only three people in second class, her impression of the couple (description, no conversation, he of mixed blood).
14. No names addressed at table (English custom). After lunch she looks into the sea.
15. In her room she types, Norwegian sailar, thoughts (picture, Europeans and sex).
34. During last year of middle school chose typing, never married, does not want to marry.
38. Fanglin brings photo album, pictures of her family, one of husband, Luozhen's thoughts.
41. Asks how she met husband, imagines how, thinks about language.
42. At night afraid of cockroaches.
47. Boat winds around islands, she observes workers on pier.
48. Boat stops at small island, Japanese board.
49. She enjoys ten days on boat, waiter worried.
51. At table contact with Mr. and Mrs. Li not as good, because she did not return visit. Thoughts about what could have done.
52. Before boat reaches Japan, high waves (at dinner table talk again).
53. She hears them spit after dinner. Thoughts, fearful of world outside (future).

## CHAPTER 4

**"Happy Reunion": A Conversation**

This story gives the strongest illusion of a situation in real life by virtue of its realistic treatment of the action in the present time. The story is relatively banal (two women and the daughter of one of them chat for a few hours one afternoon, the husband of the second woman drops by later and joins them in the conversation. A few months after that afternoon all four characters are shown for a short time in a very similar situation), but what happens in the minds of the characters, textually appearing between the spoken words, brings in the larger dimension of the character's inner lives and their pasts.

The story is realistic in that in a real dialogue like this one we would hear what other people say but we would not know what they are thinking. It is the role of the narrator to open the characters' minds and tell the reader all the information the characters do not tell each other because they already know it, as well as give information the characters may only suspect about each other or do not know at all. The narrator always goes "with" the action (revealing something when it comes up in the action of the story) without independently creating an atmosphere around the characters into which to embed them. The dialogues by themselves are not relevant to the final meaning of the story, they are only an extension of the characters' thoughts about the present and the past. (Mrs. Xun talks more in the present time than Mrs. Wu, the past reveals why Mrs. Wu lets Mrs. Xun talk more). These memories extend the

furthest into an unspecified time of Mrs. Wu's and Mrs. Xun's girlhood. The past in this story cannot be neatly grouped into blocks of time according to their location as in "Flowers and Pistils" (and to a lesser extent in "Lust and Abstinence") as three characters here are thinking about various locations and different times (even though these sometimes coincide) and the maze therefore is more complex. This mingling of thoughts, however, strengthens the impression of a realistic situation.

The thoughts in the characters' minds take split seconds, paradoxically, however, they take up more textual space than the few comments the narrator makes about the characters' actions, actions which realistically would take up more story-time. When viewed next to the two other experimental stories though, the action in the present time of this story is the most limited and the plot the most static due to its subject matter (conversation). The mentioned and implied actions of the story amount to roughly the same number as in "Flowers and Pistils"<sup>40</sup> but they tend to be actions of shorter duration, and because they are performed by different characters rather than one character, they give the impression of brief moments interspersed within longer periods of physical immobility (talking and thinking).

Another difference from to the other two experimental stories

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<sup>40</sup>Mrs. Xun arrives (greetings) 2. the two cousins search each others' heads for white hair 3. Mrs. Xun smokes 4. Mrs. Xun looks at her shoes 5. Mrs. Xun tries on a Qipao 6. Mrs. Wu places an orange on the oven, after she has eaten the orange she places the peels on the lid of the oven 7. the three women have dinner (implied) 8. Shaopu arrives 9. Yuanmei smokes 10. Yuanmei fetches calendars 11. Mrs. Xun choses one 12. Mrs. Wu leaves to answer a telephone call 13. she returns 14. Mrs. Wu receives injections (implied) 15. Shaopu yawns.

lies in the fact that there are three main characters here, each with their respective background and their present state of mind revealed through their thoughts, all of which are interwoven due to their close family ties. Instead of having one character remembering and reflecting on her own past (Jiazhi) or one character thinking about other people's pasts in addition to her own past (Luozhen), there are now three main characters reflecting on their individual pasts and each other's (Mrs. Xun, Mrs. Wu and Yuanmei). Shaofu arrives in the last third of the story and although he contributes to the conversation and reveals some of his personality through his thoughts, his main function is to strengthen the role of Mrs. Xun in underlining what she stands for in a broader sense. Yuanmei is the character with the most distance from the present situation, at various points in the narrative she is shown in a spectator's position, reflecting on the action the two cousins provide. Because of her younger age and therefore different experience, and her taciturn state of mind (she feels dejected because all those of her age group in her family are studying abroad), she has a greater detachment from the situation than the two older cousins involved in exchanging news. She provides the necessary different perspective to the older generation's without which the story would seem flatter.

The subject matter resembles Zhang Ailing's earlier story "Waiting" written in 1944, the action of which also unrolls mainly in form of conversation between the characters. The difference between the two stories though, lies in the characteristic temporal switches between present and past in the narrative of the experimental story compared to

the linear development of "Waiting". In both stories the characters' inner lives are revealed, but in "Waiting" the characterization and the actions described by the narrator dominate the characters' thoughts whereas in "Happy Reunion" the characters' thoughts about present and past dominate everything else. Also, while both stories have about the same story-time (a few hours of one day), "Waiting", in spite of its 'static' title, has a more dynamic present-time action due to the coming and going of the patients. "Happy Reunion" in contrast has an almost 'inert' present time action (again in spite of a title that could suggest animated talking and action), however, because of the "hidden" elements of thoughts and memories happening beyond the action of the present time, the story has an additional fluidity and wider temporal scope. This could explain why the story is double the length of "Waiting."

In "Waiting" the narrator plays an important role in providing the atmosphere of the gloomy waiting room and of embedding the characters into the cheerlessness and desperation of wartime.

The windows of the waiting room were closed, yellowed strips of old newspapers were pasted crosswise on the windows to seal them in case of air raids. Outside it was a light and cloudy day, the colour of the sky seemed just like a sheet of white paper glued onto the window panes. (p.123)

The narrator has an obvious guiding role by selecting what the reader is to visualize and by bringing an ironic tone into the narrative, selecting what the reader is to know. He moves with a cinematic eye through the setting of the story, describing each character minutely from the outside and choosing to focus on the inner lives of some of them (Mrs. Xi). For



most characters he 'paves the way' to their entrance, describing them before they start to act (for example Mrs. Pang and her daughter Afang p.110), or their way of talking before they start to talk ("After quite a while, he suddenly turned his head around, looked at the maid and spoke up--one could hardly believe that these words were coming out of the mouth of a five or six year old child: 'I don't want to buy mantou. Mantou don't taste good.'" (pp. 109-110)). The reader first hears other characters before receiving a description of them. Mr. Pang for example is first described talking to Mr. Gao, interpreted and mocked by the narrator, before he appears ("Mr. Pang laughed and recited a string of formulas put into verse. The seven characters in Mr. Pang's mouth took on weight, like amber pearls of a rosary, they had the flavour of an old lady's room; venerable, peaceful, full of grace. And to that Mr. Pang added backbone, nerve and scientific explanation" (p. 109)). From the description of Mr. Pang's words the narrator moves to a selective view of his practice (cinematic focus).

On the wall hung a picture of the human body drawn in perspective in a half western style. There also hung a license for practising Chinese medicine issued by the office of hygiene, in a picture frame with a small photograph of Mr. Pang thirty years earlier glued on. (p. 109)

The narrator is ironic or outright sarcastic when he describes Mr. Pang.

Mr. Pang had the broad yellow face of a lion, and a thick neck, the head and the neck formed one sturdy piece, no matter if seen from the front or the back it looked like a fat man's knee. (p. 111).

The ironic descriptions of external aspects of the characters and the comments on their manner of expressing themselves ("Mr. Pang seemed to be speaking very deliberately, smacking his tongue while choosing his fine words. It was as if some chewing gum were stuck between his teeth and he was trying to lick it away with much effort; he paused for a while (p. 111)) serve to undermine their self-centered seriousness.

The story has, as Stephen Cheng has shown in his study of Zhang Ailing's short stories, an extended meaning beyond the "action" of the present time. "A story ostensibly about some middle aged women gathered in a clinic waiting for their appointments with the massage doctor, is in reality a penetrating study of their "waiting" for the fulfilment of their dreams that can never come true. The gloom in the clinic, the overcast sky in the wet afternoon, the shabby dresses worn by the women, all help to evoke a mood of forlorn pathos."<sup>41</sup> True, many of the characters seem to be waiting for the war to end so that they can start new lives. (Afang might have more chance to get new clothes after the war so that she can find the partner she wants, Mrs. Xi wants the war to stop so that her husband can return, and the child is coaxed into the massage with the words "Right, in the future, when the political situation has quietened down, you'll be getting married, but if you don't invite me to the wedding feast, I'll be angry!" (p. 122)). It seems, however, that the story also has a strong social message, in showing how people do not seem to

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<sup>41</sup>Cheng, "Themes and Techniques" p. 181.

change the ways they interact with each other even though the political structure is changing. Perhaps they hold on to their social differences just because the outside world is in a turmoil. The narrator brings out these social differences and the subtle ways they communicate their status to each other through strong characterizations. Each character brings an aura of his/her social milieu and portrays its inherent attitudes. Mrs. Tong for example expects preferential treatment as soon as she enters the practice and pays more money to get an earlier turn. As she gets dressed the narrator describes her: "She extended one hand to take down her grey woolen knitted jacket from the hanger, pulled it over unhurriedly and in one gust of wind had wrapped the whole room inside it." (p. 122), implying that she believes she is at the center of the world. Mrs. Wang has the frozen smile of a small gloomy peaceful alley and answers the doctor's and the other women's questions docily, almost frightened (p. 113). Mr. Pang has a patronizing attitude. "[He] always believed he could talk with people from any class, right away entering into other people's worlds" (p. 115).

Once, however, they start talking, they reveal all their problems, bringing each of them down to the same desperate level of need for self-expression. Mrs. Xi for example, very soon penetrates Mrs. Tong's big airs. In her frustrated attempts to have Mrs. Tong listen to her problems, Mrs. Xi has changed her mind about her, she dislikes her out-right now. "[Mrs. Tong] handed Mrs. Xi back the jacket that had covered her grand daughter, thanked her again not at all feeling the cold shoulder of the other woman . . . Her short jacket whisked by Mrs. Xi's

face and shoulder, Mrs. Xi dodged with an expression of disgust" (p. 122). When Mr. Gao's concubine has helped him like a child into his clothes and overzealously says goodbye to the people in the room one by one, the narrator comments "The women did not pay attention to her" (p. 112), making clear they all look down on her.

The narrator's strong presence is especially felt when he conveys the character's desperation to the point of transforming the waiting room into a kitchen for a moment, and takes over the character's account when the character can not go on.

Her eyes reddened and from her mouth only the cold swishing breathing sound of her old age came out. The floor underneath her feet changed to the black and white kitchen tile floor, the whole world seemed like it had been wiped with a damp cloth. (pp. 119-120)

Mrs. Tong can not continue talking for anger and resignation.

'I've been thirty years in his house, anything that had to be done, wasn't it I who did it all? . . . ' . . . The parents-in-law who had given her the many hardships, . . . (p. 119)

In "Waiting" thus, the emphasis is on strong a narrator's presence for characterization and commentary, and providing the atmosphere of the story into which the characters are embedded.

In "Happy Reunion" the narrator is less visible, he stays in the background, occasionally offering a longer external description (for example of Mrs. Xun in the beginning of the narrative) or just bits and pieces ("Mrs. Wu used to be an ugly ducking" (p. 83), "Mrs. Wu was

wearing glasses" (p. 82)), and occasionally putting the reader into the picture in regard to something the characters already know. ("Of course she was still talking about her mother-in-law" (p. 86), "She did not need to explain, Mrs. Wu knew of course knew what she was talking about: . . ." (p. 95). The narrator is a step behind the action, he describes or supplies information only when it comes up in the dialogues. Even when he describes the room without the oven a few months after the first afternoon, he does not seem to create an atmosphere "before the characters go into action"; the language he uses is as terse as the situation the characters find themselves in, his presence is hardly felt. "The weather had become warm, they had dismantled the oven. The black iron oven did not fit the modern decoration" (p. 109).

The characters in this story have for the most part taken over the role of the narrator for interpreting and supplying past information and they do this through their thoughts and memories. The reader therefore knows that the descriptions we get of the other characters, for example, are subjective. "[Mrs. Wu] had already seen Shaofu before that time . . . he was dark, short, and fat, looked rather stupid but very conceited and with quite a temper" (p. 86). "Yuanmei was short sighted; when she looked over to Shaofu he looked round and dumpey--he was wearing a cotton gown and had no shoulders whatsoever--in the dim light of the lamp he looked earth coloured, a bit dazed, like a tall and upright anthill" (p. 101). As all four characters have their own views about each other, the reader receives various kinds of information about each, in the form of thoughts which reveal just as much of these characters doing the thinking. One

of the reader's contributions in "Happy Reunion" therefore is to trace the characters' personalities and histories through the maze of the four different minds at work simultaneously and within the switches of past and present times.

In "Waiting" the characters come together for the purpose of being massaged. The people waiting to take their turn do not chose whom they sit next to in the waiting room; they might know each other from outside the confines of the room (Mrs. Tong and Mrs. Bao) or might have seen each other for a number of years by coming to the practice (Mrs. Xi has been coming for two years), but they are not as intimately connected as the characters in "Happy Reunion" who have known each other for many years and are of the same family. Their level of knowledge about each other's past and therefore of each other's weaknesses is deeper than in "Waiting". Mrs. Xun, for example, knows why Yuanmei is at her mother's home and why she is not fond of speaking (she feels dejected because her husband and her brother-in-law have gone abroad leaving her behind). "Therefore, Mrs. Xun, besides asking her with a smile 'And Zifan?' did not pursue the conversation with her" (p. 82). She is careful not to touch the sore points. She also knows that Mr. Wu has gone to Hong Kong with another woman and has a child with her. "Mrs. Xun did not ask about him" (p. 82).

Through the thoughts and past memories the characters have about each other, the reader can follow the changes these characters have undergone and the wearing effect of life on them. The fact that other characters are aware of these setbacks and care for another character heightens the effect of their close relationship. Mrs. Wu for example feels protective

about Mrs. Xun.

Mrs. Wu was really sorry for her. With so many relatives and friends, but they just had to give her to the Xuns. One day Yuanmei had said behind her back that her face was still pretty, but Mrs. Wu had said indignantly: 'You did not see how bright her eyes used to be, she had a kind of naughty expression. Once she got married, her eyes dulled. She completely dulled.' As she spoke, the rim of her eyes reddened and her voice hardened. (p. 86)

The narrator presents a more complete image of Mrs. Xun by dedicating more narrative space to her. He does this by interspersing the narrative with information about her through his voice (descriptions and comments), Mrs. Xun's own voice and the thoughts, memories, and actions of the other characters. The narrator gives the longest external description of her (p. 81). Mrs. Wu thinks about her in the present time (see above example) and in the past ("She did not know whether she should laugh or cry when she realized Mrs. Xun had 'tipped' the postal service" (p. 87)). Yuanmei remembers the small room the Xuns lived in Shanghai, she saw it when she visited Mrs. Xun one day. Inside a memory of Mrs. Wu another character expresses her opinion about Mrs. Xun ("Mrs. Sun . . . had asked her a few years later: 'How is that Mrs. Xun now? . . . They all speak well of her. She is so soft-spoken!'" p. 102), thus offering another outside perspective. More importantly, when her husband Shaofu appears in the latter part of the narrative, his function is to show the couple in action in the present time and give the reader a chance to verify their relationship against the largely subjective information offered up to that point. Comments such as "Ever since Shaopu had come after dinner,

Mrs. Xun had adopted an attitude of ordinary social intercourse, she did not say too much and did not even smoke" (p. 103), ". . . Mrs. Xun saw that her husband was telling a joke, she would always laugh, and if she did not understand it, she would laugh even more" (p. 101), and "[Shaofu] finally let go of the deep, long yawn he had been suppressing, because just now it had been his wife talking, it did not matter" (p. 111), certainly reveal the relationship of a couple in which one takes more space and the other yields. There is, however, a short, almost tender moment between the couple in the present time when Mrs. Wu leaves to answer the phone. Mrs. Xun asks Shaofu if he found the food she left for him.

When he answered, his voice was low and deep, almost gentle. Due to his sudden change of voice it was a bit hoarse, he had to cough once to clear his throat. He had not lifted his head to look at her, and he had reddened slightly, he looked even darker now, as if the light in the room had grown dimmer.  
(p. 106)

He has been observed avoiding eye contact with his female relatives according to tradition (p. 101), but his sudden shyness could be attributed to the fact that Yuanmei is present; it is through her eyes the conversation between the couple is seen. In her relationship to Mrs. Wu, Mrs. Xun takes all the space Mrs. Wu gives her, starting most of the conversation topics and doing most of the talking, while Mrs. Wu listens and responds with short comments. This could be because Mrs. Wu on the one hand feels sorry for her and wants to give her space to unburden herself but also because Mrs. Wu is less confident than Mrs. Xun. "Although Mrs. Wu had not been pretty in her youth, she could understand the feelings of a beautiful woman past her prime" (p. 87).



Unlike Mrs. Xun, Mrs. Wu's husband does not appear in person in the present time, all the information the reader has of him is filtered through her subjective memory. There is some evidence that she feels she has been too harsh in her complaints about him to her cousin (she does not make these comments in the narrative, we are to assume that Mrs. Xun is well-informed). Although the couple is separated, they regularly write each other letters. In fact, on the same day as her cousin visits her ("today" in the narrative, but a memory to the present time), she writes him a letter that she feels comes close to being a love letter. "If she let [her cousin] see that at her age she was still writing 'Brother' and 'Sister' it would be too embarrassing, also, it would look like her temperament was too strong, that she had asked for her sympathy for nothing" (p. 97). This revelation and also the intimate dialogue between Mrs. Xun and Shaofu in the present time may indicate that the two women have a tendency to exaggerate their lot in their frequent conversations in order to get some sympathy. In the whole narrative Mrs. Wu is less vocal in the present time, her story is revealed through memories and much of her personality through past dialogues (she and Yuanmei talk about Mrs. Xun, each time revealing Mrs. Wu's relationship to Mrs. Xun), giving a less forceful image of her because she holds herself in the background.

Mrs. Xi in "Waiting" resembles Mrs. Xun in that she has the most narrative space allotted to her. Rather than getting other peoples' views of her to make her into a "round" character, we see her in a range of emotions giving her an additional dimension. She is first of all the only

woman in the waiting room who stays throughout the story even though she does not always act. The reader has a mental picture of her from the minute description of her physical appearance (p. 113) and then follows her through her complaints about high prices, her embarrassment when she suddenly receives attention from Afang and the other women in the waiting room, her enjoyment of it at the same time, always accompanied by the characteristic fingering of her bag, an expression of her inner anxiety. "The whole room was listening to her talking, Mrs. Xi felt this was the way it should be, in her bitter complaints she felt a somewhat exultant, she made a gesture with the netbag in her fist" (p. 115). She is polite to Mrs. Tong by offering her her jacket to cover Mrs. Tong's grand daughter and gives some advice for anger. "Mrs Tong, when you have time you should try out a Christian Church, when you hear them talk you won't be angry anymore. Any Christian Church will do." (p. 120). She is as vocal as Mrs. Xun in talking about her problems and has changed her mind quickly about Mrs. Tong when she is not ready to listen to her but instead talks about her own worries. Unlike all the other characters she is hurt when slighted by another character, showing her to be more sensitive. When Mrs. Pang spits into a spittoon standing close to Mrs. Xun, Mrs. Xun smiles at Mrs. Pang to show her friendliness, but Mrs. Pang pretends not to see her. "Mrs. Xi quickly looked outside the window, as if she had been insulted, she thought warmly of her husband" (p. 124).

The relationship between the characters is more remote in "Waiting" and more intimate in "Happy Reunion". The connection between the two cousins in particular is very close, not just because they are of the same

family but because they share many childhood memories.

In the past they had been apart for long periods, there were large parts missing which needed to be filled in. Yuanmei had seen such cases of innocent homosexuality before. . . . [This generation] had no chance after [girlhood] to fall in love with a person of the opposite sex, therefore the feeling was deeper and longer lasting. (p. 99)

In spite of the physical closeness of the characters "Waiting" in the waiting room, they are all isolated from each other. They talk at cross purposes, listen to each other out of cold curiosity rather than out of compassion ("Afang smiled the smile of her black rimmed eyes, one hand playing with the set of keys dangling from a button of her blouse, she drew nearer [to Mrs. Xi] and said in a low voice: 'Maybe your husband has somebody over there!'" p. 114) or because they have been moulded into the position of listening ("Because [Mrs. Bao] had never been good looking, she had always been, from her young days to today, in the position of companion, she could not but wholeheartedly sympathize with those near her" p. 117). They might offer each other some quick advice, (Mrs. Xi tells Mrs. Tong about the church, Mrs. Tong in turn gives her some off-hand advice for her hair loss), but they are so desperate for someone to listen to them that they pour out their sorrows to anybody who lends an ear to them. Mrs. Xi tells Afang willingly about her bitter situation, although one could wonder that she reveals her personal life to somebody so much younger than herself. ("It is not that I don't know it, Miss Pang! I guessed long ago that he probably took another wife." p. 114).

Mrs. Tong takes advantage of Mrs. Bao's sympathy. "Having somebody who sympathized, Mrs. Tong became sad right away." (p. 117). When Mrs. Bao leaves to take her turn, "they all were suddenly quiet" (p. 117) suggesting a sense of loneliness, also implied by the Chinese character 寂 for 'lonely' in the word 'quiet' 寂靜. Both Mrs. Tong and Mrs. Xi, maybe because they do not know each other or do not have enough compassion, cannot listen to each other.

Mrs. Tong hearing this, was at a loss, the regular features of her fat face became confused for a moment and full of red pockmarks, she said: 'Eh? Eh? . . . times are bad now, really bad, Eh? Once a fortune teller told me . . . ' (p. 120)

Mrs. Tong frustrates Mrs. Xi by repeatedly returning the topic of the conversation to her problems when Mrs. Xi wants to talk about her own worries.

Hearing her talk, Mrs. Xi was getting impatient, she answered now and then 'Mm . . . Mm . . . 'and occasionally nodded her head, gradually getting a bit lazier and just blinking her eyelids, . . . she decided that Mrs. Tong was an old muddlehead. (p. 121)

Wartime and the unfortunate position society puts the women in are the cause the women to desperately search for a sympathetic ear.

In "Happy Reunion" the stormy times of the war have retreated into the past, and the scene of meeting and listening to each other has been repeated so many times that there is nothing new to tell any more. Old stories have to be warmed up and new ones found ("Mrs. Xun was also thinking hard, looking for something she had not told her yet" p. 98). The textual break on p. 109 and the temporal indication that a few months

have gone by ("The weather had become warm, . . ."), showing the characters in the very same positions, suggest that this scene has been repeated many times. Although the time is a few months later, the characters seem not to have moved from their seats, the afternoon of the winter day seems to continue. "The same four people were sitting in the same places under the light of the lamp, they all had their arms crossed and felt a bit chilly from sitting so long" (p. 109). Their "happy reunions" have become a routine, so much that they have forgotten what they told each other in a span of a few months. Their reunions have more importance in the physical action of meeting than in the exchange of news. The repetition of the story Mrs. Xun tells of the man following her in Peking, and Yuanmei being the only character realizing it, illustrates this fact ("Yuanmei could not believe her ears, . . . how could one of them forgot she told the story before and the other forget she heard it before?" (p. 110)), as well in the wear and tear life has taken on both women, numbing the sharpness of their memory. In a sense one story ("Happy Reunion") could be the continuation of the other with the plight of the women not very much changed. During war times couples are geographically separated due to the political situation (Mrs. Xi's husband has a good post in the interior but does not send her money, and he has another woman), and after the war the couples are divided by new political trends and for educational reasons. (Mr. Wu is in Hong Kong and Yuanmei's husband is abroad).

After the war Hong Kong was abnormally prosperous; because of the Communists, sensitive business men had also moved there. The separation due to politics facilitated many things for an unharmonious couple wedded in the traditional styles just like during the war in Chongqing and the occupied areas. (p. 82)

In fact, some characters share very similar characteristics in both stories: Mrs. Tong talks about anger in her stomach like Mrs. Xun does, she also had to work hard in the household of her parents-in-law like Mrs. Xun; but from the appearance and disposition (as well as presence in the narrative) it is Mrs. Xi who resembles Mrs. Xun most. Mrs. Xi is in the same position as Mrs. Wu with her husband gone, Mrs. Wu like Mrs. Bao has always been 'ugly'. As the daughter of the house, Afang would be in the same seniority rank as Yuanmei, and Mr. Pang would be equivalent to Shaofu in "Happy Reunion" in terms of his physical presence in the story. The point is, however, that these characters all have very similar stories because they are members of the same culture and class and share many of the same plights even though the times and political trends have changed.

The conversations in "Happy Reunion" give an impression of a natural situation through the breaks and jumps in topics. The actual conversation topics in the present time are quite few<sup>42</sup> and less important in meaning than the narrative parts between the spoken words, and therefore shorter

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<sup>42</sup>1. Greetings 2. Hair, household of Mrs. Xun's parents-in-law, the furniture in their house 3. Mrs. Xun comments on her shoes and the cat of the landlady 4. She talks about the time the Old Master died 5. She talks about Shaopu during the war 6. She talks about him lending his money 7. They talk about Mrs. Xun's children in Peking 8. Mrs. Xun says she will not move in with her son when Shaopu dies 9. She talks about the anger in her stomach 10. She talks about the sickness of her sister-in-law 11. Mrs. Wu talks about cholesterol, they talk about food 12. Mrs. Wu talks about a sweater she saw for Mrs. Xun 13. All four talk about a movie they saw together 14. Shaopu talks about Zhou Deging's wife in Changqing 15. Mrs. Wu asks if they have a calendar for the new year 16. Mrs. Xun and Shaopu talk about the food she left for him 17. Mrs. Xun says she is worried about the dark, somebody followed her in the dark 18. Mrs. Xun tells the same story a few months later.

in textual space, than the rest of the narrative. The present time can reveal that Mrs. Xun brings up most of the new topics and does most of the talking while Mrs. Wu follows and responds. We have already looked into the meaning of this previously. The narrative parts between the spoken words, that is, the thoughts of the characters about each other, their memories including the conversations of the past and the elaborations of the narrator, bring in a wider background for each character so as to explain their present situation.

The text is stretched by these narrative parts. Sometimes they are positioned between an ongoing dialogue, setting the response to a question much further in the narrative, thereby creating a longer narrative-time although the story-time is much shorter. The result is many layered and parallels reality.

'That day when Shaofu got his salary  
Shen Bingru came to borrow money.'

Mrs Xun talks to Mrs.  
Wu

The couple called the husband of his younger  
sister by his full name. . .

expansion by the  
narrator

Yuanmei saw that she had hesitated before  
she spoke, obviously she could not decide  
whether she could talk in front of her. . .

Yuanmei's thoughts

Mrs. Wu thought it inappropriate to say  
anything, both women looked at each other  
and smiled. (p. 93)

Mrs. Wu's reaction

There are three of these 'talk/thought/talk' situations in the story, each time to bridge over an uncomfortable moment of embarrassment or surprise (p. 93, 94, 107).

Mrs Wu was astonished, she asked:  
'They call you old lady? Who?'

Mrs. Wu asks a question

She did not look old herself, . . .

Mrs. Wu's thoughts

The other day Yuanmei had teased her:  
'Mother. . .'

past dialogue

'At the market, somebody called me old lady,'  
Mrs. Xun said in a low voice. (p. 107)

Mrs. Xun answers

The story's content in these situations has an influence on the structure. As the narrative of "Happy Reunion" places the characters in the foreground and lets them convey their own situation rather than having the narrator do it for them, this story has more of these 'talk/thought/talk' situations than "Waiting", except when the narrator supplies some information about the characters. There is one such situation in "Waiting" in which Mr. Pang asks the question and answers it himself with the narrator supplying the 'thought.'

'I admire two of Mr. Zhu's qualities.  
Which ones?'

Mr. Pang talks to Mrs. Gao

Mr. Pang had the broad yellow face of a lion, and a thick neck . . .

Narrator describes Mr. Pang

Mr. Pang after all was a man who had kept his position from before the war, . . .

Narrator elaborates on Mr. Pang's social position

'Which ones? Ah? No matter how busy he is, every night at eight . . . ' (p. 111)

Mr. Pang continues to talk

The narrative text between the words of Mr. Pang's monologue provide the impression of Mr. Pang's self-importance.

The dialogues in "Happy Reunion" are broken by silences getting longer and more awkward toward the end, while in "Waiting" the



conversations are broken by the outside events of people arriving or taking their turns to be massaged. Both stories can be divided into discernible parts according to these characteristics: "Happy Reunion" according to silences and textual breaks, "Waiting" according to external actions. "Waiting" reveals six parts in a pattern, alternating between the action happening inside the massage room and outside the partition walls of the massage room. (1. Mr. Pang and Mr. Gao in the massage room) 2. Afang and Mrs. Xi talk in the waiting room 3. Mr. Pang massages Mrs. Wang 4. Mrs. Tong, Mrs. Bao and Mrs. Xi talk in the waiting room 5. Mrs. Bao gone, Mrs. Tong and Mrs. Xi continue to talk 6. The young man and the Pang's talk, Mrs. Xi alone in waiting room). The fourth and the fifth part happen outside the massage room focusing on the personalities of Mrs. Tong and Mrs. Xi. The last part happens first inside the partition walls and then moves outside of them and even beyond (the narrator's description of the outside world):

The white, wet sky, and the opaque green palm-size leaves of the Chinese parasol tree were outside the window. Across the street was a row of old red brick houses, numerous clothes were hanging on the balconies to dry in the air, although it was so humid. A black and white cat went by walking on a roof, one could only see its black back with its tail, it looked like a snake, slowly undulating along. Not long after, it appeared again outside on the balcony, walking along the railing, it did not look to the left or to the right, it went slowly by in its own world. Oblivious to anything else, life passed. (p. 124)

This suggests that no matter whether inside the partition walls (Mr. Pang's respectable position; he is mentioned to massage people in official circles) or outside in the waiting room and beyond the room, the

characters are all in the same position, life goes on, indifferent to their suffering.<sup>43</sup>

"Happy Reunion" is broken internally by moments of silences preceded by longer narrative passages representing the thoughts of the characters during these silences. The breaks are thus created by the prolonged pauses in the story-time, during which the narrative takes the reader into the characters' minds and their pasts. These breaks are marked by "After a moment of silence" (p. 93) -- second part--and "Mrs. Wu broke a longer period of silence" (p. 98)--third part--, whereby the temporal words "After" and "longer period" stand for the thoughts appearing in the text prior to the statement. The textual breaks on p. 93 and p. 109 do not introduce drastic changes in the action. The first (introducing the second part, also by the above mentioned temporal statement) ends an eight page long retreat into Mrs. Wu's past before resuming with the present time. The second indicates a temporal jump of a few months forward from that past, but no change in action. The similar situation in the fourth part (p. 109) to the end of the third part joins the two parts smoothly in terms of the action of the story, suggesting, as mentioned, the repetitious actions of the characters, and by telling the same event in the fourth part, the dulling of the older characters minds.

The end of the first and the second part, that is the longer retreats into the past which are called back into the present by the temporal statements, each start with the random thoughts of the three women and end

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<sup>43</sup>Cheng, p. 181.

with Mrs. Wu's past or the past situation seen through her eyes. The first retreat into the "silent world" (thoughts and memories) is set off by Mrs. Xun talking about Shaofu losing all her pictures in Nanjing (p. 87). The narrative then moves into her mind thinking about her situation at that time, ("She had brought the three children back to Peking . . ." p. 87), then to Mrs. Wu's mind thinking about Mrs. Xun's habit of overtipping ("But when she phoned her, . . ." p. 87) and to the time when Yuanmei went to see Mrs. Xun through Yuanmei's memory ("It was a dark old building" p. 88). Yuanmei then thinks about her own situation ("She had never been diligent" p. 88) and about her mother in the past ("Her mother had initially accompanied her father abroad." p. 89). At this point the narrative moves into various moments of Mrs. Wu's past through her own memory: the first time she met Mrs. Xun after she came back from abroad (p. 90), she and her husband abroad (p. 90) and a few years after she returned in a conversation with Mrs. Xun, and again she and her husband abroad. These jumps go back and forth until page 93, when the narrative returns to the present time. To say that these thoughts happen in the characters' mind at the exact story-time when they are reported would be an unreasonable claim. It is not possible that the characters are all thinking in a smooth thematic sequence during this period of silence, thoughts which the narrator would need only to unveil. The narrator's presence is clearly felt in this passage, especially in the transitions between the thoughts of one character to the next. ("The room she had rented at first in Hong Kong had mice" (p. 88) = smooth thematic transition between Mrs. Wu's thoughts about Mrs. Xun and Yuanmei's

thoughts about the time she went to visit Mrs. Xun). The narrator is, however, as we have noted, subordinated to the presence and thoughts of the characters and therefore the strong illusion is maintained that the characters are thinking, whether it is at the very moment of the story-time or whether the narrator catches the atmosphere of the characters' minds. The illusion is maintained even more strongly through the ensuing statement "After a moment of silence" as an explanation for the "silent" passage. The reader, for example, does not know whether Yuanmei really thinks the thoughts during the very story moment in spite of the indicative tags, or if she thought it some time in the past. "As Yuanmei was thinking this she thought right away that she should not." (p. 88). The precise moment of thinking is left out and the thoughts recorded seem like random associations (from Zuming, Mrs. Xun's son to Zifan, her husband, her poor academic study career and so on), but the reader has the illusion Yuanmei thinks these thoughts and thereby learns some information about her.

Not all statements of silences in the story overlap with the characters thoughts (as not all statements of silences introduce a new part). They do not when no mention of thoughts appear in the narrative. These moments are described as "Nobody was speaking" (p. 104), "There was a moment of silence" (p. 104) and "Everybody was silent for a while" (p. 110), at which point we can assume that the characters do not think, or the narrator chooses only to highlight the thoughts which are important to clarify the relationship between the characters.

The various mentions of silences in the narrative act as still points

in the story for switches to new topics or pauses within a topic. External factors such as the ring of the bell, the arrival of the Qipao, or Shaofu's arrival after dinner as well as a conscious effort of the character to talk about something else, can act as breaks to bring about a change of topic. These are most often related to the "talk/thought/talk" situations, when the previous topic was uncomfortable. Mrs. Xun for example is upset that her husband lends his money to all sides when they are not doing well themselves. Mrs. Wu does not know what to say. "Isn't he alright now?" she said laughing. 'Does Zuzhi have a girlfriend now or not?' She asked to change the subject." (p. 94). The rest of the topic changes are natural occurrences in the conversation, to tell each other news they have not (or think they have not) told each other yet.

Silences can also be mentioned as pauses in the narrative, the implied meaning of these pauses the reader has to fill in. Such moments are less obvious in "Happy Reunion", where the narrator tends to indicate the characters' thoughts immediately after the statement of pauses occur, than in "Waiting", where such pauses might add to the more visible characterization by the narrator. In "Happy Reunion" for example Mrs. Xun complains about Shaofu, a remark which seems to make Mrs. Wu uncomfortable and therefore she tries to defend him. "Mrs. Xun did not answer at first, she paused and then said: 'I hated Shaofu that time when the Japanese came--'" (p. 87). The pause could imply that Mrs. Xun has a grudge against Shaofu and wants to get a few things off her chest, no matter how Mrs. Wu feels about it. In "Waiting" the meaning of such an instance is much clearer. In the last part the young man who is being massaged tells Mr. Pang about a war film he saw recently in the Russian Club. Mr. Pang

asks him questions about the film, letting him understand that he wants the young man to buy tickets for him.

Mr. Pang said: 'Is there really such a film? How much is it for each person?'

The young man said: 'Mr. Pang, if you want to see it, I'll get you a ticket.'

Mr. Pang did not say anything, after a while he spoke:  
'What time is it shown? Is it shown every day?'

The young man said: 'At eight, how many tickets do you want?' (p.123).

Without having made a straight forward request because he is too polite, through his modest pause Mr. Pang has given the young man the message that he wants to see the film. The reader understands this without the narrator having to supply Mr. Pang's thoughts; his mind from the outset remains closed throughout the story thereby makes him a less sensitive character.

Even though, as we have seen, both stories "Happy Reunion" and "Waiting" have as their main action a dialogic situation and therefore on the surface appear quite similar, they differ in their narrative approach. In "Happy Reunion" the characters stand almost by themselves, without a narrator commenting on every aspect of their existence. It is through their thoughts that the characters reveal themselves, and thereby create a much more personal (and subjective) atmosphere around themselves than the narrator is able to do in "Waiting". In addition, the temporal switches which make this story "experimental" in comparison to the linear development of "Waiting", give the story the impression of living thoughts, of the mind moving back and forth between memories of different times without placing them in their sequential order.

## CONCLUSION

Having analyzed the structure of Zhang Ailing's three modernist, "experimental" stories on the basis of the reader's participation, we need to point to their final meaning and the author's vision reflected in them.

As we noted in the introduction to this paper, these three stories, in contrast to many of her earlier ones, do not deal with love and marriage as their central theme. Even in "Lust and Abstinence", a story in which the relationship between Jiazhi and Mr. Yi plays a major role, the author's vision of the desolate reality wherein the characters "have little control over their environment and the sadness of their pathetic struggles to escape or remake their world"<sup>44</sup> as an overall theme of all Zhang Ailing's stories, is apparent. We have, for example, seen in some detail the internal struggle Jiazhi undergoes to try to transform her "fictional" love relationship with Mr. Yi into a real one. Jiazhi "has never been in love" (p. 37) and therefore she mistakes the moment of comfort with Mr. Yi with "love". Beneath the secretive atmosphere of the story created by revealing information and the characters' thoughts selectively, the author skillfully presents the two characters in such a way that the reader is struck by the contrast between Jiazhi's innocence, inexperience and youthful zeal for a cause, and the older, experienced and blasé Mr. Yi who is willing to sacrifice her to secure his position. Her conflict is between the role she pretends to be and her actual self: she

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<sup>44</sup>Gunn, p. 204.

is not as sexually experienced as she has to feign to Mr. Yi and actually is still in the growing process.

"Two years ago they weren't this way" he said in a low voice while stroking and kissing her.

His head was nestled close to her breasts and he did not see that she had reddened (p.22).

A recurring theme in Zhang Ailing's stories is that of "social entrapment and psychological retardation"<sup>45</sup> in which the author sides with the female characters: the reader is inclined to feel sorry for Jiazhi for having lost her innocence in the harsh conditions of a cause and, sacrificed by both the gang and Mr. Yi, her life at such a young age. Also in "Ashes of Descending Incense, Second Brazier" a story that on the surface deals with Roger Empton's "social entrapment" the reader, with all his sympathy for this character driven to his death, feels even greater pity for his innocent wife, Susie Mitchell, who, unusually sheltered by her mother, has a distorted view of life.

Curtis Adkins mentions in his analysis of Zhang Ailing's short stories that her stories end in an indetermined type.

This ambiguity is not intended to incite the reader to guess what will happen but is rather a feature of Miss Chang's perennial preposition that life is dreary and self-repeating. The only possible conclusion is that nothing will "happen" to the characters in the story - they will simply go on living as they have been. (pp. 19-20)

In the first chapter of my paper I noted that, for example, the structure of the story "Jasmine tea" ends in a way that would support such an

<sup>45</sup>Gunn, p. 201.



interpretation: the last statement of the narrative and the absence of the narrator's independent voice to close off the story convey the idea of Chuanqing's loneliness in a life that will continue without any major events to improve his existence. We can also assume that in the first of the three experimental stories Mr. and Mrs. Yi's lives will continue in the manner related in the first and the fourth part of the narrative (Mahjiang games, Mr. Yi waiting for orders from above) while anything that happened between these two parts will never come to the surface.

Both stories discussed in the last chapter of this paper, that is the linear and the anachronic story, very much support the themes of the dreary uneventful existence of the characters. We noted that the women's lives, no matter whether during or after the war, were very similar in their waiting for something to happen. One gets the sense that these women spend their existences in perpetual waiting for their husbands while trying to ease their pain and boredom with conversations that have no other function than giving them the illusion that somebody shares their sorrows. In "Waiting" the women talk at cross purposes, in "Happy Reunion" the only solace the two women have is each other and their memories. The story's technique makes the unexciting lives of these women vivid by interspersing the characters' thoughts (identified as the increasingly longer moments of silences) with apparently meaningless exchanges. Also the repetition of Mrs. Xun's story in the last part of the story brings home the message of the two women's dazed minds after a life that perhaps had no other function than to bear a few children. As exemplified by the character Yuanmei, the lives of the women of the

younger generation in Zhang Ailing's world do not look much better. They may have the chance to choose their own husbands, but in a meaningless reality they live the same drab lives as their mothers: just like the other two women Yuanmei is waiting for her husband to return. As we noted, her role in the story is to provide an outside perspective to that of the two older women, but her way of thinking is not much different from theirs. She accentuates the sad existences of the older women by noticing their dulled minds but does not offer any "hope" for the new generation by the fact that she is so similar to them.

The relationship of the two women in "Happy Reunion" is compared to a case of "innocent homosexuality" because they "had no chance...to fall in love with a person of the opposite sex, therefore the feeling was deeper and longer lasting" (pp. 98-99). Zhang Ailing thus seems to be looking in particular at the women's situation in Chinese society whose existence is a continuation of waiting to get married and who, after being married, are separated from their husbands either for political reasons ("separation due to politics facilitated many things for unharmonious couples wedded in the old style" p. 82) or because these have run off with another woman. Having mostly no marketable skills of their own, the wives either try to fight to maintain their primary position in the marriage -- Mrs. Xi -- or have resigned to accepting the secondary position -- Mrs. Wu -- while living in the vain hope that their husbands may return. ("Actually she could have said: 'Come live with me.' But she was not willing to admit that her man would not come back" p. 95).

The friendship of the two women is overshadowed by Mrs. Xun's unspoken but ever present awareness that her husband Shaopu has a special liking for Mrs. Wu because she is better educated than herself. "Mrs. Xun knew that he was in no haste to return. He had always admired Mrs. Wu" (p. 101). While Mrs. Wu and Shaopu now dominate the conversation, her attitude changes to one of "ordinary social intercourse" (p. 103). Mrs. Xun is not separated from her husband but like so many of Zhang Ailing's characters she coexists with her husband in a stale relationship in which both partners are alienated from each other.

While Zhang Ailing reveals in her stories particular pity for the women's lot, she is not blind to the fact that the men are thrown into the arranged marriages just as the women are. She also shows, however, that it is socially more acceptable for men to disappear with another woman or have an affair, leaving their wives behind. Even Mrs. Wu's education does not help her very much, in her illmatched marriage her husband complains that he is "dragging around an ugly wife who is a bad housewife and not good at socializing" (pp. 91-92). The husbands' boredom with their usually less educated wives and the wives' efforts to cater to them make these relationships especially painful to witness. "But when Mrs. Xun saw that her husband was telling a joke, she would always laugh, and if she did not understand it, she would laugh even more" (p. 101). This particular passage is very similar to the ending of Zhang Ailing's earlier story "Happy Matrimony" which deals with the contrast of such a stale relationship in the background of the busy preparations for and the actual wedding ceremony of a younger couple, a marriage which the reader knows is

doomed from the beginning. The story ends with the comment "Mrs. Lou did not understand clearly what he had said, but she knew he had made a joke; she laughed the loudest."<sup>46</sup> In her close look at the women's situation in Chinese society, Zhang Ailing, however, does not exhibit the revolutionary ardour of a feminist writer. Rather she records what she sees in her artistic interpretation of reality from a humanist perspective making the reader experience the sadness of the women's plight.

I called the three stories I analyzed in this paper "experimental" because of their differing narrative structure from Zhang Ailing's earlier stories. The author, however, called only the second one specifically an experiment. While there are in this story again indications of the characters' rather dreary and meaningless lives, and a look at a woman's situation (Luozen is a young woman repeatedly harassed and chased by men), the structure, that is the story's form, seems to take precedence over the content, and is what constitutes, at least for this reader, the attractiveness of the story. The loosely structured narrative, the temporal segments in their new chronological arrangement which could almost be reshuffled to fit in their original order, function on the one hand to represent Luozen's thoughts as they drift back and forth between the present of her immediate surrounding and the past in her mind, and on the other hand to tell us something about her personality. The loose structure gives a palpable sense of Luozen's relaxed journey on the

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<sup>46</sup>Zhang, The Collected Stories, p. 56.

boat (we could imagine the "Flowers and Pistels" of the story's title to represent her thoughts "floating on the waves") while the almost clean block-like time segments could show the more inflexible aspect of her mind. The order of her thoughts and their content reveal an average modern young woman who, not different from other Zhang Ailing characters, is concerned with the everyday little stories between men and women (she wonders how Mr. and Mrs. Li met, she knows everything about Mr. and Mrs. Kali's unsuccessful marriage).

In sum, what Zhang Ailing has introduced in these three stories is a new narrative approach to convey the same vision of the world as in her earlier stories. The different narrative style could perhaps in addition reveal that the author had an even more pessimistic view of life in the 1950s than when she wrote her earlier stories. Whereas previously she could have been identified as a sad humanist with a sense of humour, the "ironic mode and satiric tone" that formerly so clearly reflected her "expressed views on modern society with subtle yet penetrating social criticism"<sup>47</sup> has changed to a tone that appears more serious and more matter-of-fact in presenting the characters' subjective reality. Her language is less witty and the imagery she uses "less lavish."<sup>48</sup> As in works by other modernist writers, these three stories present a "challenge to the reader's will to interpretative synthesis"<sup>49</sup> in creating a reality

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<sup>47</sup>Adkins, p. 19,

<sup>48</sup>Hsia, A History, p. 417.

<sup>49</sup>Auerbach, Mimesis, p. 549

that appears broader in scope and closer to actual life by changing the temporal order and incorporating numerous seemingly unrelated elements into the narrative. Whereas the first of the three stories still seems as "tightly-knit" as her previous stories in that the use of imagery and symbols and the newly introduced anachronies point to the final theme of the story, the other two stories seem aimless, as drifting as their characters.

It appears indicative that Zhang Ailing wrote this type of short story after the change of government to Communism in 1949 and after her move to Hong Kong in 1952. The novels she produced from then on, The Rice-sprout Song (秧歌) and Love in Redland (赤地之恋), both published in 1954, are studies of life under the "Communist tyranny."<sup>50</sup> In the present short stories there are only a few specific comments on life under the new government (more so in the second than in the third story), but one senses the characters' implicit loneliness permeating all three stories, an element that could be attributed to the author's view of the regime and specifically to her view of a changed interpersonal climate within this regime. "Happy Reunion" seems to be set on the brink of the Communist take-over and "Flowers and Pistels" clearly after the change of government. Although "Lust and Abstinence" is set in pre-Communist China, but its similar narrative structure to the other two stories and its underlying thematic similarity of alienation with the other two stories (all characters in the first story are separated from each other; Luozen

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<sup>50</sup>Hsia, A History, p. 427

in the second story is in flight of men and Communism; all four characters in "Happy Reunion" are lonely and only loosely connected) could reflect the author's more pessimistic view of the world at that time.

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## GLOSSARY

"Ashes of Descending Incense, First Brazier" 沉香屑第一爐香

George 喬琪喬

Weilong 薇龍

"Ashes of Descending Incense, Second Brazier" 沉香屑第二爐香

Clementine 克荔門婷

Dolinda 哆玲姐

Millicent 靡麗笙

Mrs. Mitchell 蜜秋兒太太

Roger Empton 羅傑安白聖

Susie Mitchell 懷細蜜秋兒

"Flowers and Pistils in the Floating Waves" 浮花浪蕊

Adrian 艾軍

Fanny 范妮

Li Chaxun 李紫遜

Li Fanglin 李芳鄰

Luohu 羅湖

Luozen 洛貞

Miss Fan 潘小姐

Miss Solomon 所羅門小姐

Mr. Kali 咖哩先生

Mrs. Kali 咖哩太太

Mrs. Niu 鈕太太

Shichen 適陳

Shihe 適何

"Happy Reunion" 相見歡

Miss Wan 婉小姐

Mr. Wu 伍先生

Mrs. Wu 伍太太

Shaofu 紹甫

Shen Bingru 沈東如

Yuanmei 苑梅

Zhou Deqing 周德清

Zifan 子範

Zuming 祖銘

Zutai 祖怡

Zuzhi 祖志

"Jasmine Tea" 茉莉香片

Feng Biluo 馮碧落

Nie Chuanqing 聶傳慶

Yan Danzhu 言丹朱

Yan Ziye 言子夜

"Lust and Abstinence" 色,戒

Huang Lei 黃磊

Jiazhi 佳芝

Lai Xiujin 賴秀金

Liang Runsheng 梁潤生

Mr. Yi 易先生

Mrs. Liao 廖太太

Mrs. Ma 馬太太

Mrs. Mai 麥太太

Mrs. Yi 易太太

Ping An Theatre 平安院

Wang Jingwei 王精衛

Zhou Fohai 周佛海

"Red and White Roses" 紅玫瑰與白玫瑰

Chenbao 振保

"So Much Hate" 多少恨

Old Mr. Yu 虞老先生

Xia Zongyu 夏宗麟

Yu Jiayin 虞家茵

"The Golden Cangue" 金鎖記

Cao Qiqiao 曹七巧

Changan 長安

"Waiting" 等

Afang 阿芳

Mr. Gao 高先生

Mrs. Bao 包太太

Mr. Pang 龐先生

Mrs. Pang 龐太太

Mrs. Tong 童太太

Mrs. Wang 王太太

Mrs. Xi 奚太太