

University of Alberta

Transgressing Conformity:
Taiwanese Women in Tzeng Ching-wen's Short Stories

by

Lisa Tang

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Chinese Literature

Department of East Asian Studies

©Lisa Tang
Spring 2014
Edmonton, Alberta

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Libraries to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only. Where the thesis is converted to, or otherwise made available in digital form, the University of Alberta will advise potential users of the thesis of these terms.

The author reserves all other publication and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis and, except as herein before provided, neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatsoever without the author's prior written permission.

For mom, dad and Michael.

Abstract:

In *Magnolia: Stories of Taiwanese Women* by Tzeng Ching-wen, Tzeng Ching-wen writes about women's suffering. The fictional women in this collection suffer because of the commitment to their responsibilities, which are framed by conformity. Conformity is a set by responsibilities that people have, to which members of a society should not escape. In Tzeng's stories, the protagonists suffer because conformity has been broken by a patriarchal authority – these women are soon burdened by the responsibilities that they have to take, in addition to being judged and oppressed by others. This thesis will analyse how these women were challenged in preserving virtue through their responsibility and how oppression is inevitable, whether it derives from traditions or modernity.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Tzeng Ching-wen, the Humanist.....	1
Tzeng’s Writing: Literature Review.....	6
Conformity and Tzeng Ching-wen.....	13
Composition of this work.....	17
Chapter 1 – Conformity: Confucianism and Women.....	21
Confucianism and women.....	24
Confucianism and Conformity.....	33
Conformity and the New Era.....	42
Chapter 2 – Transgressing Conformity in “Magnolia” and “Ah-ch’un’s Wife”	47
Introduction.....	47
Scent of “Magnolia”.....	50
<i>A Virtuous Mother</i>	50
<i>Time and Magnolia</i>	58
Memories of a Dead Husband in “Ah-Ch’un’s Wife”.....	61
<i>Struggle with Conformity</i>	61
<i>Living the Past</i>	67
Conclusion.....	71
Chapter 3 – Entering Modernity	75
Introduction.....	75
Being “The Woman Taxi Driver”.....	80
<i>The Taxi Driver</i>	80
<i>The Mother Hen</i>	84

Coldness in “The Huge Shadow”	93
<i>The Observer</i>	93
<i>Remaining in the Shadow</i>	99
Conclusion.....	105
Conclusion – The Human Being	108
Works Cited.....	115

Introduction

Tzeng Ching-wen, the Humanist

Born in Taoyuan, Taiwan in 1932, Tzeng Ching-wen 鄭清文 is a writer who witnessed several changes in his homeland. Classified as a Nativist writer, Tzeng transmits to the reader the life and stories of the fictional ordinary Taiwanese people. Thus, it is through his writing that one can eventually understand the history of Taiwan and notice the social, political and economic changes that affect everyone on the island.

Born during the Japanese Occupation (1895-1945), Tzeng still remembers a youth that was culturally and politically different from today. He can remember when Pearl Harbour was bombarded and when the United States declared war to Japan when he was a third-grader. He describes life during war as harsh and unstable because of all the sudden changes happening one day after another. From his own experience, education was among the most difficult social aspect to maintain because of the changes happening every day. Attendance at school was often interrupted and class material would change unexpectedly. One of the instances that he explained in his book *Xiaoguojia Dawenxue* 小國家大文學 (Small Country, Great Literature) is how often maps would be updated.¹ The students could not catch up with the geographical updates with the imperialist expansions, whether it was from Japan or from a European country. Because of the inconsistent education system interrupted by war, it became nearly impossible

¹ Tzeng Ching-wen 鄭清文, *Xiaoguojia dawenxue* 小國家大文學 (Small Country, Great Literature) (Taipei: Yushanshe 玉山社, 2000), 218.

to grasp school material. At the end of the war, Tzeng reached the age of a middle school student. He recalls how unofficial the placement test for middle school looked like. The text consisted of a few questions in Japanese. If one managed to answer with few mistakes, then he or she would be placed as a middle school student. It is from this experience that the writer tells the audience that life under political changes is never easy. Although this took place when he was very young, Tzeng was conscious of the political transition and how it affected people's life.

The changes that Tzeng perceived were mostly marked by political events, such as the Second World War and the relocation of the GMD (Guomindang 國民黨 – Nationalist Party) headquarters to Taiwan in 1949. Taiwan is a place where history has been distorted because of many political changes since the beginning of the Second World War. Under the Japanese Occupation, Taiwan's history was read through Japanese imperialist eyes, and with the mass arrival of the partisans of GMD, Taiwan became Chinese and was strictly seen as part of China. Living a similar experience as the Taiwanese history, Tzeng is aware that the Taiwanese people suffer from such past because they never had their voice heard. During the whole time, history has been interpreted from the eyes of the colonizers. Thus, his writing is about the suffering of the Taiwanese people, whose voice has been oppressed in their homeland. Considering all the political instability in the past, Tzeng praises Taiwan for going through a lot of progress since the end of the war.

In 1999, Tzeng was awarded the Kiriya Pacific Rim Book Prize for writing his collection of short stories *The Three Legged-Horse* (Sanjiaoma 三腳)

馬)。The collection was praised for the humanistic content because it is concerned with social transformation and adaptation in Taiwanese society. His stories are described as “Chekhovian”² because of the inspiration he drew from the Russian writer Anton Chekhov (1860-1904). The Prize committee awarded the author for being able to balance the particularity of the environment and the subject of common features of human beings. They believed that it would contribute to describing the brightness of Taiwan to the English-speaking world.³ The stories were praised for their humanistic contents as Tzeng writes about human suffering and the human experience. In the book *How To Write Like Chekhov: Advice and inspiration, Straight from his own letters and work*, Chekhov explains to his contemporaries that literature consists of picturing a story without plot and ending,⁴ Although Tzeng does not belong to same era as Chekhov, the style is adapted to the contemporary Taiwanese setting. The plotless storyline is the reflection of life banality and the lack of closure in the story represents the continuity of the living experience.

In one of his essays, Tzeng writes that literature is about human suffering.⁵ His stories describe the daily lives of ordinary people, picturing the toughness of living through a world that is consistently changing socially or politically. Human suffering comes with the experience of living and surmounting obstacles, whether

² “Kiryama Prize, Winners & Finalists 1999,” The Kiriyama Prize, accessed July 19, 2013, <http://www.kiriyamaprize.org/winners/1999/1999winners.shtml>.

³ Ibid., 57.

⁴ Anton Chekhov, *How To Write Like Chekhov: Advice and inspiration, Straight from his own letters and work*, transl. by Lena Lencek (Da Capo Press, 2008), 10.

⁵ Tzeng, Ching-wen 鄭清文. “Xunzhao ziji, xunzhao rensheng” 尋找自己・尋找人生 (Searching for the Self, Searching for Human Life), in *Zheng Qingwen 鄭清文*, ed. Jinyi Li 李進益 (Tainan: Guoli Taiwan Wenxueguan 國立台灣文學館, 2012), 103.

it is physical or psychological. One can see that obstacles are generated by human desires. Tzeng's definition of literature as human suffering appears to be pessimistic, but the author denies pessimism in human life. To him, the nature of human life is suffering. Literature needs to approach the difficulties of the human experience, because life ends in a tragic way, which is death. He believes that the role of a writer is not to act as a saviour but it is their duty to point out human conditions that need to be changed, because this is truly what a writer cares about.⁶ To know that death can happen at any time, this truth draws the human nature to tragedy, because no one can avoid death. In another of his work, Tzeng tells people to keep a positive spirit despite the difficulty of living the human life. He uses the metaphor that "when people get older, their back stoops."⁷ This symbolises that as people live, the more they will carry the burden that they have accumulated through the difficulties of life. Whenever Tzeng visits a botanical garden, he is reminded that trees grow upward. To picture the growth of a centennial tree gives him hope that people can still change and that people should look up instead of down. Instead of looking at the difficulties of life as burdens, one should see them as a source of growth and hope.

The experiences that Tzeng writes about are set in the Taiwanese context about Taiwanese people – this type of literature being called Taiwan literature. However, considering its uses of Chinese language to write, it is considered as

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Tzeng, Ching-wen 鄭清文, "Shudejianzheng: xiezai Zheng Qingwen guoji xueshuyantaohui zhiqian" 樹的見證: 寫在鄭清文國際學術研討會之前 (Testimonies of the Trees: Writing before the International Conference on Tzeng Ching-wen), *Zheng Qingwen* 鄭清文, ed. Jinyi Li 李進益 (Tainan: Guoli Taiwan Wenxueguan 國立台灣文學館, 2012), 108.

part of Chinese literature. Few people are aware of the distinctiveness of Taiwan literature when compared to Chinese literature. Tzeng is surprised to see that even Taiwanese people are not conscious of the existence of their own literature. This negligence from the Taiwanese people indicates their lack of understanding of how Taiwan is represented when compared to China or even to the world. What this means is that the Taiwanese are aware of the differences in the politics and history, yet they do not understand that the political and historical experiences could be translated into literature.

Tzeng calls himself a humanist as he is fascinated by the human experience. And one of the ways for him to write about it is to use narrative to tell about women's suffering. The women in his stories are the ones who live through exceptional circumstances that cause them the inability to satisfy cultural and social expectations. By being unable to fit in the expectations, these women are oppressed, hence they suffer. On the surface, these stories appear to concern female suffering, but in the end, Tzeng wants to convey the message that women are human beings after all.

Tzeng is been inspired by Chekhov, notably by the story "The Darling,"⁸ and he was so fond of it that he transcribed a Chinese translation of the piece. "The Darling" is the story of Olga Plemyannikova, a woman who has always had a man to love. Each time that a man in her life disappears – either dead or having abandoned her, Olga is left in solitude. Whenever a new man enters her life, she becomes the new person. She takes his ideas and speaks his words. Olga is a

⁸ "The Darling" was written by Anton Chekhov was published in 1899.

woman without opinion, and her personality is defined by the men in her life. Tzeng's fascination with Chekhov's works is because of his depiction of women and how they suffer from the cultural factor of the power of patriarchy restraining women's freedom. Tzeng has come to understand that women are bound to their cultural expectations. Women who stand away from the expectations cause themselves trouble.

Tzeng has also been influenced by different Western writers, such as Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, and Feodor Dostoevsky just to name a few. All these authors have one thing in common, and that is to display their concern about society and the human race, to which Tzeng follows the trend.

Tzeng's Writing: Literature Review

As mentioned earlier, Tzeng Ching-wen's literature is about human suffering. In the book *The Monster that Is History: History, Violence, and Fictional Writing in Twentieth-Century China*, David Der-Wei Wang writes that literature is a way to convey human suffering.⁹ He addresses the issues of trauma, often generated by violence. Suffering is the result of a psychological state after experiencing a physical violence or a physical impact of a socio-political event. Wang's description of suffering is mainly concerned with physical violence. Although Tzeng's stories do not deal with physical violence, the characters' sufferings are similarly a result of social, political and economical situations. The characters are psychologically scarred by events that have pulled them out of their

⁹ David Der-Wei Wang, *The Monster that Is History: History, Violence, and Fictional Writing in Twentieth-Century China*. (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2004), 2-4.

comfortable life. In Tzeng's fictions, people are psychologically and socially suffering because of ideological repressions. Wang explains that to write about suffering is difficult. The experience of suffering and the experience of writing on suffering are different because of the limitation of language. Language is a mean to communicate feelings, but not all feelings can be communicated. Some feelings exist beyond vocabularies. To reinforce Wang's statement on suffering within literature, the living experience that the reader has previously acquired will help understand Tzeng's – as well as any writer's – works, since he can feel sympathy for the characters, having undergone through a similar struggle. Then, the language – in terms of the vocabulary instead of the dialect – will bring the characters and the reader closer to each other, connecting the sufferings that they have been through.

Nativist literature is mainly about the life of local people or native Taiwanese people. Pang-yuan Chi writes that Nativist literature advocates attention to the suffering of the local people. In contrast to other forms of literature, Nativist literature is concerned with issues occurring in the everyday life of commoners; it is about how they make it through their days, which is what Tzeng writes about.¹⁰ For instance, in the collection *Magnolia*, each story is about a commoner's life. Their problems seem banal at the first sight. But in reality they are deeper than one thinks – they have been passed from generation to generation and no solutions were found. Chao Yang describes that Taiwan literature is about

¹⁰ Pang-Yuan Chi, "Taiwan Literature, 1945-1999," in *Chinese Literature in the Second Half of a Modern Century: A Critical Survey*, ed. Pang-Yuan Chi and David Der-Wei Wang (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 24.

a critique of the political and economical situation; the island has been victim of imperialism, hence now they want an equal distribution of politics and economy.¹¹

Tzeng writes stories that depicts periods of political or economic development. The characters are affected by these developments, but they suffer because they are torn between traditions and changes. By writing this struggle, Tzeng suggests how he is not satisfied with the uneven changes that are happening in the world, which is a reality. The realism is expressed as “human life literature,” which is how his works are described.¹²

According to Yeh Shitao, Tzeng perceives human beings as economic animals as they need one another to survive as he believes that people cannot live by themselves; they need others, which requires exchanges between individuals.¹³ Tzeng’s works have individuals from different professions and different lifestyle, and each character cannot be a hero unto himself. A person needs others to determine his identity and give him a reason to be whom he wants to be. Although Tzeng’s work could be seen as entrapping, as he views people’s fate as a tragedy because of the ending with fatal death, he gives his characters a chance to survive. Yeh writes that from Tzeng’s perspective, people’s lives are tragedies because each lives to a death, and this is the real form that literature should take.¹⁴

Literature is about life. It is the transmission of an individual’s suffering to

¹¹ Chao Yang, “Beyond ‘Nativist Realism’: Taiwan Fiction in the 1970s and 1980s,” in *Chinese Literature in the Second Half of a Modern Century: A Critical Survey*, ed. Pang-Yuan Chi and David Der-Wei Wang. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 97.

¹² *Ibid.*, 102-103.

¹³ Yeh Shitao 葉石濤, Lun Zheng Qingwen xiaoshuolide “Shehuiyishi” 論鄭清文小說裡的「社會意識」 (Discussing “Social Consciousness” in Tzeng Ching-wen’s Short Stories), in *Zheng Qingwen 鄭清文*, ed. Jinyi Li 李進益 (Tainan: Guoli Taiwan Wenxueguan 國立台灣文學館, 2012), 143.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 142.

another person, since life, according to Tzeng, is the experience of suffering. Yeh questions how can Tzeng calmly write about the paradox of human life, and his conclusion is that truth cannot be found and should be left without being interpreted.¹⁵ As an author himself, Yeh explains that a writer does not state the purpose and it is his duty to stimulate the readers to think. Hence, Yeh believes that Tzeng's works are humanistic as they address issues that are so omnipresent that people forget.

As Tzeng writes a lot of women's stories, he asserts his worries about how women's condition can be disturbed by the multiple changes in the society, according to Jenn-Shann Lin.¹⁶ With the experience he had in the past, Tzeng is well aware that social developments are inevitable, yet in some cases, social changes do not seem to be applicable to some minor groups. The instance of women's condition suggests that social changes and traditional thoughts do not always follow the same line. Women are granted new rights although they still have limitations deriving from the ancient ideology. Lin discusses issues in the short story "To Set Lives Free" (Fangsheng 放生) concluding that Tzeng's ultimate human goal is to find equality and respect among all humans.¹⁷ This goal could be found in most of his stories, where women are victimised by the patriarchal society. They are bound to their Confucian duties as wives and mothers, yet they are denied their individuality. From an interview conducted by

¹⁵ Ibid., 144.

¹⁶ Jenn-shann Lin 林鎮山, *Yuanxiang, Nüxing, Xiandaixing: lun dangdai Taiwan xiaohuo* 原鄉・女性・現代性：論當代台灣小說(Native place, Women, and Modernity: A Critique of Contemporary Taiwan Fiction) (Taipei: Avanguard Publishing House, 2011), 131-132.

¹⁷ Ibid., 211.

Jenn-Shann Lin and Lois Stanford on the short story collection *Magnolia: stories of Taiwanese Women* by Tzeng Ching-wen, Tzeng said that men and women should be respected as human beings before anything else and that gender identity is only given by cultural values.¹⁸ Regardless of whether one is a man or a woman, Tzeng believes that everyone is fundamentally a human being. In the collection of short stories, the author conveys the suffering that Taiwanese women experience over time. Two of the stories are about women who are abandoned by their husbands. Those women have chosen the modern lifestyle by finding a job and living a life that is at odds with the traditions instead of opting for the traditional path by finding another man on whom they can depend. Tzeng explains that it is easier to write these situations from a female perspective, because women are expected to be weaker.¹⁹ If the story were to happen to men, people would not feel the same kind of sympathy for him.²⁰ It is through this remark that one will understand that there are standards not only for women but men as well. Men are not allowed to behave weakly, and they must be stronger and more authoritative than women.

In the same interview, Tzeng mentions the main character in short story “The Darling” written by Anton Chekhov, stating that the woman copied other men’s identity to make it her own. The reader would not know it until he or she

¹⁸ Jenn-shann Lin, and Lois Stanford, “Xingbie, wenxuepingwei, xushicelüe: zuozhe yu yizhe youguan Magnolia <yulanhua> de duihua” 性別·文學品味·敘事策略：作者與譯者有關 *Magnolia* 《玉蘭花》的對話 (Gender, Literary Style and Narrative Strategy: A Conversation on *Magnolia* between the Author and the Translators), in 林鎮山著，離散·家國·敘述：當代台灣小說論述 Jenn-Shann Lin, *Lisan, Jiaguo, Xushu: Dangdai Taiwan xiaoshuo lunshu* (Diaspora, Homeland and Narration: Discourse in Contemporary Taiwan Fiction) (Taipei: Avanguard Publishing House, 2006), 238.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

sees the same pattern happening to each man she encountered.²¹ From a traditional standpoint, it appears quite normal for a woman to rely on a man but from Tzeng's view, a woman is a human being and she can have an independent identity that is not copied from her male counterpart. Tzeng's fictions suggest how unfair the world is to women because they are still subject to traditional values, which expect them to be submissive and defined by their male counterparts. This is why he depicts his female characters with a strong personality. According to Mei Jialing, those women in Tzeng's fiction initially appear weak, but as the reader reads in the story, one will eventually discover that they are actually strong when facing a difficult situation.²²

In Jiang Baochai and J.B. Rollins' review of Tzeng's short stories collection *Magnolia: Stories of Taiwanese Women*, it is mentioned that Tzeng provides a good understanding of the situation that Taiwanese women live in the approximate time frame.²³ The short story "Magnolia" depicts the difficulties for a woman to raise her children on her own. Jiang and Rollins find Tzeng's depiction of motherhood touching.²⁴ It shows how benevolence from a mother can be contagious. The short story presents the social situation in Taiwan and the

²¹ Ibid., 241.

²² Mei Jialin 梅家玲, "Shijian, nüxing, xushu: xiaoshuo Zheng Qingwen" 時間·女性·敘述: 小說鄭清文 (Time, Femininity, Narrative: Short Discussion on Tzeng Ching-wen), in *Zheng Qingwen* 鄭清文, ed. Jinyi Li 李進益 (Tainan: Guoli Taiwan Wenxueguan 國立台灣文學館, 2012), 259.

²³ Jiang Baochai 江寶釵 and J.B. Rollins, "Lunyingyi Zheng Qingwen xiaoshuoshuan 《Yulanhua》 de yuedu yu wenhuajieru" 論英譯鄭清文小說選《玉蘭花》的閱讀與文化介入 (Discussion on the Reading of the English Translation of Tzeng Ching-wen's Collection of Short Stories "Magnolia" and Cultural Interventions), in *Shudejianzheng: Zheng Qingwen wenxuelunji* 樹的見證: 鄭清文文學論集 (Testimonies of Trees: Essay Collections on Tzeng Ching-wen), ed. Baochai Jiang and Jenn-Shann Lin (Taipei: Ryefield 麥田出版, 2007), 235.

²⁴ Ibid.

difficulty of preserving traditions in such a rapidly developing society. The article states that after reading the story, Rollins has a better understanding of the Taiwanese lifestyle.²⁵ To support Rollins' words, Tzeng targets problems that appears specific to the Taiwanese context, but they could be easily associated in other cultures. Stories like "Magnolia," "The Woman Taxi Driver," and "Ah-Ch'un's Wife" present how much pressure women receive from their society and how much effort they have to exert to get recognised as a human being. Such problem is not only specific to Taiwan, but to other parts of the world, which is why it is easily relatable for non-Taiwanese readers. Jiang and Rollins states that Tzeng illustrates the Taiwanese lifestyle so well that the Western readers would be able to avoid seeing the female characters' case as marginal, and they would be able to sympathise with them.²⁶

In Li Qiao's article, he describes the artistic style that Tzeng uses in his writing.²⁷ This style presents reality through the use of language – the use of local Taiwanese expressions. It depicts well the local atmosphere because from an anthropological view, the local language traces back political and historical background.²⁸ The local expressions set the reader in the geographical setting. It gives an idea of how powerful language can be. Language helps readers

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 236.

²⁷ Li Qiao 李喬, Jiuzhende yezishu – xu Zheng Qingwen quanji 舊鎮的椰子樹 – 序鄭清文全集 (The Coconut Tree from the Old Town: Preface to Tzeng Ching-wen's collection), in *Zheng Qingwen* 鄭清文, ed. Jinyi Li 李進益: (Tainan: Guoli Taiwan Wenxueguan 國立台灣文學館, 2012), 161.

²⁸ Henning Klöter, "Re-Writing Language in Taiwan," in *Re-Writing Culture in Taiwan*, ed. Fang-long Shih, Stuart Thompson and Paul-François Tremlett (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 106-108.

understand not only the plot but also the social, cultural and political stance that a character takes. This is how Tzeng's Nativist Literature is formed.

Conformity and Tzeng Ching-wen

This thesis will argue that conformity restrains the possibility for women to carry an identity of their own and that their fate depends on their actions and the decisions they make. Women are traditionally defined by men, who are the dominating figure in the man-woman relationship. For women to obtain an independent identity from men is when conformity is broken and that women are conscious that they can build up their own identity.

Tzeng's works finely describe female suffering. Female suffering is challenging the patriarchal force. In the context of Tzeng's work, some of his fictional women are forced into this challenge, because they have been abandoned by a male character or they have been forced to decide their own fate based on a demand of a male character. Through his humanist lenses, Tzeng is able to denounce the patriarchal force that surrounds those women. The women in Tzeng's stories struggle against their traditional responsibilities and the expectations coming from their surroundings.

Although Tzeng does not explicitly state that his literature is about Confucianism, his works have characteristics that are particular to Confucianism. In many of the stories, the characters face problems of filial piety, chastity, virtue and human nature, which are related to Confucianism. All the characters in each story are responsible for each other traditionally speaking. But Tzeng pulls them

out of the context of conformity and makes them single individuals. These women torn between traditions and modernity must decide what value they have and will have to make their decision whether to stay within conformity or to live more freely.

Literature is an interdisciplinary ground as it is composed by language, history, politics, and social sciences. It is through literature that one can read and understand the past, but it is also a space for hope of a better future. For Tzeng Ching-wen, literature is perceived as a ground for human suffering. After analyzing Tzeng's work, one can understand how suffering could be read from a historically, politically and socially different point of view.

Literature prior to the French Revolution mostly pictured the noble life. In most cases, having a financially comfortable life, those people could not escape the condition of human suffering. However, with the era of Revolution, literature was given a new direction. People from lower classes started to write about their lives. Considering the significantly small number of literate individuals at that time, the experience was still very limited and very different from those who were illiterate. The illiterate people could still not speak out. With modernisation and globalisation entering the 20th Century, many developed and developing countries encouraged their people to become more educated. This encouragement gave rise to another form of literature, a literature that carries a vernacular language and expresses the lifestyle of ordinary people. Tzeng Ching-wen falls in that category. His stories are about ordinary people living an ordinary life.

To narrow down to the Taiwanese experience is to bring awareness to the historical past. Taiwan is very much distinct from China even if it is considered as part of it (if one considers the One-China Policy). The social, political, historical, and economic experience is well differed. Even if Tzeng does not use any comparison, the experience extracted from his writing proposes that Taiwanese identity is not to be confounded with the Chinese one. The writer traces all those experience with the colonial past and the change of the social structure since the mass arrival of Mainlanders since 1945. Taiwan defines itself as culturally Chinese, but that does not entail that it belongs to China. It describes itself as such because the ethnicity derives from there, just like diasporic groups located in Southeast Asia, North America or any other parts of the world. The ingredients that Tzeng uses in his short stories deliver to the audience a realistic perspective of the Taiwanese experience. He presents the common people's life and exposes their suffering. These fictional people's sufferings are ubiquitous and are actually real problems in the real world, because the problems are still unsolved. The suffering indicates that ideological structures are not easily reconstructed.

The crucial choice for Tzeng's work is his observation of how women suffer through political and economic changes. Tzeng sets most of his stories in the contemporary period – after the Second World War until the early 1990s. His description of women's suffering is based on the socio-political and economic changes deriving from traditional limitations and taking form in modern life. The problem appears banal, because they are so often viewed in ordinary life. But Tzeng tells the reader to not underestimate those issues, since they are likely the

ones to prevent social developments. Those stories illustrate the hardship of living in between modernity and traditions. The social conditions are modern, but the ideologies are still structured in the old form. Tzeng's works suggest that modernity comes with a prize or an aftertaste of traditionalism.

Even if most of his works are about women's issues, Tzeng's story would lead one to question the responsibility that men have toward women. Thus, the gender issues are not only from the women's side but also from the men's. Tzeng is very unsatisfied with how the world is composed for both men and women. At the same time, he worries that there is no possibility for these problems to be solved, which is why he leaves the ending opened. Either man or woman, everyone has a problem to face.

The shift from traditions to modernity is often unstable. Traditions seek harmony and modernity tries to establish equality. The human condition is often questioned when shifting from one ideology to another. Harmony will be sacrificed for equality and equality cannot be strived for without harming harmony. In reading Tzeng's works, the suffering of the protagonists derives from the breaking of harmony. The characters have to figure out their responsibility and their values. Hence, this is how human aspects are interpreted in the stories; the characters must make a choice of following their responsibility to the community or a choice of acting based on their own interests. The analyses of the short stories will bear in mind Tzeng's perception of the female protagonists as human beings before their identity as women. This is how it will help determine human nature through traditions and modernity. Knowing that the women in Tzeng's stories are

strong characters, the analyses will interpret the struggle of being cornered between traditions and modernity.

However, under both ideologies, women can hardly make themselves perceived as human beings because they are always oppressed. Modernity has opened doors to opportunities, yet the only people who can fully profit from it are men. Women are still bound to their traditional responsibilities. Thus, this work will question the necessity of modernity in women's condition, whether it truly leads to their liberation from traditional roles.

Composition of this work

Tzeng's depiction of his female characters' lives encompasses the conflict between tradition and a modern lifestyle. Tradition is a very broad term, and this essay chooses the Confucian side of the Taiwanese culture, considering that most of the stories that Tzeng addresses are about women belonging to the Chinese Han ethnicity. Melissa Brown writes that Taiwan is more Confucian than Mainland China, since Confucianism has always been strongly associated with Chinese culture, as it is basically how the Chinese society is structured.²⁹ Considering this fact, Taiwan could be viewed as Chinese in terms of ethnicity. Despite the Chinese identity that Taiwan carries, this thesis will not take in consideration the Chinese factor and will only analyze the Confucian values that the Taiwanese people apply in their everyday life.

²⁹ Melissa J. Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?: The Impact of Culture, Power, and Migration on Changing Identities* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), 29

Confucianism is seen as an oppressive doctrine toward women in the contemporary context. In the Taiwanese society that Tzeng presents, the women in his fictions are subject to expectations coming from their surroundings. The oppression takes form when these women are unable to fulfill their expectations and they find themselves facing the problem by themselves. While one carries Confucianism in mind, it is crucial to understand that such ideology is based on a system of conformity. Conformity is defined as a mandatorily submissive relationship to a doctrine, and to go against it would cause fatality.

This work will be distributed into three chapters. It will present an analysis of Tzeng's observation of conformity in women. This is an analysis of four short stories from the collection *Magnolia: Collection of Tzeng Ching-wen's Short Stories 2* (Yulanhua: Zheng Qingwen duanpian xiaoshuo xuan 2 玉蘭花:鄭清文短篇小說選 2),³⁰ which addresses the issues of breaking traditions. The choice is narrowed down to "Magnolia" (玉蘭花) "Ah-Ch'un's Wife" (阿春嫂), "The Woman Taxi Driver" (女司機), and "The Huge Shadow" (龐大的影子). As this thesis will be read by an English audience, passages from Tzeng's stories will be extracted from the translated version of the collection in English by Jenn-Shann Lin and Lois Stanford, *Magnolia: Stories of Taiwanese Women by Tzeng Ching-wen*.³¹

³⁰ Tzeng Ching-wen, *Yulanhua: Zheng Qingwen duanpian xiaoshuo xuan 2* 玉蘭花:鄭清文短篇小說選 2 (*Magnolia: Collection of Tzeng Ching-wen's Short Stories 2*) (Taipei: Ryefield Publications 麥田出版, 2006).

³¹ Tzeng Ching-wen, *Magnolia: Stories of Taiwanese Women by Tzeng Ching-wen*, transl. Jenn-Shann Lin and Lois Stanford (Santa Barbara: Center for Taiwan Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2005).

The first chapter will define conformity. It will explain how it is distributed in the Chinese tradition and how it is practiced. It is the theoretical part of this thesis that explains how conformity oppresses women and how it has been imprinted within history. This part of the thesis will refer to ancient writers such as Dong Zhongshu, Liu Xiang, and Ban Zhao to expand on the definition of conformity. Then it will explain how conformity has been reinforced through time, and this chapter will end by explaining how modernity contributed to the changes of traditions and the liberation of women.

The second and third chapters are literary analyses of Tzeng Ching-wen's works. In order to understand how women in Tzeng's story are faced with conformity and changes, the two chapters will mention feminist theory. To use feminist theory does not mean necessarily that Tzeng is feminist; it only shows that feminism is a part of humanism. Tzeng has mentioned that feminist studies should not be placed as a different form of studies since it is concerned with human beings.³²

The second and third chapters of the thesis will be analyses of Tzeng's short stories. The second chapter will focus on "Magnolia" and "Ah-Ch'un's Wife." It will discuss how the protagonists have transgressed conformity and how they struggle to keep their responsibility. The protagonists of both stories are affected by a painful event in the past, and they try to make their place in a world that is perceived as cold. They are confronted with the reality where people do not

³² Tzeng, *Xiaoguoja*, 55.

necessarily sympathise with them or people who sympathise but cannot provide any support.

In the third chapter, modernity will be incorporated in the analysis of “The Woman Taxi Driver” and “The Huge Shadow.” It will question whether modernity really helped women to escape the oppression from patriarchy, bearing in mind that it is a male-controlled ideology. The protagonists of both stories are set in a modern environment. Although modernity serves to bring equality among human beings, these women figure out that they are still far from being viewed as a man’s equal.

The analysis of the four short stories will serve to determine Tzeng’s articulation of women’s condition in Taiwan in the contemporary era. It will discuss how neither conformity nor modernity contributes to improve women’s condition. It is believed that conformity oppressed women and modernity came to liberate them. However this is not the reality, whether it is in Tzeng’s works or in real life. Both have aspects that oppress women.

Chapter 1 – Conformity: Confucianism and Women

The disparity between men and women has always been determined by the physical appearance such as the form and the strength. However, with ideologies dominating the nature of individuals, this disparity is not only limited by physical traits. Ideologies control the psychology of a human being, which is reflected in the behaviour. Thus, the behaviour is a result of the ideologies' nurturing effect. It is less related with the physical traits. Hence, for centuries, many have believed that women are generally weaker than men physically, psychologically and academically.

With modernity following the era of industrialization and colonization, the concept of individuality categorises different aspects of a person. Through individualist perspective, hierarchy becomes a controversy, because some lower class individuals are cognisant of the unjust reality that their life is economically more challenged than their upper classes counterparts'. The gaps between the lower and the upper classes in certain historical periods were so great that it was very difficult for the lower class to catch up the upper class. Upon such realisation, the lower class individuals would contest for equalities among ranks by proposing a pluralistic view on each individual. The pluralistic view is to consider the different identities that a human being can carry. For instance, a man is not simply a man: if he has children, he is a father; if he has a wife, he is a husband; if he works, he is an active member of the labour force. A man under this view has several identities. The pluralistic view will evaluate one facet of the individual and will not take into account that this one identity will represent the whole

person. It is a deconstructive approach: By considering the different facets, a person will not be seen as either good or bad. The pluralistic view would not perceive a person based on his gender. It will view the person through different responsibilities that he has. It believes that qualities and development will be different from identity to identity (e.g.: a man could be seen as a good father but a bad husband). Therefore, the pluralistic approach is related to individuality, evolutions, and modernity. In contrast, the simplistic view will only judge a person based on a specific identity. It is an approach that creates binary oppositions and prevents all nuances to occur. For instance, a man will automatically be assumed to be a father, a husband, and an active member of the labour force. The simplistic view will not separate one person into many identities. It perceives all the responsibilities that one has as the composition of his one single identity. Because of the binary nature of the simplistic view it prevents changes to happen. It believes that every person is related to one another because responsibilities constitute each person's identity. Therefore, the simplistic view is associated with community, stagnation, and traditions.

The Confucian ideology denies individuality and believes that every person is perceived as a social component to help the society develop. This ideology is fixated on the relationship between individuals, either directly or indirectly. It proposes that everyone has a responsibility based on his or her sexual identity – the male as a man and the female as a woman. Even if each sex has to perform their respective task, the male is considered the dominant, and the female

the submissive. Hence, Confucianism is a form of patriarchy – an ideology that ensures power to male lines.

This patriarchal ideology attaches people through the Confucian term of Three Bonds (*san gang* 三綱) as it believes that it accords people to the appropriate dominant. The Three Bonds are composed of the relationship between the ruler and his ministers, the father and his son, and the husband and his wife. The ministers are submitted to the ruler, the son to his father, the wife to her husband. Although in Western ideology, this is perceived as a domination-submission relationship, Confucian teaching is more concerned with reciprocity and the responsibility that one holds for the other. These relationships are sustainable as long as people carry the Five Virtues (*wuchang* 五常): Humaneness (*ren* 仁), righteousness (*yi* 義), propriety (*li* 禮), knowledge (*zhi* 智), integrity (*xin* 信). By achieving all of them, one can reach self-cultivation, a state that a person can attain from Confucian teachings. Self-cultivation can only be reached when interacting with the public sphere, as one can finally use the moral practices in a vaster environment.¹

By respecting the Three Bonds and practicing the Five Virtues, one can recognise and distinguish the different social functions. However, self-cultivation in Confucianism is limited to only men, because by the above definition, which may be too limiting, women have no accessibility to the public sphere, since they must remain in the domestic environment. Furthermore, how those virtues can be

¹ Benjamin Schwartz, "Ideas and Values," *Confucianism and Chinese Civilization*, in ed. Arthur F. Wright (New York: Atheneum, 1965), 5-6.

practiced demonstrates that women find themselves in the lowest level of the hierarchical stratum, as according to the Three Bonds, a woman must submit to her husband, meaning that under any circumstance, she is lower than a man. In many cases, people describe the application of this practice as *norm*. However, this thesis will refer to this practice as *conformity*, since this term involves a connotation of submission, which will be explained later in this chapter.

By definition, patriarchy is a system that has men in the dominant position and entails that women are oppressed by them. Confucianism is a male-ruling ideology but it does not mean that women are exclusively oppressed by men. Women are buried by social expectations. According to many scholars such as Chenyang Li,² Lisa Raphals,³ and Lisa Rosenlee,⁴ women under Confucian teaching are not directly overpowered by men but by the whole social system. These scholars believe that women are oppressed by men, other women and cultural expectations, which are usually carried within the individual themselves. Being buried by cultural expectations, women can hardly survive without satisfying the Five Virtues.

Confucianism and women

Scholars have different opinions on the power that Confucianism exercises on women. However, most have agreed that there is hardly a way for women to

² Chenyang Li, "The Confucian Concept of Jen and the Feminist Ethics of Care: A Comparative Study," in *The Sage and the Second Sex: Confucianism, Ethics, and Gender*, ed. Chenyang Li (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 2000).

³ Lisa Raphals, *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York, 1998).

⁴ Lisa Li-Hsiang Rosenlee, *Confucianism and Women: A Philosophical Interpretation* (Albany: State University of New York, 2006).

escape the expectations from the ideology. Unlike in Western Europe, where patriarchy is exercised in a way that women are less burdened by cultural expectations and other female counterparts, the Confucian form of patriarchy is not only limited to the oppression coming from men, but also from other women or the whole community. Lisa Rosenlee explains that under Confucianism women are perceived as cultural being: They try to fulfill their role by achieving the cultural goal despite having limited access to the public sphere, which is the environment outside of the house.⁵ Even if they are denied access, they are expected to contribute to the development of the public sphere. Hence, the only way to satisfy the expectations is to submit to their motherly and wifely tasks. By acknowledging their identity as mother and wife, women can regulate men – their husband and son. If a woman is of good influences – who supports men and disciplines them to success, then she will be granted virtue. If she does not lead the men in the right path, she will be criticised for her lack of motherly and wifely competence. Within Confucianism, virtue is considered the most honourable state that one can acquire. Women without virtue are condemned.

It is during the Han Dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE) that women saw their responsibilities reinforced since the image of virtuous women became associated with men's success. In *Biography of Exemplary Women* (*Lienü Zhuan* 列女傳), which has been compiled in early Han (206 BCE – 9 CE), Liu Xiang's 劉向 (c. 79-8 BCE) gathers many stories about women who were considered virtuous. The work describes virtuous women as the founders of civilization explaining how

⁵ Ibid., 4.

they contributed to the success of their sons. On the one hand, Lisa Raphals argues that the book presents women as mystical beings, having the ability to foresee or predict events that may affect the harmony in the family, and those women are considered instructors and counselors in the book.⁶ On the other hand, Bret Hinsch writes that Liu Xiang's depiction of women can lead to two interpretations: The first one is that he acknowledges that most women can have the sense of instructions and have a high character; the second interpretation would be that such virtuous women are rare and the collection serves to praise and to exemplify them since their behaviour is "so unusual."⁷ Thus, in both readings there is a hint that women are perceived to not be equal to men. They are seen as weaker, less independent, and more calculating than men. Very importantly, Hinsch states that Liu Xiang praised women more for what they declined to do than what they did.⁸ Liu Xiang's work demonstrates that there are many more restrictions on women than there are on men. While Liu Xiang's opinion of women is still undetermined by scholars, his intention could be read that there are ingredients for women to become virtuous. Hinsch adds that the *Biography* does not exclusively discuss the division between male and female in terms of separation of sex, but also as a representation of the social structure on a smaller scale.⁹ The relationship between male and female is a more intimate reflection of the bond between ruler and his subjects – the male has the ruling power and the

⁶ Raphals, 27-29.

⁷ Bret Hinsch, "The Criticism of Power Women by Western Han Dynasty Portent Experts," in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 49.1(2006): 104.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Bret Hinsch, "The Origins of Separation of the Sexes in China," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 123.3 (July-September 2003): 604.

female must be the yielding object. Hence, it is difficult to say that Liu Xiang intended to dictate conformity through his work, as the anecdotes used in the compilation are rare cases and they interpret the goodness that a woman can project rather than the bad image of the woman. Considering that Confucianism was majorly associated with state affairs and that most of the people in power were men, to discuss the woman's duty toward the contribution of the man's success creates dynamism between the two genders. It proves the interdependence between both parties and that it is not an obligation for a woman to perform those duties, but rather a choice.

Following Liu Xiang's work, Ban Zhao 班昭 (45-120 CE), who was an influential woman in the Later Han court (25 – 220 CE), wrote *Admonition for Women* (*Nüjie* 女誡) presenting how a woman should behave in order to bring harmony and balance in the family. Written in seven chapters, this piece explains how both sexes can complement each other on condition that the woman fulfills her womanly duty. Ban Zhao explains that even if women were expected to fulfill their duties, men would also be required to do as much. Women's responsibility towards men can be judged bad if men fulfill theirs better and that women neglect their duty. In the case where men are neglecting their responsibilities, then women could be forgiven for giving back responsibility in poor quality to men. Ban Zhao illustrates a relationship based on reciprocity. And reciprocity will lead to harmony. If harmony cannot be found, then the system becomes dysfunctional.¹⁰ Ban Zhao encourages literacy for women because it can fulfill the understanding

¹⁰ Rosenlee, 48.

of reciprocity and have a better understanding of men and women's responsibility. Even if the responsibilities of both men and women are reciprocated, there is a role of power.

From Ban Zhao's perspective, the woman must be subordinate to the man in order to respect the Three Bonds when it comes to the control balance of the *yin-yang*. It is during the Later Han that gender roles have been reinforced by suggesting that a woman's virtue is established through her chastity even as a widow. This concept took form to prove the difference between men and women: the man belongs to a higher hierarchy. Ban Zhao characterises men as Heaven. In Confucian philosophy, the Heaven governs the "under-Heaven" or the "Earth" (*tianxia* 天下). It is an unlimited power, and none can escape its rule. Hence men dominate women – who are earthly beings. The latter, under their husband's unlimited power, must maintain lowliness and vow their loyalty for the rest of their life; even if their spouse is deceased, they are still under his rule and they cannot escape it.¹¹ Thus, women's virtue is evaluated based on their loyalty to the living or dead husband. However, in spite of her success in the court, Ban Zhao constantly told her audience that the woman's place is at home and that she should be submissive to the husband and his family. This caused a dispute between her and her sister-in-law Cao Fengsheng 曹豐生, who complained that her work was oppressive towards women.¹² This conflict between Ban Zhao and her sister-in-law demonstrates that women's condition prior to Ban Zhao's work

¹¹ Raphals, 217.

¹² Tan Zhengbi 譚正璧, *Zhongguo wenxuejia dacidian* 中國文學家大辭典 (Dictionary of Chinese Writers) (Hong Kong: Xianggang wenshi Chubanshe yinxing 香港文史出版社印行, 1961), 50.

was less fixed. *Admonition* presents a whole new perspective on virtue carried by women. As mentioned earlier, even if Ban Zhao states that literacy is important for women, she however did not encourage them to follow their own path and to choose a successful life, which is contrary to what Ban Zhao has experienced throughout her life. Lily Lee points out that the female writer's definition of female virtuousness is someone without her own personality and without opinion. It is a woman whose identity is forged by others and her existence is approved by her pleasing the counterparts, because it is the man who has control over the ideological as well as the behavioural aspects.¹³ Therefore, with Ban Zhao's controversial description of virtuous woman, it has reinforced the difference between the feminine and masculine gender in Confucianism. If one compares Liu Xiang's work to Ban Zhao's, it appears that the definition of virtue has changed. Women during the Later Han Dynasty had duties reinforced and the presentation of men has pressed women lower than before in the hierarchy of relationships. Thus, virtue in women has moved from descriptive to prescriptive, meaning that prior to Ban Zhao's work they were not obliged to fulfill chastity. One should question Ban Zhao's motives for writing this work, considering that she was a successful and influential female historian in the Han court. She had been approached by the Emperor to complete the *Book of Han* (*Han Shu* 漢書), which is still preserved. She was also a mentor to Empress Deng Sui as well as to other male court historians of her time. It is an enigma to relate her life experience with the meaning of her book since she tells women to not follow her path.

¹³ Lily Xiao Hong Lee, *The Virtue of Yin: Studies on Chinese Women* (Australia: Wild Peony, 1994), 16-17.

Earlier than Liu Xiang and Ban Zhao, the term “woman” did not carry a static term in Dong Zhongshu’s 董仲舒 (179-104 BCE) perception, which explains that women’s responsibility has been bolstered over time. He describes a woman as someone who plays specific roles with a specific sense of aesthetics according to Robin R. Wang. Wang writes that Dong Zhongshu sees a gender dichotomy, and allows less flexibility to what a woman can possibly be to what a woman should be. Wang describes that the concept of womanhood under Dong Zhongshu’s view went from performative to static, hence the woman is no longer seen as a social actor. Instead of picturing the reciprocal relationship between the *yin* (陰) and the *yang* (陽), which is discussed by Ban Zhao about the reciprocity between men and women, he categorises *yin* and *yang* in terms of normative hierarchical ordering (*xu* 序).¹⁴ Wang explains that Dong Zhongshu sees the *yang* as the dominant force. The *yang* becomes even more associated with male identity and characterises it as leadership and authority. According to Wang, the relationship between male and female under Dong Zhongshu’s view is a simulation of the relationship structure in the public sphere: The husband is the ruler and the wife is his subject.¹⁵ Considering that *yang* (associated with activeness, brightness, and masculinity) is perceived as above *yin* (defined as passive, dark and feminine) the former regulates and controls the latter. Hence, it is the man’s duty to regulate and control women. From Dong Zhongshu’s view, the discrepancy between the male and female role is extended. Women in the era

¹⁴ Robin R. Wang, “Dong Zhongshu’s Transformation of “Yin-Yang” Theory and Contesting of Gender Identity,” in *Philosophy East and West*, 55.2 (April. 2005): 216-217.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

following Dong Zhongshu's period experience more constraints than in the past, having lost their place in the social structure. These women are limited to a specific stereotypical image and they can barely survive if they are unable to suit the appropriate image.¹⁶

Following Dong Zhongshu's definition of *yin* and *yang*, the woman's role has been removed from the social context, leaving her in the domestic domain. From this perspective, the inner sphere – just like the outer sphere – imitates nature from a smaller scale. The woman is responsible of controlling her behaviour and blending with the environment. In the case that a woman behaves in extreme fashion – either prominently good or bad – she will cause instability in the atmosphere of the domestic domain. Hinsch states that this form of ideology conceives that disasters, in general, are caused by a woman's inability to balance her behaviour.¹⁷ Thus, if a woman falls in a category that is outside of the expectations' scope, she can bring conflicts within the household. For instance, a prominently bad woman would break the ritual of filial piety and cause dissatisfaction to the parents-in-law; as for the prominently good woman, she can generate jealousy within the family and cause competitiveness against her sisters-in-law. In other words, a woman should not be dominant or be noticed by others, as her virtue is defined by the environment that she creates around her – virtue is given through the harmony that she spreads. Dong Zhongshu's definition of how women should behave suggests that in the past, the distance between men and women were closer, because the author suggests that the woman should not be

¹⁶ Ibid., 223.

¹⁷ Hinsch, "The Criticism," 113.

seen as a social actor. Then one can see that the image of the woman has been imposed with restrictions that are specific to them.

With historical changes, Confucianism gradually shifts from the recognition of gender to an imposed image of a gender. From Dong Zhongshu to *Biography of Exemplary Women* and *Admonition for Women*, the female role still remains within the household. However, each period follows a different approach on women's behaviour. The woman's responsibility can be seen as the core to all other kind of relationships. As a mother, her son will access the public domain and she can teach and leave her legacy through what she has taught. The familial aspect is a reflection of the public affairs. The individual aspect can take form in the public environment even if both the individual and the public life are completely different, they are related in terms of individual growth.¹⁸ In Liu Xiang's work, a woman is honoured for her virtue, to keep her son on the track of success or to contribute to his accomplishments. The philosopher Mencius' 孟子 (372-289 BCE) mother is used as a role model of a virtuous woman in Liu Xiang's collection. She is praised for her ability to discipline her son and to correct him from his bad behaviour. Mencius's mother's ability to discipline Mencius is considered exceptional, because she has been able to make her son a better person by providing a good education at home. The results of her discipline are perceived in the public sphere when Mencius is recognised as a gentleman, a man who knows and practices the Five Virtues. Mencius's Mother is believed to have contributed to the community by disciplining her son how to behave

¹⁸ Schwartz, 5-7.

virtuously in the public sphere. According to Dong Zhongshu, it is necessary for women to be lowly and submissive to men, since the latter is the one who possess the ability to regulate. Women are communal beings and Confucianism refuses to grant them individual identities. Without individuality, women are men's propriety because of the correlation with *yin* and *yang* – the *yin* being subordinate to the *yang*. Order – which is governed by the *yang* – is the key to maintain harmony in Dong's opinion. In respect to Dong Zhongshu's discussion on harmony, Liu Xiang's work does not discuss it in terms of what men and women should do. From his stance, it appears that harmony is something that comes naturally, and women with exceptional virtue can make this harmony work in many aspects. In Ban Zhao's work, harmony is defined through reciprocity despite the oppressive-submissive relationship between men and women; each are responsible for what they learn and what they do, each must know what they are allowed to perform, and each must understand what others may expect.

Confucianism and Conformity

As conformity has become necessary to maintain harmony within the Confucian society, Confucian teachings have bolstered women's submissiveness with even more homely duties over time. As mentioned earlier, the responsibility that men and women have for each other has varied depending on how virtue is defined at the respective period. For instance, in Liu Xiang's *Biography*, women were encouraged to contribute to their son's or husband's success in the outer sphere. Because of the rarity of those cases, the women who succeeded would be honoured virtue. In contrast, in Ban Zhao's *Admonition*, women were obliged to

achieve virtuousness by performing their role as mother and wife, and by proving their loyalty toward their husband through chastity. Limitations to women have cumulated in between Liu Xiang's and Ban Zhao's works. The expectations on women have changed through each new Confucian work. Thus, it ensues the reinforcement of conformity.

Conformity was established earlier in Dong Zhongshu's work when the *yin* and the *yang* are defined and assessed to sex. His argument that order is preserved through the *yang* power already categorises *yang* men as dominant and *yin* women as submissive. Relationships are not equal because of the hierarchy between individuals regarding their social status, age, and sex. Women are expected to submit to all men in their lives: Their father when they are unmarried; their husband when married; and their son when widowed. As a subordinate of men, they are not defined by themselves. Women's identity is defined by their relationship with their dominant. Thus, the only possible identity of a woman is being a daughter – to obey the father, a wife – to obey the husband, and a mother – to obey her son. From a Feminist view, Simone de Beauvoir explains that patriarchy ensures that the woman is given to the man, as she is viewed as an object of trade, while the man utilises marriage to confirm his existence – his ability to impregnate and to extend his lineage give him the natural power over women.¹⁹ Here, De Beauvoir criticises the biological discourse that patriarchy have been using to argue men's natural, if not only biological, dominance over women. While one understands how marriage plays a role in forming identity in

¹⁹ Simone de Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe, tome II: L'expérience vécue* (The Second Sex, volume II: Lived Experience) (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), 182.

men and women, Hinsch proposes that marriage is one of the events that draw attention to the separation of the sexes.²⁰ Whether it is the Western form of patriarchy or Confucian form, they all propose the female's lack of identity, which goes back to Ban Zhao's opinion of the virtuous woman – without personality and opinion. It is with this lack of self-awareness that the woman remains limited in her rights. Therefore she blindly conforms herself to the traditional expectations. Selfhood is denied to women because of all the responsibility that they incur to men. Because they are bound to this burden, they must adjust themselves to the whole cultural expectations. Hence conformity is inescapable.

By describing all its different facets, Confucianism should be viewed as conformity-based, rather than perceiving it – like in current scholarships – as norm-based. “Norm” according to the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* is defined as “a standard or pattern or type” or a “customary behaviour, appearance.”²¹ It states that a “norm” is about pattern and regularity. Being part of a “norm” is to be similar to other members of the society. “Norm” is descriptive, since it does not tend to correct behaviours, it only assesses it. Conformity is defined as an “action or behaviour in accordance with established practice; compliance.”²² It is prescriptive, and anyone who attempts to escape from it would need to be corrected. As a result, the individual in the correctional state might suffer. Confucianism does not allow women to be part of the public sphere, hence it

²⁰ Hinsch, “Separation,” 598.

²¹ *Canadian Oxford dictionary*, 2nd edition, ed. Katherine Barber (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2004): 1059.

²² *Ibid.*, 320.

would be difficult for them to understand what “norm” can really present. This is the reason why “conformity” will apply better in the context of Confucianism, as women have to respect the Three Bonds and the Five Virtues in order to be considered as a good woman. It is about the submission to Confucian practices – hence conformity. There is no specific rule as to how the practice is performed, but there is an understanding that behaviours should be nurtured in order to overcome innate imperfections. Although the teaching requires submission of the practicing members, there is space for justification if one falls out of the conformity. For instance, although a wife has to be under her husband’s obedience, she still has the right to criticise him if she judges him to be incompetent. By providing a reasonable criticism, the woman will prevent the man from reproducing the mistake in the public sphere. Hence her impact is perceived in the public domain and accomplishes her responsibility.²³

In order for conformity to take place, there is a dominating force to judge the subordinate one. Jiang Yi-huan explains that conformity requires submissiveness to establish itself.²⁴ Conformity seeks to satisfy harmony by having a whole community conformed. If one member of the Confucian community breaks conformity then the whole community becomes dysfunctional until the expulsion of the non-conformed member. Jiang’s definition of conformity could be applied to Dong Zhongshu’s description of order, as it is related with the power of dominance and submission. Jiang’s key word to

²³ Raphals, 27-29.

²⁴ Yi-huan Jiang, “Confucianism and East Asian public philosophy: an analysis of harmonize but not conform,” *National Taiwan University Journal* (2007): 13.

conformity is submissiveness: this is why Confucianism's expectation for women is not necessarily called a "norm," but rather "conformity." It consists of women submitting themselves to men.

Women under Confucianism must fulfill the virtue of *care* (仁) to their husbands or sons. From Li's explanation, the concept of *care* is not only in the sense of affection but it also encloses the meaning of morality.²⁵ *Care* can be perceived as a physical concern – to take care of a sick person, or a moral concern – to direct someone to a moral decision. In Confucianism good moral is believed to be rooted in the inner sphere. Women are trusted to transfer her caring advices to men in order to prevent them from making amoral moves.

Confucianism sees order in different ways. For instance, Mencius is convinced that order lies within the person.²⁶ People are good, which explains why there are moral values and spiritual growth. Another view on order is Gaozi's 告子 (420-350 BCE) theory that people were born neutral and they internalise order that is found in the nature.²⁷ This approach suggests that human beings are flexible to order and their moral ability depends on how they have acquired from the nature. A third view is Xunzi's 荀子 (313-230 BCE) theory that people were born evil. Order – which is part of the nature – must be internalised in order to suppress amorality.²⁸ Under all these circumstances, order is a very important part of Confucianism because it helps preserve harmony. To propose an order based

²⁵ Li, 26-27.

²⁶ Schwartz, 8.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

on hierarchy would limit each person to his responsibility, because hierarchy defines what one must do. The downside of this is that it is nearly impossible for one to do something beyond what he is expected to do. Confucianism is a culture that teaches people to perform what they must do. If a woman does not reach the expectations, then she will cause problems to the environment because conformity implies that one should embrace submission. To fail in reaching expectations is to demonstrate that one attempts to challenge a ruling force. It will diverge the general attention to that person by making her standing out from others.

Raphals explains that in the work called *Guanzi* 管子, women are described to have “negative influence.”²⁹ *Guanzi* proposes to separate men and women on the political plan. It states that men should govern the state and that women should remain outside of politics. This separation of roles for men and women needs to be maintained to keep each of the gender to the correct conduct.

30

If Ban Zhao’s work promoted public activities to women, it might not be preserved these days, as history has always been written to support the patriarchal view. The fact that the female historian did not advocate women’s activity in the public sphere has a great impact on the redefinition of Confucian conformity. Her work can be interpreted in two ways. The first one is that she was conscious of the difficulty that women outside of the public sphere could experience, and the purpose of her writing was to prevent women from further suffering. However,

²⁹ Raphals, 208.

³⁰ Ibid.

those who profited from her work, most likely to be men, might have used it to promote male supremacy. Hence, restrictions and expectations towards women have reinforced with time. The second reading is to perceive *Admonition to Women* as an allegory of the patriarchal society that Confucianism has brought. The message could present Confucianism as a stubborn and inflexible philosophy towards women. Ban Zhao's work is a message that a woman's fate is doomed to everyone's judgment and expectation. Benjamin Schwartz writes that in Confucian thoughts, to make harmony happen, one must understand how order works. Knowledge leads to the concept of harmony.³¹ Hence, for harmony to remain, women, according to Ban Zhao's description, must accept and follow the hierarchal order in which they are submitted to men.

Confucianism is not specifically about men oppressing women. Many scholars suggest that women are not specifically oppressed by men, but by the whole social system. Given the distinction between the role of men and women, Rosenlee explains that the woman is not perceived in the individual context but in the communal one.³² The communal context conceives the cultural oppression of women within the Confucian society women. Women are expected to fulfill their responsibilities to satisfy the cultural standards such as to lead men to public success and the only way they can do it is to educate men – their sons – in the inner sphere. Women are men's subordinate and all action they take serves to enhance men's moral and social skills. Their responsibility can only be practiced in the inner quarter, but the impact they have can be noticed in the public sphere.

³¹ Schwartz, 11.

³² Rosenlee, 4.

In the case where a man does not satisfy the cultural values, the woman is to be blamed. She will be judged by people in and outside of her household for her lack of competence for being a homely educator.

Responsibilities are a way to tie Confucian men and women. Whether it is a public or a private affair, everyone should fulfill their duty to satisfy the harmony. Conformity forces each person to satisfy the culture because every relationship is based on the progress of the society. Hence, it leads to the concept that men and women should be selfless and be responsible for one another's wellness. Much unlike Western ideologies, Jean-Jacques Rousseau describes that each relationship is perceived as a contract – a relationship based on profits.³³ One would accept to be in a relationship on condition that he or she can benefit out of the other person. The benefits would be emotional support, economical support or academic support. The Western view on relationship is about fulfilling self-interest. Hence, it allows individual identities, since a person knows what kind of interest that he or she is searching for. Confucian men and women do not search for what they want, because they are bound by responsibilities. It makes them caring people. Thus, people under Confucianism are communal beings and they lack individuality.

Many scholars argue that Confucianism sees no separation between the public and the private life, because one has responsibility in both context, and public matters are viewed as an expansion of familial environment. Hence, if one considers Li's view point, women's duty is seen as a catalyst to the public

³³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social* (Of Social Contract) (Paris: Flammarion, 2001), 57.

development, despite her exclusion of being an active member in the public circle. Since the public environment is perceived as an opportunity for one to practice self-cultivation and women are not allowed access to it, it then suggests that being part of the external sphere is only accessible to individuals that are called “people” or a “person” as they are usually seen as individuals with more awareness of the Five Virtues.

Conformity is conceived that women should not have access to the public domain, because they are responsible of homely duties, among which they will contribute to the maintenance and the preservation of the culture by giving basic educations to their sons. To compensate, harmony gives them an opportunity to be heard outside of the inner domain if they contribute to the wellness of the public affairs. This goes in accordance with the notion of the woman seen as less of a social being and more as a cultural being because of her ability to achieve cultural goals and because she has a responsibility towards the culture. She is oppressed by men and the society. To describe women as cultural beings suggests that they are raised to accomplish something for the culture, such as to bear children and to give them good education. They are never presented as individuals: They should be selfless and all tasks they perform serve to develop the inner and the outer sphere.

This is how it brings up the expression “good wife, wise mother” (liangqi xianmu 良妻賢母). Marriage is perceived as a way for women to contribute to the public sphere. Dorothy Ko, Jahyun Kim Haboush and Joan R. Piggott have explained that although there is not only one form of Confucianism since the

ideology has changed through time, it is “amorphous” and “ahistorical.”³⁴ Despite different social and political changes throughout history, women’s role in guiding men to success is associated with their role as mother and wife. The ideal virtuous woman is one who contributes to the public sphere indirectly through a male intermediate, whether it is her husband or her son. Women must remain outside of public affairs physically and are strongly encouraged to contribute to the development of the public sphere. A good wife must give a son to her husband and a wise mother must teach appropriate conducts to her son. In either or both ways, the woman will have her contribution perceived in the public sphere. A woman will not be considered conducive if she is unmarried. This is why her marital status defines her. Traditionally speaking, a woman cannot be a mother without being a wife. To have a husband and son would allow her to contribute to the public sphere.

Conformity and the New Era

With social changes during the past century, Confucianism started to lose its influence with the arrival of Westerners and the diffusion of Christianity since the 18th Century. States such as Japan tried to counter foreign arrivals by institutionalising the Confucian doctrine. Although promoted and practiced, the ideology has adapted to the changes from the new era. Customs that were practiced in the past have evolved, which have allowed new opportunities. For instance, women in the past were denied the same kind of education as men. With

³⁴ Ko, Dorothy, Jahyun Kim Haboush and Joan R. Piggott, “Introduction,” *Women and Confucian Cultures: In Premodern China, Korea, and Japan* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2003), 3.

the arrival of the missionaries, women now have accessibility to science and philosophy, instead of only poetry writing.

In his essay, the Chinese philosopher Hu Shih discusses how literacy is transmitted to women. He reports that most of the published female writings were mostly poetry; very few discussed scientific, historical or philosophical matters.³⁵ It indicates that women did not receive the same kind of education as men. They were taught to express their feelings and to take the aesthetic view on education instead of contributing to the development of the world. Despite their acquisition of literacy, they were not conscious enough to revolt against some traditional practices such as footbinding or to claim their economic independence.³⁶ Hu assesses that traditional literary education was “superior and unpractical,” since it contributed to elevate the woman’s position – she could be married to a man of good background, yet it did not awaken them from the condition they lived.³⁷ For that reason, he does not believe that for a woman to have “a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.” However, literate women are of great importance to their son, since they are believed to transmit some knowledge.

Even if the Confucian ideology has evolved and has become more flexible, there are new ways to impose conformity on women. In Japanese, the notion of “good wife, wise mother” was used to encourage women’s participation in

³⁵ Hu Shih, “Women’s Place in Chinese History,” in *Chinese Women through Chinese Eyes*, ed. Li Yu-ning (Armonk, and London: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1992), 12.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

building the Japanese nation.³⁸ It motivates young girls to become as educated as boys. The education was structured to reinforce Confucianism in order to build up a sentiment of nationalism. People were taught to be filial to the emperor, and they pledged their loyalty.³⁹ Education for women did not necessarily grant them access to the public domain it rather reinforced their homely duty. These women during the Meiji period were still bound to their home duty, but they were encouraged to provide Confucian doctrines to their sons. They were like a Confucian mentor, teaching them national values so that their son could become good and filial imperial vassals. When the latter would grow up and access to the external domain, he would carry his mother's legacy and serve the state in the Confucian way. According to Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, Confucianism is not necessarily taught through school or media, it can also be indoctrinated through family.⁴⁰

Women are still not accepted in the public sphere despite the opening to education. This is how Confucianism oppresses women even if there were new opportunities. It is in this order that women can hardly escape this cycle of oppression, as unlike Western ideologies, a woman is not only oppressed by men, but also by other women and the whole societal system.

Confucianism does not play out a single form. It is with time that expectations toward women change. Ko, Haboush, and Piggott state that China

³⁸ Nicole Freiner, *The social and Gender Politics of Confucian Nationalism: Women and the Japanese Nation-State* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 67-69.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 87-88.

⁴⁰ Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Confucianism, Democratization, and Human Rights in Taiwan* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2013), 14.

has been through many dynasties, and each political change has an impact on the domestic environment when compared to Korea, where the political situation was rather stable and, correspondingly, changes in women's role did not significantly change.⁴¹ In spite of several changes in the teaching, women were still expected to submit to conformity. With the arrival of Westerners in East Asia, the Confucian doctrine was questioned its practice, whether it is suitable for everyone and if it could accommodate social developments that does not only involve cultural aspects, but also economic and political variations. As modernity is taking place, equality among men and women is gradually advocated, making women more educated. Hu Shih explains that when education reaches a certain degree, self-consciousness take place, which can cause revolution.⁴² This is how women start to claim more freedom and independence. By refusing the hierarchal order or the unequal form of society, these women will eventually go against the traditional teachings.

Sharon Sievers explains that women in East Asia were not conscious of their backwardness until the Western missionaries opened education to them.⁴³ According to Tseng Pao-sun, it is the Westerners who brought ideas of freedom and individuality. Women can now develop their own individuality as well as claiming some rights that only men had in the past.⁴⁴ Tseng's statement is too simplistic because it will take a lot of courage for Confucian women to escape

⁴¹ Ko, Haboush, and Piggott, 9-12.

⁴² Hu, 13.

⁴³ Sharon Sievers, "Part II: Women in East Asia," in *Women in Asia: Restoring Women in Asia*, ed. Barbara N. Ramusack and Sharon Sievers (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Pres, 1999), 197.

⁴⁴ Tseng Pao-sun, "The Chinese Woman Past and Present," in *Chinese Women through Chinese Eyes*, ed. Li Yü-ning (Armonk and London: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1992), 79.

from conformity. Confucian conformity has been practiced for centuries. Men have the upper hand in the structure of Confucianism, and they will prevent women from reaching their higher status in the hierarchy. It is true that women can develop their own personality by claiming the same rights as men, but it is still the men who are in power of letting opportunities occur. It is through this difficulty of claiming their rights that women under Confucian doctrine will understand how different their tradition and the new Western ideology are.

Chapter 2 – Transgressing Conformity in “Magnolia” and “Ah-ch’un’s Wife”

Introduction

Tzeng Ching-wen writes many of his short stories on the role of women as mothers or wives. Under the Confucian view, women must be submissive to men or a patriarchal figure to preserve harmony within the household. The patriarchal figure could be a person who replaces the man by inheriting the patriarchal power, for instance a mother-in-law. However, in some cases, women’s role was properly fulfilled but there is no sign of reciprocity from the men or the patriarchal figure. It then denies virtue within women. Often, women who were declined their virtue would find themselves outside of conformity, as they needed to fulfill additional or neglect one or many responsibilities. In some cases they needed to take over the economical role that was not traditionally assigned to them, and in other cases they were forced to give up their responsibility as mother or wife. Tzeng describes the suffering of being expelled from conformity in the short stories “Magnolia” (玉蘭花) and “Ah-Ch’un’s Wife” (阿春嫂). Both are about women who were driven outside of conformity because of the lack of virtue coming from the patriarchal figure.

In “Magnolia,” the protagonist is abandoned by her husband. Without a husband (who is the father figure in the story) the family could have lost the economic stability and entered poverty since he represents economic supports in the environment. The mother has taken over the economic role in the family by

selling magnolia flowers on the street. Lin Ch'ing-ho 林清河, the son of the family, describes the poor living conditions in the past and witnesses his mother's struggle in present time through the narration. It is through Lin Ch'ing-ho's focalization that the reader can feel sympathy toward the mother. He is torn between the desire to see his father one last time as the latter is in his deathbed and the desire to remain filial to his mother – who did not grant him permission to visit his father – because she has been the one who brought him up. He feels that meeting his father without her consent would be a form of betrayal, since his mother has been the one suffering from the abandonment. The son does not express any dissatisfaction towards the father's negligence, but his filialness and his loyalty to his mother suggests that he senses that his visit to the father would impact the mother's feelings.

In “Ah-Ch'un's Wife,” the protagonist – known as Ah-ch'un's wife 阿春嫂 – loses her husband when he attempted to save a stranger and accidentally drowns. Despite the suddenness of the death, the protagonist is asked by the mother-in-law whether she would remain widowed or would choose to remarry. She tells the mother-in-law that she is unsure of her decision and agrees to follow the mother-in-law's demand to have her widowed in order to take care of Lin Hung-ming 林宏明, the protagonist's child. Upon accepting this decision, Ah-ch'un's wife requests that she be allowed to see her husband one last time before his burial but the request was denied. On the day of the funeral, the protagonist manages to escape the women who guarded her in order to prevent her from attending the ceremony. Her unexpected presence then generates gossip, which

later affects the mother-in-law. Feeling shameful of the gossip, the mother-in-law expels Ah-Ch'un's wife, takes away her ornaments and refuses to let her take Lin Hung-ming with her and even forbids her see him one last time.

Tseng Pao-sun explains that women under Confucianism are not without power, as they can rule over the son and daughter-in-law.¹ Women who are mothers(-in-law) are expected to use their power to preserve harmony within the family. They then represent the patriarchal figure and assume the role of the matriarch. As a patriarchal figure, a mother-in-law is the person speaking on behalf of the father-in-law or the husband to preserve harmony within the patriarchal structure in the family.

In both stories, the women were driven outside of conformity because of the patriarchal figures' lack of virtue. The Confucian saying "let the ruler be a ruler, the subject a subject, a father a father, and a son a son" (君君、臣臣、父父、子子) explains that each person must respect his or her responsibility and project virtue in order to assume his or her role. In "Magnolia," the father has left his function as a father and in "Ah-Ch'un's Wife" the mother-in-law did not perform her duty with humaneness. In contrast, these women were virtuous and willing to preserve their virtue. They cared about the environment and people around them, yet the situation in which they found themselves pushed them to transgress conformity.

¹ Tseng Pao-sun, "The Chinese Woman Past and Present," in *Chinese Women through Chinese Eyes*, ed. Li Yü-ning (Armonk and London: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1992), 78.

These stories reflect Tzeng's opinion that traditions and customs must not remain inflexible. The ideal is to have flexibility in them in order to fit with the social and emotional circumstances. In the case of "Magnolia," the protagonist accepts to let her son visit the father. It suggests that she has given up on the hope from the past and that she finally forgives the father. In the case of "Ah-Ch'un's Wife," the protagonist suffered from her action in attending the funeral, despite her decision to remain widowed; her fate depended on that action. In both cases, these women have their identity bound to the past and limited by the patriarchal figure. They have broken the emotional barrier that kept them stuck in the past and attached to the identity linked with their husband, which is at odds with the definition of women according to conformity.

Scent of "Magnolia"

A Virtuous Mother

The protagonist in the story lives with her son Lin Ch'ing-ho and is representative of the traditional constitution of family in modern Taiwan.² Based on a research conducted by I-Fen Lin et al. published in 2003, it is reported that most Taiwanese families has the son to primarily contribute to the general support (financial support, daily activities and housing) of the aging parents.³ The research explains that the support given to parents by adult children is reflected as a reciprocal relationship.⁴ Because Confucianism is an ideology that promotes

² Modern Taiwan is referred as 1945 and beyond.

³ I-Fen Lin et al.. "Gender Differences in Adult Children's Support of Their Parents in Taiwan," in *Journal of Marriage and Family* 65 (February 2003).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 186.

patrilineage, the emphasis is given to male children. The female child, as Elizabeth Croll explains, is only seen as a “temporary” being in the family.⁵ The daughter is considered a temporary member of the family because she is believed to be given to another family through marriage. Thus, the importance accorded to the daughter is less important than it is to the son. The reciprocity that is required in relationships under Confucianism encourages the son to take care of the parents when married so as to return all the investment that the parents afforded him. In consequence, the daughter is taught to be a good wife and a good daughter-in-law to the husband’s family since she is not expected to live with her natural family after marriage. The daughter is not expected to fulfill the same achievements as a son and all she has to do is serve her husband’s family well. In contrast to Confucianism, the report reveals that in North America most aging parents lived with their daughters instead of their sons.⁶ This is because education in North America gives more emphasis on the daughter taking care of her parents, rather than taking care of the family of her husband. In the short story “Magnolia,” the mother lived in the same house as her son. The first clue comes at the beginning of the story when Lin Ch’ing-ho tries to convince the construction company representative to leave the magnolia trees untouched during the reconstruction of the house. Lin Ch’ing-ho explains that the plants are important to his mother this is why it must be kept. He assumes that it is his mother who planted the trees more than thirty years ago, and his insistence on keeping the trees reveals that they still live in the same house as thirty years ago. The second clue comes from

⁵ Elizabeth Croll, *Feminism and Socialism in China* (London, Henley and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 22.

⁶ I-Fen Lin et al., 186.

this sentence: “At home, when [mother] wanted to thread a needle, she would ask her daughter-in-law or a grandchild to give her a hand.”⁷ This passage indicates that the mother shares the house with her son and his family. Traditionally, the house would have been the property of the father. Since he has left the family, the house belongs to the mother, who has been sharing it with her children. As her children grow, Lin Ch’ing-ho’s sister is married off and leaves the household. Her scarce presence in the story represents the traditional expectations of a woman, who once married belongs to another family. In the case of Lin Ch’ing-ho, his mother obtained him a wife and allowed him and his family to live with her, which is a traditionally Confucian practice. Hence, in allowing her son’s family to live with her was a sign of responsibility, virtue and generosity.

The mother plays an additional role to her traditional role, which assigns her as a woman who has derailed conformity, as she ceases to depend on a male figure. Ever since the father abandoned the mother, she has been selling flowers to support the family. The mother is forced to perform the duty of a father in addition to her role as a mother to provide the well being of her children. From Lin Ch’ing-ho’s perspective, the narrative voice describes the poor situation that the family went through when Lin Ch’ing-ho was young and conveys his reminiscence of that time. Lin Ch’ing-ho realises that there are differences ever since the time he was young until now and that life has become better. It is through his eyes that the reader will feel sympathy for the mother. The narrative voice portrays the mother’s life and the life of her son, who recognises his

⁷ Tzeng Ching-wen, *Magnolia*, 7.

mother's efforts and struggle as a poor magnolia seller. Thus, it is through the son's experience that the reader perceives the narrative and understands the circumstances of the narrative. It is through the focalizer that one will understand the moral values of the hero or heroine. According to Wayne C. Booth, the reader would feel more sympathy for the character when there is moral isolation, so long as the character is taken as a reliable source.⁸ The story is viewed through the eyes of the son, who understands the suffering that his mother goes through with all the changes in their lives.

Lin Ch'ing-ho sees the virtue of consistency within his mother. Even after the abandonment, the mother assumes the duty of the income generator in the household in order to give shelter and food to her children. Lin Ch'ing-ho thinks about the past and describes the situation. To eat salt fish ("Salty as salt"⁹) hints that there was not much to eat. Salt fish in Taiwan is considered one of the cheapest foods and it usually cannot be consumed in large quantity because of its extremely salty taste. It is through this experience of eating cheap and salty food that the narrator describes the poor living condition and it is through this narrative that one would understand Lin Ch'ing-ho's sympathy for his mother's suffering. He does not seem to be unsatisfied with this kind of lifestyle, because he understands that his mother needed to sacrifice some luxury in hope of giving a better future for the children.

⁸ Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), 274.

⁹ Tzeng, *Magnolia*, 9.

Although he wants to fulfill his desire, Lin Ch'ing-ho considers his mother's opinion about the visit to his father. He learns from his step-sister that his father has called out his name at his deathbed, giving him a motivation to pay a visit and his last respect, despite the fact that he has no memories of him. The mother denies him the permission. Her refusal to let her son meet his father can be perceived as a warning. She tells her son that there are two choices: He has either a mother or a father, but he cannot have both. A mother who has been abandoned in the past would commonly not want her child to meet the father, because it would be a reminder of her disgrace by the latter. It is observed as a sign of submission to the male authority or a sign that she has accepted the course of the event if she allows the reunion to happen. Lin Ch'ing-ho's mother's expression is described as such: "Her face looked pale and icy cold, like a statue. Her lips puckered lightly, and peculiar light suddenly flickered in her eyes."¹⁰ It is an expression of rage and anger, which indicates she could not accept the request from the father and that she has not accepted the course of events. Her anger and rage are actually putting the son to a test, whether he wants to be filial to his mother by fulfilling the virtue of loyalty. Lin Ch'ing-ho aspires to fulfill the virtue of consistency, because he wants to assume his position of a son to his father. It is common for a child to want to meet a lost parent, because it is out of curiosity, as to see what kind of person would have abandoned the family. One can also see Lin Ch'ing-ho's behaviour as out of respect to let a dying person rest in peace after satisfying his demand. Right after obstructing the visit, the mother tells her son that the man is his father after all. It implies that the mother would understand

¹⁰ Ibid., 5.

him if he were to decide to visit his father. The son's decision to hold himself from visiting the father tells the reader that he does not want to disgrace and disrespect his mother, who has been suffering for more than thirty years because of the father's abandonment.

Lin Ch'ing-ho's mother's words "he is your father"¹¹ right after telling him that the son should either choose her or the father presents a sudden change of mind generated by a conflict between her own feelings and the sympathy for her son. She realises that her son was under an awkward situation, since he has never been acquainted with his father and no one is allowed to mention him in front of the mother. It would be normal if the son wished to see his father, but at the same time, the mother is still not recovered from the abandonment and to let her son visit the father, from her view, would be to accept the consequences that the father has given them. Thus, to grant her son the permission to visit his father is seen as disgraceful to her suffering. Knowing the situation, the son chooses to remain filial to his mother by respecting his mother's decision.

Lin Ch'ing-ho's perception of his mother changes when he decides to give a second attempt to ask for the visit to his father. The setting of the railway station is the key element to lead the focalizer to understand his mother's suffering. Although he is not confident of getting the permission approved, he still hopes for changes, just like how the railway station has changed since his childhood. Despite his hope, he notices that his mother is actually isolated from the modern world – she does not mingle with the young and busy crowd. She is described as a

¹¹ Ibid., 5.

small and aging lady in the modern and fast moving world of Taiwan. Lin Ch'ing-ho could not understand why his mother is still persisting to sell flowers in such environment which is crowded and fast-paced. It is by perceiving the difference between his mother and the world that the focalizer started to see his mother's suffering. From there, the son only sees but cannot fully understand the mother's suffering and her decisions of not granting him the permission to visit his father.

The scene about the old man on the stairs represents the link between the mother and the son; the old man is the element that the focalizer uses to evaluate virtue among individuals, notably to truly confirm virtue within his mother. When the son catches sight of an old man going down the stairs, he feels that he should offer help. However, he does not dare approach the old man fearing that his mother would see him and suspect his motives of coming to her. Although Lin Ch'ing-ho does not take any initiative to help the old man, he wonders why no one is willing to offer him assistance, and why people would rather watch him or ignore him instead. Therefore, he realises how heartless the world actually is. He then witnesses his mother taking action, extending her arm to provide assistance to the old man. From there, Lin Ch'ing-ho sees and understands that his mother is a selfless person, leaving her business aside for a while in order to ensure the well-being of a weak old passing stranger. It is through his eyes that one will feel sympathy for the mother who helped the old man. She is depicted as an "ant" because of her small size when compared to the old man, but it is also a symbolism of the mother carrying so many responsibilities ever since the father has left her and the family. From Booth's explanation, the readers are bound to

the experience of a character and the sympathy will be directed to it.¹² Lin Ch'ing-ho finally understands his mother and it is through this scene that the reader would confirm this feeling within Lin Ch'ing-ho. The focalizer feels that he is contrasted to his mother because she does not hesitate and is courageous in her decisions and actions. Since the beginning of the story, Lin Ch'ing-ho has been hesitating in his decisions and actions. He sees how truly generous his mother is by providing assistance to other people despite her own suffering.

In the end, the mother tells Lin Ch'ing-ho to visit his father and to bring him flowers, which surprises the son as he does not expect his mother to change her decision. He does not expect generosity to be spontaneous. The son asks if the mother is angry. The mother answers by looking at the direction where the old man has disappeared into the crowd. It suggests that she is no longer angry and that she managed to accept the course of the past events. The action of helping the old man determines the mother's virtue in this cold modern world – where no one is willing to help people who are not fitting in the environment. She is able to sympathise and be generous with a stranger, and to look at his direction suggests that her spontaneous action has put her generosity to question. She seemingly realises that she was being unfair to her son as she was unable to let him visit the father, meaning that she was unable to sympathise with her son; yet she could spontaneously sympathise with an old stranger. She might have come to understand that her life is not based on the presence of the father anymore. To ask her son to bring flowers to the father proposes a virtuous image of the mother. By

¹² Booth, 274.

sending the flowers, it is a symbol of care, forgiveness and sympathy even though the father caused so much suffering in her life. By letting her son meet the father means that she has come to accept the hardship that the father has caused by abandoning them.

Time and Magnolia

The plants are first mentioned when the construction representative tries to convince Lin Ch'ing-ho to remove it. According to Booth's description of rhetoric, the beginning of the story is a way to frame the mind and manipulates the mood of the readers.¹³ Tzeng begins the story with the scene of bargain between the construction company and Lin Ch'ing-ho to present change in the shape of the city, which symbolises the modernization of Taiwan. Lin Ch'ing-ho's refusal proposes a view on inflexibility to change which is caused by his mother. In the beginning, the son assumes that the trees has been planted by the mother herself and he believes that she needs them to have her magnolia business survive. The narrative mentions the trees again a few pages later to explain how it contributes to the transformation of the family's situation. The economic situation has improved. Being a mother who raised her children by selling flowers is viewed as challenging from Lin Ch'ing-ho's point of view. Lin Ch'ing-ho is reminded of the earlier time when he and his elder sister assisted their mother in selling the flowers. The railway station is described to have more pedicabs than taxicabs during his childhood. The technological environment from back then until the current time in the story illustrates that the family as well as Taiwan has

¹³ Ibid., 201.

undergone significant changes. The family's income has improved over time and Lin Ch'ing-ho's mother managed to marry off the elder sister and obtain him a wife.

With the economic improvement, the mother refuses to stop the magnolia flower business. It suggests that she does not want to be a burden to the family. The narration reports that for her, to sell flowers is viewed the same way as people going to temples. She carries the same mind as those people when selling flowers.¹⁴ People who visit temples pray for good fortune and better future. But for the mother, selling flowers follows the same intention. The only exception is that she is active in her demand, whereas the people going to the temple are regarded as passive. It is also a suggestion from the part of Tzeng Ch'ing-wen to illustrate how traditional Taiwanese people still are, as they still rely on traditional customs to hope for a better future. It also proposes a view on activeness and passiveness between modern and traditional people. For the mother, because she is forced to find herself outside of conformity, she comes to accept the lifestyle that requires activeness. According to Mary Wollstonecraft, women are expected to be passive and if a woman becomes active – meaning that she is a pursuer in life – she would be seen as masculine.¹⁵ Her argument is that passivity is not necessarily naturally feminine or that activeness is naturally masculine. Passivity and activeness are nurtured, this is why some women choose to strive for economic independence or further knowledge, while others prefer to stay at

¹⁴ Tzeng, *Magnolia*, 10.

¹⁵ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (Auckland, NZ: Floating Press, 2010), 22.

home and assume the role that they are traditionally assigned. In the case of Lin Ch'ing-ho's mother, she knows that if she does not turn herself to activeness, the family would find itself in a poor condition. The mother needed to take over the fatherly – masculine – role of ensuring the economic livelihood of the family. Hence, one can see that she could have been forced into this path of economic independence, yet after her family became well-off, she still continues to maintain her business, which indicates that she is a person who is naturally, like Wollstonecraft described, a pursuer. If the mother were to follow other people by going to the temple every day to pray instead of selling flowers, Lin Ch'ing-ho would not have a comfortable life in the present time.

The place where the mother sells magnolia flowers is the other aspect of the story that illustrates changes in Taiwan. In the current situation of the story, the railway station is now packed with taxicabs driving to many places in Taiwan. The space is described to be filled with young people and crowds are moving in a fast pace. Through Lin Ch'ing-ho's perspective, the reader would sense discomfort from his part because he does not see his mother in this kind of space. She is a small grey-haired old lady with poor eyesight. Lin Ch'ing-ho cannot see how his mother can sustain her business in such a cold, young and fast-paced world. One would hint sympathy because he finally understands the struggle of living with a traditional and ancient lifestyle in this modern world. The mother is an active person and her ability to sell flowers in this environment demonstrates that being active is the only way to survive in this world. Being active, a person will come to understand different circumstances in the world as one will be

involved in different situations, pushing him or her to themselves in other people's shoes. This is why in the end, the mother accepts to let her son visit the father and tells him to bring flowers as a sign of letting go of the past.

It is only at the end that the reader will understand why the mother does not agree to remove the magnolia trees. In the final dialogue, the mother told Lin Ch'ing-ho that the magnolia trees has been planted by both parents and that if they were to be removed, then she has to let them go. For the last thirty years, the father has not been part of the family, and to keep the magnolia trees symbolises the mother's hope that the family might be all united one day. To let the trees be removed suggests that Lin Ch'ing-ho's mother has come to accept the reality that the father will never come back since the magnolia trees represents the harmony within the family. And the final words of the story are "Ah Ho, you can't hold on to time. Our era is gone already, [...] [d]on't you know that?"¹⁶ It means that the mother has come to accept the changes in their lives and the changes through time. Through this passage, Tzeng conveys that virtue comes from the ability to accept things for the way they are. The mother understood that she could not force something to stay and that to force it would hurt everyone, including herself.

Memories of a Dead Husband in "Ah-Ch'un's Wife"

Struggle with Conformity

In this story, the mother-in-law hopes that Ah-ch'un's wife would remain in the house and not attend the funeral, because the custom conceives that the

¹⁶ Tzeng, *Magnolia*, 16.

family's fortune depends on the woman's decision and action. The mother-in-law briefly argues that if a woman decides to remain widowed, she cannot attend the procession as it would bring bad luck to the family. In spite of the custom, Ah-ch'un's wife still asks if she could attend the funeral because she wants to mourn for him as it suggests that she is in love with her husband. She cannot accept his sudden death and she wants to accompany Ah-ch'un's body to the grave in memories of all the years that they got so well together.

It is through the mother-in-law's decision that Tzeng presents a view on how customs disregard human feelings. The mother-in-law rejects the protagonist's request saying that it is a taboo. The mother-in-law's decision to keep Ah-Ch'un's wife at home and refusing to let her send her husband during the funeral procession demonstrates the lack of humaneness within her. She is concerned about the Old Town people's opinion of the family as it seems that she does not discern the human factor that Ah-ch'un's wife loved Ah-ch'un so much and that the suddenness of the event is a shock to the protagonist. The mother-in-law follows conformity to the fullest and presents a side of lack of humaneness in traditional practices.

The mother-in-law is perceived as oppressive toward Ah-Ch'un's wife. When the mother-in-law proposes to have Ah-ch'un's wife remain widowed, she tells her: "We don't want you to remarry. You remain a good widow for Ah-ch'un and raise the child, Hung-ming. We won't treat you shabbily."¹⁷ From this statement, it reveals that the mother-in-law views Ah-ch'un's wife as free labour

¹⁷ Ibid., 47.

if she remains widow. Julia Kristeva describes Confucianism as a “woman-eater” ideology because of the oppressive nature of the teaching towards women.¹⁸ And seeing Confucianism as a form of patriarchy, one can refer to John Stuart Mill, who argues that patriarchy is a means to press women to a status that is lower than the slave’s.¹⁹ Confucianism like many forms of patriarchy views women as free labour. When a woman marries the man, she becomes in charge of the management of the household, she must take care of the children. Kristeva’s view that Confucianism is a form of “woman-eater” is because of the addition that a woman is submitted to the husband’s parents and family. In Confucianism, the woman marries the husband’s family because of the responsibility that she owes to the in-laws. Kristeva believes that women under Confucianism must submit not only to the husband but to the in-laws as well. As a result the woman can be perceived as lower than the slave. From Mill’s view, the woman finds herself lower than the slave because of all the duties she has to perform. She has no right to revolt against the husband, since she cannot quit her function as wife and she cannot claim salaries for her labour. Under Mill’s view, the woman is trapped in the bottom of the hierarchy, because she must submit to the man without complaining. In the case of Ah-ch’un’s wife, the mother-in-law proposes to stay widowed for her to continue performing her job as a daughter-in-law to the family. The protagonist is expected to fulfill filial piety to the mother-in-law. The role of Ah-ch’un’s wife inside the family proposes another view on the woman’s status

¹⁸ Julia Kristeva, *About Chinese Women*, transl. Anita Barrows (London: Marion Boyars Publishers, 1977), 75.

¹⁹ John Stuart Mill and Harriet Hardy Taylor Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (Auckland, NZ: The Floating Press, 2009), 85.

within the family. Elizabeth Croll explains that a woman is seen as a “temporary” member of the family when single, since the parents would expect her to be married when grown up, and she would be seen as a “stranger” once married into the husband’s family, since she has to behave as if she belongs to the family despite the difference determined through blood relationship.²⁰

To ask Ah-ch’un’s wife if she desires to remarry suggests that women in modern Taiwan can have more choices on their fate, yet to let her have such choice can also present that because she is not the daughter of the family, the mother-in-law cannot limit her to everything. Being conform to traditions, the mother-in-law hopes to continue see Ah-ch’un’s wife as her daughter-in-law and wished to see her grandchild grow up with his mother as to preserve the image of a harmonious family.

The struggle to conform to customs is what Tzeng criticises in the story. For Ah-ch’un’s wife, to lose her husband outweighs the town people’s opinion of the family. On the day of the funeral procession, the wife is forbidden from attending the event. She could not bear the idea that she is not allowed to send her husband to his grave. And the women guarding her asked her: “what will [people] say about you?”²¹ This passage demonstrates that a woman’s action under conformity will always be judged by others. Because she took the choice of remaining widowed, Ah-Ch’un’s wife must befit to people’s expectations by not attending the funeral procession. Her actions are believed to reflect the fortune of

²⁰ Elizabeth Croll, *Feminism and Socialism in China* (London, Henley and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 22.

²¹ Tzeng, *Magnolia*, 47.

the family. A woman's love for a man cannot be sacrificed for the good fortune of the family, because she is herself a human. To have a whole community judge her based on that suggests that the woman is not seen as a human beings with feelings, but rather a being that carries burden for the family.

Ah-ch'un's wife challenges custom practices and proves it to lack of humaneness. When the sound of the gong marking the beginning of the procession is heard, Ah-ch'un's wife ceased to struggle with the guards. The silence that the narration describes is uncomfortable, since the reader can feel that the protagonist is struggling between her own feelings and her obligations to submit to traditions. She managed to escape attend the event. Her unexpected arrival could not be stopped as she said: "If you won't let me see him go into the grave, I will die here and you can bury us together."²² This statement presents how much she could not accept the tradition of mourning away from the husband when the woman chose to remain widowed. Because of the threatening condition that Ah-ch'un's wife gives, no one can tell whether what she does would be "boded ill or not."²³ This is because everyone is surprised to see how Ah-ch'un's wife expressed refusal to mourn away from her husband. People could not be sure whether it is a good or bad thing, but it surely put the tradition in question as the wife openly contested the tradition. It showed other people that her feelings for Ah-ch'un were more valuable than following an old tradition.

²² Ibid., 48.

²³ Ibid.

The mother-in-law is initially perceived as a benevolent person but with the course of the event, it is revealed that she is not as benevolent as Ah-ch'un's wife thought. Words about Ah-ch'un's wife's action circulated and the mother-in-law was "chagrined."²⁴ It indicates that the mother-in-law was largely concerned with her reputation outside of the household. She has internalised Ah-ch'un's wife's behaviour on the day of the funeral and made it her own matter. The mother-in-law could not accept the fact that Ah-ch'un's wife has opposed to traditions and could not accept her reasons for breaking traditions. The mother-in-law did not understand the feeling of love that Ah-ch'un's wife experienced. Hence, she could not understand the motivation for the daughter-in-law to behave against customs. As a result, she became repulsive of Ah-ch'un's wife's actions and judged that it would project a bad image of the family, and seemingly her own as well. It is from this moment that Ah-ch'un's wife finally discovered the nature of her mother-in-law. The respect that the protagonist had for her has turned into a form of hatred. The mother-in-law has then become a petty person; she has lost virtue to Ah-ch'un's wife's eyes. The mother-in-law lacks humaneness to understand what her daughter-in-law could feel at the moment of losing her husband, and the mother-in-law was shaming her for bringing a bad image of the family. The protagonist came to realise that there was no consistency within the mother-in-law because she cared too much about what the community said and thought that Ah-ch'un's wife's action was a disgrace to the family. She shifted her attention from her role as a mother-in-law to an observer of the family's reputation. Hence, she expelled the protagonist from the Lin family,

²⁴ Ibid., 49.

stealing away her ornaments – that has been given by Ah-ch'un – and taking away the six-year-old Hung-ming, claiming that “Hung-ming is the Lins' flesh and blood; he is the Lins' only heir. How can [the Lins] hand him over to a woman who no longer belongs to the Lin family?”²⁵ Thus the mother-in-law took away Ah-ch'un's wife's right to be a mother. The mother-in-law has lost her humaneness by not apprehending the protagonist's suffering of losing a husband that she loved and by taking away all her belongings.

Ah-ch'un's wife has been forced to take a life that is described as different from conformity. Because of the mother-in-law's lack of virtue, conformity is broken. The mother-in-law has allowed the community's judgment to take over the harmony within the family and failed to protect or, at least, understand her daughter-in-law. She gave up on the virtue of consistency as she did not ensure and preserve harmony in the household. She behaved based on her selfish agenda, which was to maintain a good reputation within the community.

Living the Past

Tzeng's strategy to start the story with the community's eyes is a source of a gossip, it proposes a view on how people in Old Town were framed within traditions. The story begins with how people are curious to see Ah-ch'un's wife and to observe what she has become more than twenty years after her husband's death and her expulsion from the Lins'. Tzeng's description of the community's curiosity presents to the reader a first impression on Ah-ch'un's wife. Meir

²⁵ Ibid., 49.

Steinberg explains that a character's personality is "devised" rather than "derived."²⁶ Hence, it is from the character's first impression in the story that reader will base his opinion on the course of the events. It also suggests to the readers that what the plot will be is mainly a hearsay story of Ah-ch'un's wife. Ah-ch'un's wife's presence in the Old Town informs the reader that she is not an ordinary person. She is described as "unenthusiastic about meeting many Old Town people."²⁷ This passage implies that those people must have had a great impact on her life.

The protagonist's encounter with the pictures of Ah-Ch'un and her mother-in-law in the Lins' residence brings her back in time. Whether it is the picture of Ah-ch'un or the picture of the mother-in-law, both brings up feelings to the protagonist since she reacts to them. The pictures hint that those two characters are the ones who have changed the living experience of Ah-ch'un's wife. Ah-ch'un's picture brings her back to the memories from twenty years ago. The man in the picture is described as the one unchanging because he only belonged to the past, a past that tastes nostalgia. The protagonist feels peace as she gazes at it, which signifies that the picture evokes good memories from her and implies that she no longer holds grudge against her deceased husband for rescuing a stranger. In contrast, the picture of the mother-in-law brings out a feeling of agitation. Ah-Ch'un's wife still feels the suffering that the mother-in-law has caused her and she is unable to fully accept the course of events. Hung-

²⁶ Meir Sternberg, *Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 95-96.

²⁷ Tzeng, *Magnolia*, 44.

ming can sense the discomfort within his mother and asks her if the picture should be removed. She replies that there is no reason for things to be changed. It suggests that she has no intention to relate with the mother-in-law's picture and the house. From the beginning until Ah-ch'un's wife's entrance in the Lin house, the narrative voice seems to have altered. In the beginning, the focus is on the attention that the Old Town people paid to the protagonist. Upon her entrance in the house, the focus narrows to the feelings of the protagonist. The shift of the narrative voice brings the readers to the understanding of Ah-ch'un's wife's living circumstance, it indicates that her life is not only based on her choice, but it has been framed by the community around her.

Ah-ch'un's wife is described to be "afraid of people in Old Town."²⁸ This fear of those people suggests that she is marked by the events in the past which is generated by them. The mother-in-law is concerned with the town people's judgment of the family. Tzeng does not mention this until after presenting the past story about Ah-ch'un's wife. To mention it at the end reveals to the reader that her suffering is not only caused by the mother-in-law, but it is also caused by the community. Although the impact of the community is not direct, the mother-in-law is subject to the Old Town people's observation, and she attempted to discipline Ah-ch'un's wife to have her fit in the community's expectation. This can be strongly associated with Michel Foucault's definition of discipline through surveillance.

²⁸ Ibid., 52.

Discipline according to Michel Foucault is the power exercised on a body to make it more obedient than useful.²⁹ An example would be that the society expects women to behave gently and lowly, if the woman were obedient, then she would have disciplined herself to satisfy to the expectations. However she would have not contributed to a development. She would be a person who only transmits conformity to her surroundings. Women in the past were extremely obedient, because they lacked agency. They subconsciously made themselves subject to the patriarchal system. They did not experience oppression unless they behaved against discipline and break conformity.

As an aspect of Confucian relationship between the mother- and daughter-in-law, the mother-in-law is oppressed by the community and the daughter-in-law becomes directly discriminated by the former. Ah-ch'un's wife resents the mother-in-law, because the latter has lost virtue due to communal judgment. Ah-ch'un's wife is perceived as disobedient as she refused to submit herself to the custom. She wished to remain widowed while maintaining her right to attend the funeral. To her, the fear of an ill-boding fate could not be equated with the feeling of losing someone with whom she is deeply in love. It is because the town people could not accept and could not apprehend her behaviour; hence, they conceived their prejudice based on her anti-conformist action. The mother-in-law blinded by her desire to uphold a righteous reputation was under the influence of the community. She then submitted to the discipline, thus the community exercised the power over the protagonist indirectly through the mother-in-law.

²⁹ Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Édition Gallimard, 1975), 139-140.

Because she is an indirect victim of the community's judgment, Ah-ch'un's wife became defined by their oppression. Her action to attend Ah-ch'un's funeral would traditionally indicate her remarriage. Yet, the protagonist was certain that she did not have any intention to remarry at that time. She yearned to prove that her intention to send Ah-ch'un to his grave should not be interpreted as a relinquishment of her widowhood. In fact, it is to prove that she really loved and cared about him. Hence, because of the community's judgment, the protagonist lived the next twenty years of her life dedicated to the two people that she could no longer be with: her deceased husband and her inaccessible son. This commitment shows that she did not want to betray the commitment to remain widowed and wished to respect her love for Ah-ch'un from attending his funeral by going against customs.

The protagonist refused to submit to her parents' encouragement to remarry. This explains why she discouraged her colleague Teacher Ho 何老師 to pursue her in spite of her reciprocal interest. She simply wanted to remain loyal to her word, not because the mother-in-law called her a "jezebel."³⁰ The decision to not remarry is a result motivated and defined by Ah-ch'un's wife herself and not by the mother-in-law or anyone.

Conclusion

In "Magnolia" and "Ah-Ch'un's Wife" neither protagonists are known by their names even if they are the ones who are the center of the story. They are

³⁰ Tzeng, *Magnolia*, 50.

defined by their past. Thomas Docherty explains that the name of a character allows the readers to come up with a “description or ascription of qualities of the character,” and it will help the reader determine whether the writer has satisfied the reader’s expectations or not.³¹ In both stories, the reader would expect the protagonists to be generic mothers and wives because of their lack of names. They are referred by their son or husband, which describes their responsibility toward that person. It is the men who defined these women through their names; it keeps them under Confucian conformity because these women were not able to step out of traditions and hold a separate identity. They were unable because the community prevented them from doing so by denying their independent identity. These women are nameless and it does not seem to matter in the context of the story; it rather gives another perspective on the story.

Whether modern or traditional, the community is depicted as cold and heartless. The community sets surveillance by imposing custom and patterns. Members feel obliged to submit to the custom or to follow patterns in fear of the judgment from the counterparts. Those who decide not to submit are isolated and excluded from the environment regardless of the human factors such as human feelings or health conditions.

Lin Ch’ing-ho’s mother and Ah-ch’un’s wife are unable to escape the past. They are only known as “Mother” or “Ah-ch’un’s wife” in the stories and one expects them to fulfill their traditional role of a mother or wife since they are

³¹ Thomas Docherty, *Reading (Absent) Character: Towards a Theory of Characterization in Fiction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 46.

nameless. In other words, both characters are generic figures representing all mothers and wives in a traditional community, having no independent identity other than the one characterised by their motherly and wifely role. Both characters are the representative of virtue through their names. They are both consistent to their familial role and they are loyal to their husbands.

In “Magnolia,” there is a scene where Lin Ch’ing-ho is reflecting upon the presence of policemen close to his mother’s workplace. He is worried that his mother would be caught for doing illegal business as he sees how fruit and vegetable vendors are running. Through his eyes, the reader would feel chaos, because Lin Ch’ing-ho is disturbed by the thought that his mother, who is an old humble flower seller, might be involved in this kind of business and get caught by authorities. This is the moment that Lin Ch’ing-ho understands that his mother is standing alone in front of the coldness of the world.

In “Ah-ch’un’s Wife,” as mentioned earlier she fears the community. It is the community’s opinion that drove the mother-in-law to expel her from the household. And the community being very traditional would not understand her actions as a human who has loved; it only cares about what she has done and not what she has felt.

Tzeng proposes to look toward modernity because of its dislocation of superstitions, it is more humane at times when compared to stubborn customs. Because traditions are strong in Taiwan at the period of those stories, Tzeng presents the paradox of customs. Customs serve to keep people in a harmonious

state, yet it can be damaging if one person decides to go against the tradition, responding to his own emotional baggage rather than fulfilling the cultural responsibility. Its practice is only accepted because of circumstances and it is not based on human feelings.

Chapter 3 – Entering Modernity

Introduction

While traditions have people being distinct by hierarchy, modernity comes to set a balance between classes. According to Reinhard Bendix,

“[T]he modernization of societies originated in social structures marked by inequalities based on kinship ties, hereditary privilege and established (frequently monarchical) authority. By virtue of their common emphasis on a hierarchy of inherited positions, pre-modern or traditional societies have certain elements in common. The destruction of these features of the old order and the consequent rise of equality are one hallmark of modernization; hence the latter process shows certain uniformities. These changes in the social and political order were apparent before the full consequences of industrial revolution were understood.”¹

By trying to dissolve the hierarchal social structure, modernity has opened doors to changes. In the pre-modern era, the ruling class was a minority in the society and the ruled subjects composed the majority. In the Western World, the French Revolution came to promote equality amongst the classes, with the establishment of France as a republic. It was a step toward modernization by abolishing the split between the ruling and non-ruling class.

¹ Reinhard Bendix, “Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered,” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9.3 (April 1967): 293.

Although Bendix mainly presents traditionalism through socio-political structure (ruling vs. non-ruling), the hierarchy is translated in gender distribution. Men in Confucianism are placed above women according to the Three Obediences; women must obey to their father when unmarried, the husband when married, and the son when widowed. The event that came to modernize Confucianism was the May Fourth Movement that occurred in 1919. Although the movement was mainly anti-imperial, it has also reframed the Confucian structure between men and women. According to Teng Ying-Ch'ao, men and women were gathered on an equal ground because of the growth of nationalism.² Both men and women desired to achieve the same goal which was to build up the nation. Women were accepted as contributing individuals not only at home but also in the public domain since men understood that women were affected by the changes in the public domain despite their inaccessibility. They were then perceived as people needed in the public environment to provide support to men who were fighting for equality among classes. Men from lower class were oppressed by the government and they needed to mobilise enough people to succeed in reversing the authority's power. Some women understood that they were oppressed and some other rose by themselves being educated and conscious enough of the social problem. Because some women mobilised, they were granted more rights; however they could not reverse male domination. Sharon Sievers explains that the May Fourth Movement contributed to giving women more rights and freedom, but it did not help women significantly in improving their condition because the

² Teng Ying-ch'ao, "Remembrances of May Fourth Movement," *Chinese Women: Through Chinese Eyes*, ed. by Li Yü-ning (Armonk, and London: M.E. Sharpe, 1992), 151-152.

familial structure has remained the same even after the event.³ Men are still holding the position of the ruler within the family and based on traditional structures and teachings, men will tend to act and decide for men's interest rather than reflecting on the account of people in general, which also includes women.⁴

In Tzeng's story "The Woman Taxi Driver" (女司機) and "The Huge Shadow" (龐大的影子), the protagonists are faced with the coldness that modernity is bringing to them. Tzeng Ching-wen's voice as the author of the story implies that modernity is not necessarily right to replace traditions since women are still oppressed. In "The Woman Taxi Driver," Hsiu-chen 秀貞 who was a female taxi driver gets involved in a car accident. The male taxi driver who rear-ended her taxicab accuses her for being careless. Knowing that she did not do anything wrong, Hsiu-chen speaks as vulgarly as the man to assert that she is not the one at fault. She knows that the male driver is trying to take advantage of her as woman.

In "The Huge Shadow," Pai Yu-shan 白玉珊 faces the arrival of her former pursuer Hsu Chi-min 許濟民. She admits his success considering that he attended one of the most prestigious universities in Taiwan and that he was able to upgrade his working position within a very short period of time. However the protagonist is repelled by his devious personality and his ability to repudiate people around him. Modernity allowed Hsu Chi-min to leave his initial identity as a son of farmers to the son-in-law of the Chairman of a large company. He went

³ Siever, 197.

⁴ Ibid.

from a “nobody” to someone who has influences in a company with more than a thousand employees by coming back to the company two years later as the Managing Director – the second most influential person in the company. In both stories, the protagonists are set in a contemporary context, where they are dominated by men. Men are still presented as the bearer of authority, yet those men, from Tzeng’s depiction, are not virtuous people, they used new opportunities to rise above women.

In “The Woman Taxi Driver” and “The Huge Shadow,” those women face the lack of humaneness that men have brought to them even if they were the ones who gave them the opportunities to raise their status. According to John Foran, modernity is brought by revolution and it tries to bring novelty and development in history; those changes happen with economic crises and the dissatisfaction with the political situations.⁵ In those two stories, the protagonists are working women. In the case of Hsiu-chen, she is forced to work to afford an acceptable lifestyle and provide good education to her daughter after being abandoned by her husband. Hsiu-chen is persistent because not all women would choose to work in this kind of male-dominating working environment. This requires a lot of effort to make herself a place in this industry since she faces discrimination from men by judging her to be less competent and weaker than men. Simone de Beauvoir explains that women are only assigned low-skilled and low-paid jobs to keep them within the

⁵ John Foran, David Lane and Andreja Zivkovic, “Revolution in the making of the modern world,” in *Revolution in the Making of the Modern World: Social identities, globalization and modernity*, ed. Foran et al. (Routledge, 2008), 1-3.

patriarchal plan, which is to have them married and take care of the family.⁶ Hsiu-chen's job suggests that contemporary women are not part of that era, that there have been some improvement since they can perform the same job as men. In "The Huge Shadow," Pai Yu-shan sees that there are options to access to a prestigious lifestyle even if one is from a humble background. She notices that Hsu Chi-min's choice to an unvirtuous path is the reality that modernity presents, since one cannot quickly succeed by working his way up the ladder. This is the unwanted price of a full-fledged modernity in Taiwan.

This chapter will analyze how modernity came to affect the lives of Hsiu-chen and Pai Yu-shan, since both protagonists work in a modernized environment of Taiwan. In "The Woman Taxi Driver," the protagonist struggles with her duty as a mother and worker. As a taxi driver, the woman is discriminated for her gender as it is an uncommon job for women; as a mother, she must preserve a good image for her daughter who is attending a prestigious high school, which suggests that most of the students are from a well-disposed background. In "The Huge Shadow," Pai Yu-shan is confronted with the lack of virtue that Hsu Chi-min presented. As a devoted worker, the protagonist wants to assure the wellness of the company. She feels that the whole environment at her workplace has changed ever since Hsu Chi-min's comeback, as she is skeptical of his malicious presence.

⁶ De Beauvoir, 184.

Being “The Woman Taxi Driver”

The Taxi Driver

The story begins with Hsiu-chen driving around her daughter’s school to take a look as part of a routine. Being a taxi driver gives her some freedom to drive wherever she wants when there are no customers, and, most of the time, she would circulate around her daughter’s school wondering what she is doing. Hsiu-chen is described as a swift and careful driver as she has been able to promptly brake her car on time when seeing that the vehicle in front of her stopped abruptly. However, despite her carefulness with the vehicle to her front, she feels a shock and she knows that she has entered in a car accident, being rear-ended by another vehicle in the back. The first word that the protagonist hears after exiting her car is “bitch,”⁷ coming from an angry male taxi driver. From the circumstances of the accident, it is the male driver who is at fault since he rushed towards Hsiu-chen’s car, yet his behaviour implies that it is the woman’s fault. The man’s assertion of fault on the protagonist suggests that he does not want to take responsibility in the accident that he caused. By insisting the cause of the accident on Hsiu-chen, the male driver displays aggressiveness to show his dominance in the situation. He would be seen as abusing his male authority, ascribing the cause of accident to the woman’s identity since he falsely accuses Hsiu-chen’s skills.

⁷ Tzeng, *Magnolia*, 56.

Hsiu-chen replies back to him as vulgarly by calling him “son of a bitch.”⁸ She then embroils with the male driver in a verbal fight arguing who must pay the damages of the accident. While the male taxi driver attempts to escape the scene, Hsiu-chen extends her arm to grab his collar. She is depicted to have a choking voice and trembling hands,⁹ which indicates that she cannot accept the fact that she is falsely accused for something that she did not do. She knows that she is not the one at fault. Her aggressiveness is expressed to claim justice. In this passage,

“Did he think that by berating her first, he would not have to pay for the accident? If she had not retorted, might not others have thought she was in the wrong?”¹⁰

Hsiu-chen inexplicitly contests aggressiveness in the taxicab industry. Each driver tries to save himself from defraying additional fees since to make a living is already a challenge. For that reason, some may use force to frighten and to threaten a victim in order to reduce and possibly discharge from the cost of the damage. This is why the male taxi driver pre-emptively accused the protagonist wrongly. Looking from a perspective of integrity, it would be unfair for a victim to pay for casualties that he or she is not held responsible. Thus, the victimised individual must refute the case, and often time force and aggressiveness will be required to counter the culprit’s threat. Thus, Hsiu-chen resorts to aggressiveness to claim justice as she assumes that silence would dispose consent to the situation. It also suggests that in the taxicab industry, aggressiveness is commonly

⁸ Ibid., 57.

⁹ Ibid., 58.

¹⁰ Ibid., 63.

employed to settle one's own problem. Hence, regardless whether one is a man or a woman, the taxicab driver will have to adopt such vulgar and contentious image in order to maintain his or her space within this competitive business. However, looking from a cultural perspective, for a woman to behave aggressively is seen as shameful, since she does not fit in the expectation of a woman traditionally being gracious, soft and submissive. Hsiu-chen knows that being a female taxi driver is not easy because of the cultural and ideological discrimination that men have toward women. It is uncommon to see women driving a taxi because it is a job that puts their safety at stake, whether it is the safety on the road or the safety brought by the behaviour of the customer.

Hsiu-chen explicitly tells herself that "it [is] not easy to operate a taxicab, especially for women..."¹¹ in a later part of the story. It suggests that there exists discrimination of women by men, and women's discrimination serves to argue male dominance in this sector of job. This is also the voice of the writer. Wayne C. Booth explains that a writer cannot be fully objective because neutrality is difficult to maintain.¹² The writer cannot always directly convey his values in the story. He has to resort to the implied author to project the intention of the story. The implied author in the story proposes that the working environment for female taxi drivers is not well developed. Even if other jobs were to no avail and that being a taxi driver is the only option, Hsiu-chen should be seen as a persistent character since she manages to survive in this male-dominant industry.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Booth, 69.

The protagonist thinks to herself that it is hard to be “reasonable” because the world is unjust. When the male taxi driver sees the insistence that Hsiu-chen projects, he gives her the money that they are arguing over and curses her to “buy medicine.”¹³ A man who has lost a fight against a woman is socially seen as a weakling, because men are traditionally conceptualised to be stronger and more authoritative than women. The man execrates Hsiu-chen to “buy medicine” as a way to justify his submission to her violence and to curse her. His words signify that the protagonist is not an ordinary woman; this is why he lost the argument. Hsiu-chen internally laughs at him, judging him to behave weakly. To wrongly accuse her has made her feel that men are indeed not to be trusted and are not always virtuous. Tzeng’s presentation of the character as aggressive and insistent at the beginning makes it difficult for the reader to see her as a calm and soft person after the event. As Hsiu-chen is aware that there are people watching the scene and she is aware of her image as anti-conformist to the traditional image of women.

Hsiu-chen does not think that being a woman and making money through this life of taxi driver is easy, because she wants to be a good worker and as well as a good mother. Despite the presentation of Hsiu-chen as a female taxi driver, she cannot escape from her motherly role to her daughter Hsueh-hua 雪花. Her role as a female taxi driver appears to be shameful to her daughter, who is suspected to be upset against her mother after witnessing the conflict between the two taxi drivers. Neither is she recognised for her virtue because she falls in the

¹³ Tzeng, *Magnolia*, 58.

group of uncommon and anti-conformist woman. As a taxi driver, the protagonist has to behave actively and aggressively, since it is the way to make a living.

As a woman, Hsiu-chen is expected to be passive, to let the man have his reasons. Eva K.W. Man explains that when a woman is placed under the individual scope, she becomes alienated; a woman's relationship is traditionally limited to the others and not the self.¹⁴ When a woman enters the labour market, she is thought to be a person working through independence. She becomes alienated because of her inability to suit to her original job as a wife or mother. Hsiu-chen is a working woman, and she devotes her life to her daughter, but no one seems to understand that, not even her daughter at the beginning. As a woman taxi driver, the protagonist faces oppression from men, and she fears the opinion from at least another woman – her daughter – because she is not sympathised for her motives for working.

The Mother Hen

As part of the mother's nature, Hsiu-chen is tempted to check on her daughter whenever she passes by her daughter's school. To drive around her daughter's school also gives her a feeling of pride, because she remembers that only three students of her daughter's previous class are selected to attend the school and her daughter is among them. Seeing that her daughter is attending City Girl's High School (市立女子高級中學) yields pride to her, because this school

¹⁴ Eva K.W. Man, "The Relation of "Self" and "Others" in the Confucian traditions and its Implications to Global Feminisms and Public Philosophies," in *Contemporary Asian Modernities: Transnationality, Interculturality, and Hybridity*, ed. Eva Kit-Wah Man and Yiu-Wai Chu (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang AG International Academic Publishers, 2010), 232.

is known for all the successful women being part of the alumni in the past. To have her daughter attend the school gives hope that the daughter can eventually become equally successful in the future. However, her pride cannot be expressed beyond her daughter's attendance to the school.

Hsiu-chen fears to be seen and that people discover that she is Hsueh-hua's mother. Being a taxi driver is not considered a prestigious job and having a mother that works indicates that the familial situation is not well-disposed. Someone who has the ability to send his or her daughter to a good high school is expected to be well-off so that she can be elevated through her educational framing. Hsiu-chen feels shameful to know that she cannot satisfy her daughter based on that condition because she is a working woman, and they live in a poor environment when compared to the parents' of Hsueh-hua's classmates. Her feeling of shame derives from her inability to be equal to the parents of the other students, because it is an establishment attended by people of good background. She is anxious that her daughter and her daughter's classmates might have witnessed the quarrel scene, which suggests that she does not feel as an equal because of the family's economic environment and the family's structure. She fears to have the family situation be discovered, which would place her daughter in embarrassment. But to her dismay, she suspects that the girl school's students, including her daughter, might have watched the event occurring.

The protagonist feels as if she has betrayed her daughter, since she suspects that her daughter has witnessed the incident, and she wishes to be forgiven for what she has done. Hsiu-chen imagines that Hsueh-hua is ashamed to

have a mother as a taxi driver. She believes that it would have made her daughter feel degraded when compared to other students of her school. Those who are from a well-disposed family are likely to have a mother to stay at home and a father to earn income. When Hsiu-chen suspects to be perceived after quarrelling with the male taxi driver, she feels that she might have exposed her family background to her daughter's classmates as she notices differences in her daughter's behaviour later that evening. Although she still feels the anger from her job, she knows that she has to assume her duty as a mother. Hsiu-chen tries to proceed like usual. She forces herself to speak softly because she usually speaks in this way with Hsueh-hua. However, she fears that her daughter still is troubled by her behaviour during the scene, seeing her as an aggressive and vulgar taxi driver. Hsiu-chen realises that she might have lost the recognition as Hsueh-hua's mother, because of her daughter's refusal to speak with her.

The silence between the mother and the daughter insinuates that these two women are pressured by one another. Hsiu-chen supposes that her image as mother could be reflexive on her daughter. If her vulgar behaviour has been witnessed by her daughter's classmates, then it might have caused her daughter's discrimination, since Hsueh-hua's attendance to a prestigious school would entail that many of her classmates are from a privileged background. Hsiu-chen feels at fault for causing her daughter's worries. Yet, she knows that if she had not defended herself during the incident, she would have left the falsities take over her righteousness.

Hsiu-chen goes to her daughter's room door, and attempts to call her out by knocking the door twice, but she receives no response. The silence from her daughter delivers to the protagonist a feeling a fear. That day "[Hsiu-chen seems] to be afraid of Hsueh-hua,"¹⁵ because she realises that she might have lost the support from her daughter, who is thought to be the only person who would sympathise with her. Her fear is generated by her daughter's lack of understanding that she needs to carry characteristics of a taxi driver in order to make a living and that that without behaving aggressively, she would have not been able to justly have the damage paid.

Tzeng interestingly uses "Why?" in this context to demonstrate that a human identity is complex and broad. The narrative of the story contains many questions. They are intertwined between dialogues and the narrative, making it difficult for the reader to localise the narrative voice and the character's thoughts. Hsiu-chen perceives herself as a woman and a taxi driver; thus, she questions her role as a woman and her identity as a taxi driver. The question "Why?"¹⁶ is opened to Hsiu-chen's many facets. "Why?" leads to many interpretations, whether it be her role as a worker, a woman or a mother. As a worker, she might ask why she has to deal with such difficult environment and why the accident has to happen. As a woman, she might ask why the world is unfair to women who need to work to get money and why she easily is judged by her spontaneous anti-conformist behaviour rather than analysing the situation. As a mother, she might ask why her daughter could not have a bit of understanding of her situation. A

¹⁵ Tzeng, *Magnolia*, 61.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

human itself contains many identities and each identity leads to different burdens and expectations. At times, burdens and expectations can become conflicting with one another, which eventually lead one identity to be judged as anti-conformist. As for the other questions, they are asked by Hsiu-chen as a woman. She questions why things are not going the way she expects and how that the life as a woman is unfair to her. The differences between questions asked in the dialogues and questions reported from the narration sets the readers in different temporal environment. According to Gérard Genette, a narrative that reports on a conversation without adding anything can distort the duration of the temporal space in the story.¹⁷ A dialogue is spontaneous and gives the reader what they read. The reported conversation omits the silence and does not clarify the speed at which the character expresses itself. The narrative structure contains many questions that deal with Hsiu-chen's different facets either as a woman, a taxi driver and a mother. They are questions that keep coming back to ponder on her virtue and her responsibility. It is because of the indirectness that the reader would feel the permanent isolation from the character because there is no temporal space or assigned speed to the text.

Hsiu-chen's fear of Hsueh-hua is related to the past. Ever since the abandonment by her husband, Hsiu-chen has thrown away their wedding pictures. The picture that brings her back to the past in the current moment of storyline is a picture of her in younger years with hairs on her scalp. It directs her to the past thinking back on the abandonment and then fearing all the men who have

¹⁷ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, transl. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 87.

confronted her identity as a woman. There are three men who have put her motherhood in question. The first one is her husband Ah-fu 阿福 who has abandoned her. A woman who has been abandoned by her husband could see her child in two ways. She could either see the child as a burden or a bearer of security. A woman would see her own child as a burden when she faces economic difficulties, or she perceives the child as a legacy that the man has left which would remind her of his former existence in her life. The child can also bring a sense of security to the mother, since it is the evidence of a mother's effort. After the abandonment, the protagonist initially did not regard her daughter importantly. After a few years, when Hsueh-hua has reached the age of six, the father came back to claim the child. When Hsiu-chen saw that the child chose to be with her, it concedes her a sense of security. From that moment, she became aware of her role as a mother, which made her feel needed in this world. To see Hsueh-hua turning towards her during the contest with her husband allows her to realise that all efforts she has given to her daughter is not in vain. For the male authority to have an impact, the influence has to be consistent. Ah-fu has disappeared for a long time and his sudden decision to claim the daughter is practiced to prove his patriarchal authority. Seeing that Ah-fu has lost authority supplies Hsiu-chen more confidence in being a mother.

Hsiu-chen does not fear death, because she knows that she has to fight for her and her daughter's survival. The second man who helped her build up her sense of motherhood is a customer who has threatened her with a knife and attempted to assault her sexually during a nightshift. A woman under such threat

would submit to the man's violence in order to remain alive. However, Hsiu-chen cannot afford to have her dignity taken away, because she knows that she has a responsibility towards her daughter. In the case of this aggressor, he does not care about humaneness; all he wants is to satisfy his own desire by using violence on a woman. He projects the image of a selfish being who only seeks to dominate physically and psychologically. Realising that the man is not aware of the consequences that he has driven himself into, the protagonist tells him that he either had to kill her or marry her. The options she proposed to the aggressor warns him that he has to take responsibility in his action, which is what this man has failed to do by threatening her. He has wrongly used his physical and psychological dominance – socially constructed – to aggress a woman without considering the social factors.

Although modernity has allowed Hsiu-chen to enter in this male-dominating industry, she still cannot claim her rights without resorting to aggressiveness. The third man to have caused Hsiu-chen to ponder upon motherhood is the male taxi driver at the beginning of the story. Hsiu-chen hopes that she can make money without encountering major problems and that she can have a peaceful life with her daughter. She does neither expect her identity as an aggressive and vulgar taxi driver to be a problem for Hsueh-hua, nor thought that such incident can possibly happen in front of her daughter, putting the latter in embarrassment. The man accuses her for causing the accident, which presents the man as the dominating figure in this fight, because he unreasonably judges the female driver. All these three men refers back to the earlier statement from

Sievers that men are likely the ones acting for their own interest instead of the interest for all.

It is through all the reflection upon the struggles that Tzeng insinuates that modernity only opens door to new opportunities, but it does not establish equality among people. People have to fight for it. In the male driver's eyes, Hsiu-chen was viewed as woman because his insults to the protagonist suggest that a woman does not belong to this type of workforce but rather at home. It makes Hsiu-chen trapped between her role of a mother and taxi driver.

Although protective of her daughter, Hsiu-chen is not able to protect herself. By looking at the picture that reminds her of the past, the protagonist loses her sense of security. Hence, she struggles to accept herself for who she has become. Although the person in the picture is her past self, she is not capable of overcoming judgment from others, either men or women from the present or the past. She is haunted by the rejection from the people around her. Her sensation of fear derived from her feeling of rejection. The action of breaking the glass while being submerged by all the memories represents the loss of her sense of dignity. For Hsiu-chen, to have lost her hair is in part losing a physical aspect of her femininity. Her unconscious act of breaking a glass on her head demonstrates the dissatisfaction and anger of losing this feminine feature, as she related the past with her hair through the only picture she kept of herself before the marriage.

Hsiu-chen's sense of security requires the support from her daughter. It is Hsueh-hua who brings Hsiu-chen back to her senses. Wounded to the head with

the shattered glasses, the mother tells her daughter that only taxicab drivers and surgeons are not afraid of blood. This is because both occupations are at the service of the people, yet few understand such situations. They are human beings that people forget to have feelings. In both professions, one should not fear blood because this is part of their way to save lives. Surgeons should not be afraid in order to save the lives of the patients, and it is their way of making their living; taxi drivers should not be afraid in order to fight for their survival in the industry as well as bringing a better life to their families. Then, Hsiu-chen notices that her daughter has a wound on her wrist. For a mother to see a child scar herself, it generates the feeling to the mother that she did not fulfill her responsibility to the fullest since she has caused her own child's suffering. A mother is concerned with the wellness of her child and she would yearn to create the best environment. Hsiu-chen tells her daughter that she had let her down. In response, the daughter tells her mother that she would take care of her wound in the head and that she is not angry. When a daughter proposes to take care of a mother, it is a sign that she is asking for forgiveness or that she desires to express the reciprocal love to her mother because she finally understands her mother's suffering.

Hsueh-hua understands that her mother is not only fighting to make her place in the society, but she is also doing so to save her daughter's image. Towards the end of the story, Hsueh-hua tells her mother a story of a mother hen and a hawk. The mother hen is described as a chick that feared the hawk in the past. When the time comes for her to face the hawk in order to protect her chick, she becomes fearless and confronts the hawk. The mother hen is severely

wounded and has become ugly after fighting the hawk. After telling the story Hsueh-hua cries, indicating that she finally and sincerely understands that her mother has always been fighting to protect her. This is why she tells her mother to disregard the bandage on the wrist to imply that she realises that what her mother faces is much more serious than what she experiences in keeping a conformist image among her classmates at school. This relationship between mother and daughter is optimistic toward a brighter future as Hsueh-hua understands that her fate is not necessarily related to her mother's job as a taxi driver, and that she should see her mother as a mother and not a taxi driver.

Coldness in “The Huge Shadow”

The Observer

The reader is introduced in the story with a scene of the protagonist Pai Yu-shan waiting for her boss, the Chairman, to arrive. Her feelings are directed to the introduction of Hsu Chi-min who has quit the company two years ago and at the moment of the plot he is back to assume the position of Managing Director. The narrative informs that Hsu Chi-min is not trustworthy and only seeks to upgrade his status and wealth. He is described as a very smart and competent person, yet he is disloyal. Ever since he has left the company, he changed positions in different companies to a higher position with higher salary. Knowing his background from a poor farming family, people in the company assumes that his comeback to the company is no surprise. Long before, he was a candidate to become the Chairman's son-in-law, since the Chairman has been looking for a

husband for his daughter so that he can keep the company to the lineage on condition that the son-in-law bore him a son that would carry the Chairman's last name. The narrative voice, coming from Pai Yu-shan's observation, does not welcome Hsu Chi-min's return because of what he has done to the company.

From a traditional and conformist point of view, Hsu Chi-min would have lost his masculinity and patriarchal authority. Following Pai Yu-shan's view, the narrative voice describes that Hsu Chi-min as a person who would use any kind of strategy to acquire status and wealth, regardless of the method that he has to take whether it is virtuous or not. Because of Hsu Chi-min's humble background, he would have less chance than others, who are from a richer background, to get what he desires. Thus, he is willing to give up his dignity as a man to get the prestige that he has been longing for. According to Confucian teaching, a man is expected to extend his ancestors' lineage. Hence, it is by having a progeny who can carry his name that the lineage could be extended. It is through this burden that a man can be described as filial to his ancestors. A man who is married into the family of a woman is perceived as a man who has lost virtue, because he has given up his lineage to the woman's father's lineage. This kind of practice is more common when a daughter is from a well-disposed family, and her father has no male progeny and strongly wishes to extend the lineage. Commonly the man to be married would be someone from a poor family who is willing to bestow their son. The son would then be perceived as an equivalent of the woman. Under such view, the man is perceived as a tool to the woman's family since he would usually lose power within the household due to his deprivation from extending his lineage.

The Chairman does not have any male progeny and hopes to transmit his company to a male heir. Hsu Chi-min is willing to accept the arrangement in addition to being a good candidate. In exchange, the Chairman grants him a prestigious status by becoming the Chairman's son-in-law and by giving him the position of Managing Director within the company. However because of the openness of the Chairman, he allows Hsu Chi-min to take a major part in the company. Hsu Chi-min does not seem to worry about extending lineage and fulfilling traditional expectations since he only cares about his status.

Hsu Chi-min's return to the company as a Managing Director appears alarming to Pai Yu-shan as well as many other workers for the company. Many know that he has betrayed the Chairman in the past. Now that he is the Chairman's son-in-law and has upgraded his position to the second most important person in the company, many workers worry about their own future within the company, evaluating Hsu Chi-min's devious personality. Pai Yu-shan is an Executive Assistant and it is through her that the reader has access to the history of Hsu Chi-min. Although the reader is not informed of what Hsu Chi-min did to Pai Yu-shan at the beginning, one would feel that the protagonist felt discomfort by seeing Hsu Chi-min. The arrival of the new Managing Director is also not the only thing to have brought a feeling of discomfort to the protagonist; she also notices a "frosty glance"¹⁸ from the Chairman. Having worked for him for almost three years, the protagonist seldom perceived such facial expression from her boss. Pai Yu-shan suspects that there must have been something to

¹⁸ Tzeng, *Magnolia*, 20.

puzzle the Chairman, but she does not have an answer to her question, and the only supposition that she could anticipate was the arrival of Hsu Chi-min in the company. With that conclusion, the protagonist regrets not resigning when she first learned learning about Hsu Chi-min's arrival.

Seeing that Hsu Chi-min is married to the Chairman's daughter makes the protagonist laugh, because she has always believed that women are defined by their husband.

“In times past, Pai Yu-shan had often considered that a woman's fate seemed dependent on the mate she found. You found a diplomat, and then you were a diplomat's wife; you found a mayor, and then you were a mayor's wife, even though you and the diplomat's wife had graduated in the same class and from the same school. This notion became an even stronger conviction after she had seen several classmates marry.”¹⁹

She cannot believe that such a notion could be transferred on a man. From Pai Yu-shan's perspective, Hsu Chi-min is shameless because he is willing to have himself defined by the Chairman and his daughter. Despite him giving up his dignity to the Chairman's wish, Hsu Chi-min has gained status.

Hsu Chi-min is the reflection of the profiting and disloyal youth living through modernity. Manager Ch'en is an old manager in the company and he does not have as much education when compared to the younger generation. Pai Yu-shan knows that Manager Ch'en's status as a manager is not easily gained,

¹⁹ Ibid., 29.

because he has been working for the company for so long and his current position is gained through great effort. He is the one who indirectly criticised Hsu Chi-min. He says that young people do not care about moral principles anymore, and each is concerned with their own profit – they are people who are “not grateful and worth helping.”²⁰ Pai Yu-shan is conscious of the virtue that this old manager possesses as he talks about moral principles. It is the consistency and the loyalty to the company. In the past, an employee would contribute to the growth and development of the company. Now the younger people are more motivated to work in order to serve their own interest. Hence, they do not care about the situation of the company. Manager Ch’en understands the feeling of the Chairman when hearing Hsu Chi-min’s resignation in the past. The Chairman could not accept that the young man has quit his functions based on better offers in another company. Furthermore, he could not accept that he had lost a good candidate to become his son-in-law.

The Chairman is also perceived by Pai Yu-shan as someone who has lost virtue because of his selfish desire. Hsu Chi-min’s previous resignation is a great betrayal to the Chairman since the young man has “[cut] down the tree that had given him shade.”²¹ The Chairman believed that Hsu Chi-min would give him a comfortable future since he looked like a promising candidate. But in the end, the young man gave up on the company because of salary difference and caused the Chairman to feel that all the trust he had for him was all gone. Despite the betrayal, the Chairman is still willing to have him as his son-in-law and to

²⁰ Ibid., 30.

²¹ Ibid., 19.

promote him as the Managing Director which was the second most important position in the company. Pai Yu-shan's discomfort although not directly conveyed in the narrative is expressed at the end with the dialogue with the Chairman when she tells him that he was the representative of the company towards the end of the story. To let Hsu Chi-min become of great influence in the company signifies that the Chairman has forgiven him and trusts him enough to offer him such a high position. One can view that the Chairman, being a representative of the company, has given up on the wellness of his company for his own desire to have a progeny.

Hsu Chi-min is a person who has no respect for anyone. He is first described as such when going on a date with Pai Yu-shan more than two years before his comeback. During a date to Wulai, Pai Yu-shan felt offended by Hsu Chi-min's criticism of an old farming woman leaning on him on a crowded bus. Not only did he criticise the old farm woman's action of leaning on him, he also gave her a reason for not ceding his seat. Pai Yu-shan felt upset about his action for his lack of compassion toward old people. But Hsu Chi-min asserted that ceding a seat is a way to express virtue, yet it has to be done on one's free will. By referring to virtue, he cunningly proved himself to be right in something that he did wrong. His words demonstrates that there is no need to be virtuous when one does not desire to be so, and that being virtuous is just for the sake of social protocol. He disregards the fact that his parents are farmers and that the way he treated the old lady is the right way to treat the "country folks." Through Pai Yu-shan, the narrator transmits to the reader the reluctance she feels toward this man, because he showed her his selfishness and his lack of empathy, not only to the old

woman, but to all the farming community. In response to his behaviour, the protagonist knows that she could not confront him, thus she kept the anger to herself by ending the date as quickly as possible. The other time that shows Hsu Chi-min disrespectful is when he talks about Manager Ch'en, saying that he is not good and that all the credit he receives is gained from the people working under him – in other words, he does not deserve such credit. The protagonist knows about Manager Ch'en's background, and it is needless to say that Hsu Chi-min is only a person who judges others by looking at their status, instead of their effort. The protagonist is aware that Manager Ch'en has been working for the company for a very long time and devoted a lot of energy to it. She acknowledges his effort and confirms Hsu Chi-min's arrogance and lack of acknowledgement. Manager Ch'en is used to contrast with Hsu Chi-min to prove the latter's lack of virtue as an employee, being a representative of the youth labour. As an observer, she feels that Hsu Chi-min's arrival would not be a good thing for the company.

Remaining in the Shadow

Pai Yu-shan suspects that the Chairman has put his personal desires prior to the well-being of the company. Thus, she questions the Chairman's responsibility as the head of the company. Several days after the arrival of Hsu Chi-min, the protagonist is asked to meet the Chairman. Pai Yu-shan noticed his nervousness and he senses that he is more nervous than a year ago when the Chairman was discussing about the "other matter."²² The protagonist predicts that the meeting would raise issues about her position as an executive assistant. Pai

²² Ibid., 37.

Yu-shan notices that she has become passive since the arrival of Hsu Chi-min, because she feels powerless in front of him. A worker who knows that one of the most influential people in the company has been cheating his way up to the ladder would not feel at ease. The worker would doubt on the responsibility of the employer for allowing someone to cheat. Pai Yu-shan feels uncomfortable in front of Hsu Chi-min's presence in the company, because she is aware of her inability to change things. This inability to make change happen derives from the Chairman since he is the one who appointed Hsu Chi-min to be the Managing Director. Employees would not understand why an employer would promote someone who has betrayed in the past. There is not enough evidence to prove that the Chairman has forgiven Hsu Chi-min for what he has done two years ago. The protagonist reports that the Chairman appears to behave differently from the past and that Hsu Chi-min's return to the company is seemingly the matter that has caused the coldness of the Chairman. The speculation would be that the employer takes the decision based on his own benefit rather than the general one. From Pai Yu-shan's view, the Chairman has failed to represent the company, since he has let down his power by letting Hsu Chi-min come back. Because things are happening beyond Pai Yu-shan's expectations, the protagonist decides to not take any action and chooses to observe.

The Chairman is a cunning man. He asks the protagonist to resign, who refuses to submit to his demand. She knows that she did not do anything wrong to warrant a dismissal. In a passage, it is written that "[Pai Yu-shan] had also sensed

that these powerful men seemed to know her to the bottom of her heart²³ suggesting that the board members should not have any reason to fire her. They all know that she is loyal to the company and that she cares for it. As a way to compensate her job loss, the Chairman proposes that she study abroad and that he give her some money to do so. In the real world, when a rich man offers money or valuable deals or objects to a woman, the surrounding would spontaneously imply that the man intends to exchange the valuables for the woman's loyalty, whether it is sex or marriage. For a woman to accept the offer, the community will speculate that the woman accepts the exchange. She would be considered cunning because, for centuries, women have never been able to take steps like men to become recognised for what they do. They often have to use agency to get the status that they wanted. A woman who refuses the sponsorship of a man demonstrates her economic independence and that she do not plan to submit to his authority through this monetary exchange. This decision is taken based on the woman's desire to be viewed as an equal to the man. The Chairman knows that the protagonist is a virtuous person who she cares about her job and the company. Yet he desires her physically and mentally – through marriage, as it is later revealed in the story. Hence, his proposal to have her fired and to provide her financial support – either through sponsorship or marriage – is a way to entrap Pai Yu-shan.

The protagonist's rejection of the Chairman's offer is used to illustrate the contrast between her and Hsu Chi-min. She does not want to deceive herself by having a prestigious and comfortable life. She is revealed to be a virtuous person.

²³ Ibid., 35.

For an employee to reject a privilege signifies that he or she is satisfied with the working environment, as Pai Yu-shan has stated, she is thankful to work for the Chairman yet she cannot accept his sponsorship. The rejection of a privilege, from a communal perspective, indicates that the individual does not wish to have pressure from his or her peers – in Pai Yu-shan’s case, it would be her co-workers, or feel that she must commit to her sponsor. The pressure is usually the judgment from others, commonly the description of the privileged one as greedy, profiting or devious. The protagonist remembers a year ago the Chairman has asked her for marriage, which she rejected. The Chairman could not accept her rejection and several circumstances caused Pai Yu-shan discomfort. Love affairs are not easy to manage in the workplace. To reject a marriage proposal would cause awkwardness to the proposer and proposed especially when they are working together. Although personal affairs are not related to the organisation of the workplace, they can get across and be mixed up with public matters. Hence, Pai Yu-shan submitted her resignation after the Chairman had proposed her for the first time, since the matter has become awkward. She faced the most important person in the company and she did not want to cause trouble. Her personality is contrasted with Hsu Chi-min, who only cares about his own wellness and his status. He is aware that his return does not please many employees, but he seems to not worry about the atmosphere that he has created. Furthermore, having discouraged the Chairman in the past, Hsu Chi-min does not look embarrassed to come back, which makes him devious.

Upon hearing Hsu Chi-min's return to the company, Pai Yu-shan thought of resigning, since she knew that the Chairman would lose power and control of order in the company. The company's structure will be reorganised. It also suggests that she has lost hope for the company knowing that one of the most important decision makers of the company will be an unvirtuous person. As referred in the previous chapter, "Let the ruler be a ruler, a minister a minister, a father a father, a son a son," the Chairman has lost his responsibility to be a good ruler of the company, since he cared too much about finding an heir to insure the future of his company, this is why he has accepted to let his daughter marry Hsu Chi-min. Pai Yu-shan's refusal to resign in the current state of the company is because she is contesting the dissatisfaction that her workplace has brought her: The company has failed to protect her and the Chairman has failed to represent it ever since Hsu Chi-min's arrival. It suggests that Pai Yu-shan, the Chairman and the company are all affected by Hsu Chi-min's presence.

Pai Yu-shan does not accept the Chairman's money and the latter asked her to marry him. She remembers that a year ago, he proposed to her and she felt at fault for causing instability within him. A year later, she refuses again but asks if she would have access to power in the company in the case she accepts to become his wife. The Chairman replies that she would gain status – Hsu Chi-min and the daughter-in-law would have to see her as mother-in-law and mother – and power, since she would have the right to decide for the company. She knows that she can seize the opportunity to avenge what Hsu Chi-min has done to other

people who did not deserve his treatment, but because Pai Yu-shan does not advocate those kinds of actions, she firmly refuses to accept to the offer.

Hsu Chi-min's success proves that in the modern environment of Taiwan, it is possible for a "nobody" to rise up to become a "somebody." Pai Yu-shan is aware that she can access the same kind of prestige if she accepts the proposal. She however does not want to follow the same path as Hsu Chi-min, despite being offered it. It suggests that she values her own effort and agrees to follow the conformist way to access to power and wealth, which is to work her way up the ladder even if it would require her more effort than men. Hence, following conformity is a way to preserve virtue, yet, following it can entrap one in the same place. To follow an anti-conformist method can cause unbalance in the way justice is perceived. Pai Yu-shan does not want her selfishness to put the company at stake like Hsu Chi-min does.

In the end, the huge shadow that appears behind the Chairman is related to Hsu Chi-min, because Pai Yu-shan knows that the company is doomed after his arrival, that he has already taken over many aspects of the company by marrying the Chairman's daughter and that his decisions could be influential. Pai Yu-shan knows that she would not be respected or be feared by Hsu Chi-min without her mere position as an Executive Assistant. She is only respected because she is working as a representative of the Chairman, otherwise, she cannot stand by herself. Hsu Chi-min possesses what he desires, but he knows that he has made many enemies on his way up. Therefore, he needs to get rid of those people who would prevent him from going further. Pai Yu-shan is one of those people

because he guessed that his return to the company has made her unhappy. She is not perceived as a threat but rather as a disrespectful member. Hence, continuing to act to satisfy his own interest, he is suspected to be the one who proposed to fire the protagonist.

Conclusion

The protagonists in “The Woman Taxi Driver” and “The Huge Shadow” have entered the modern life, they are both working women and they work in an environment with men. However, even if they work with men, they are not perceived as an equal. As discussed earlier, Hsiu-chen has to fight for respect. In the case of Pai Yu-shan, she is respected only because she is the executive assistant of the Chairman. Pai Yu-shan is aware that without this position, she would not have the same respect when meeting Manager Chen for instance or that Hsu Chi-min might give her a different treatment. Nevertheless, a woman can still be defined by a man. Although modernity has allowed economical flexibility to women, they are still constrained by male dominance.

According to a report written by Zhang Jinfang 張晉芬, less than half of the Taiwanese women are active in the labour market in 1993.²⁴ It demonstrates that women still depended on a source of income, and also proves that women were not entirely economically independent. Considering that both stories are

²⁴ Zhang Jinfen 張晉芬, “Mianmian cihen, keyoujueqi? – Nüxinggongzuo kunjing zhi pouxi” 綿此恨，可有絕期？ -- 女性工作困境之剖析 (Can this Continuous Hatred End?: An analysis on the Difficulty in Working Conditions for Women, in *Taiwan funü chujing baipishu: 1995 nian* 台灣婦女處境白皮書: 1995 年 (A Report on Taiwanese Women’s Situation: Year 1995), ed. by Liu Yuxiu 劉毓秀 (Taipei: Wenhua Congshu 文化叢書, 1995), 163.

written during the 1970s, those women belonged to a minority group, since the number of working women has increased year after year. The politician and feminist Annette Lü 呂秀蓮 explains that women quitting work after getting married prevents women's condition to improve.²⁵ Marriage keeps women under patriarchal force and to pursue work outside of the household would give power to women, since they do not have to resort to economic reliance on their husbands if the latter were to step on them. According to Norma Diamond, most cases of working single women have their income invested in their male siblings in order to afford higher education.²⁶ With modernity arriving in Taiwan, more women have become educated, which sets a challenge for men, considering that Taiwan was still traditional in terms of men's role in the family. Men are expected to be more educated and earn more income than women as to keep her under the patriarchal scope. The income that they receive rarely serves to invest in themselves. Other than investing on their brothers, these women's salary was often given to the parents to repay the earlier investments.²⁷ Hence, despite new opportunities offered to women, they are still bound to the conformity that women are subject to contribute to the household's organisation.

Despite their accessibility to modern lifestyle, the women in the two short stories are still bound to traditional duties. In the case of Hsiu-chen, she must perform her motherly role when at home. Although modernity allowed women to

²⁵ Annette Lü Hsiu-Lien 呂秀蓮, *Xin nüxingzhuyi* 新女性主義 (New Feminism) (Kaohsiung: Dunli Chubanshe 敦理出版社, 1986), 73.

²⁶ Norma Diamond, "Women and Industry in Taiwan," in *Modern China* 5.3 (July 1979): 318-319.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

develop their economic independence, it did not allow them to have less responsibility as a mother. Hsiu-chen is bound to her role as a mother. On the one hand, it is her choice, but on the other hand, it is because she understands that she is needed and it is out of virtue that she is committed to her role. In the case of Pai Yu-shan, she is doomed to her role as a subordinate of men at work. She is less likely able to overcome their power. Because of her fear to lose her job, she does her best to keep it and she devotes herself to the company since it is part of her to be virtuously consistent and loyal.

Conclusion – The Human Being

In this thesis, it has been discussed how women transgressed conformity, not because they desired to take a challenge, but because they were forced. Conformity is framed by traditions, creating rules to set what is “right” and “wrong” and disregards human factors. The protagonists can be confined in the past. The success in overcoming painful memories and the ability to accept the course of events have both allowed these women to prove themselves virtuous. They do not let the situation take them over because of their suffering.

Conformity has taught Tzeng Ching-wen’s protagonists to be consistent to their responsibility. These women have embraced a modern lifestyle. They can freely work and can enjoy some rights that they share in common with men. Despite new opportunities, they are constrained within the cycle of oppression, since they must still respect their role as mothers or wives. They realise that traditions and modernity are not so different in terms of letting women rise. If every member of the community follows conformity, then each member can feel empowered. However, this feeling of empowerment is cancelled out when one decides to break conformity; instead it will limit everyone’s rights.

Tzeng Ching-wen’s stories do not tell whether traditions or modernity is better. Each presents the reality that human fate is mainly controlled by human beings themselves, since one would know what kind of consequence would follow his or her actions. Customs are practiced to preserve traditions and modernity is embraced to welcome novelty. However all those flexibilities and

inflexibilities will depend on the authoritative figure, which is usually the male figure, since modernity is still male-controlled. Hence, women's rights are still suppressed since men would decide based on their own interest.

Tzeng demonstrated through the four short stories analysed in this thesis the complexity of human beings. He shows that customs cannot be fully practiced and should be changed over time. People persist on keeping traditions because they ceased to ask questions. Eric Hobsbawm explains that traditions are invented and customs are invariants. Changes in customs would affect traditions and traditions have been strongly associated with the past.¹ Tzeng does not present modernity as a solution to replace traditions since it comes with a price. People are revealed to be selfish with modern opportunities, each cares about their own desire and would step on the counterparts to gain what they want. In most cases, it is the man who would step on the woman, since he has the upper hand of the situation. He is the one forging traditions and as well as the one who opens door to opportunities.

Traditions shape people's nature through conformity, which is imposed based on the simplistic view of human beings – it assumes that the feminine is submissive and passive, whereas the masculine is dominant and active by nature. Despite its effort to nurture human's behaviour, conformity is not always respected. The truth is that human beings are much more complex than how conformity defines. Traditional teachings prevent people from asking questions,

¹ Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 2-4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

and answers provided often threaten people with the responsibility that they need to fulfill. Because conformity teaches people to care for one another, people will blindly submit to the belief in order to preserve harmony, obviously a comfort zone. If someone despises the practice, that person would be faulted for omitting his or her commitment to the community. Hence, the practice disregards human matters.

As for modernity, people use it to promote opportunities that have been constrained by traditions. They are free to ask questions and they can find a reason through modernity to justify their actions. Modernity is the exhibition of human complexities, since people have been framed by traditions for so long. It is through modernity that people realise that they do not have to be restrained by traditional conformity. A man does not have to take full authority to be called a man, and a woman does not have to be fully submissive to be a woman. This is how Judith Butler explains that genders take form through norms.² Norms are structured to assess whether one enters the category or not. It is more flexible and forgiving when compared with conformity, which would excommunicate an anti-conformist member. If one desires to cross over norms, genders can be allowed to intertwine with one another. Hence, norms judge, in a way, that there should not be a strict distinction between masculine and feminine. Therefore, genders are blended with one another.³

² Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004). 52.

³ *Ibid.*, 42.

Modernity is integrated to bring more equality among people, yet, it appears that it does not solve the problem. The gaps between roles, genders and times have widened instead of closing up. It does solve some problems, but only a few that traditions have never come to accept. For instance, women are now allowed to work, but the underlying conformist concept that women is better at taking care home, managing the family, and framing basic education to children still survives, since many women cannot access to a higher hierarchy in their workplace or gain an as high salary as men. In such example, women are still below men in the social, economical, political, and ideological plan. But it comes to bring up even more problems, because it reveals the real nature of human beings, complex and selfish. People claim more rights, contests even more about justice.

In “Magnolia,” it is difficult to understand why the father desires to meet Lin Ch’ing-ho after abandoning the family for 30 years. It would take a lot of courage for him to take such decision since he would have to answer many questions that he has left to the family. Although the reunion is in the present time, it brings back the pain from the past. It then leaves one question: What use to reunite and is it a necessity to do so?

In the story “Ah-ch’un’s Wife,” the mother-in-law’s decision to expel the protagonist from the household is not an easy decision. To expel her because of the gossip in town seems to be an absurd reason. The mother-in-law’s action is incompatible with her demand to Ah-ch’un’s wife to remain widowed. Then what

use is it to have the demand? She clearly has a personal agenda, since her use of “we” to propose an idea that was her own.

In “The Woman Taxi Driver,” Hsiu-chen is challenged by three men, questioning the protagonist’s position as a woman in this male-dominated world and a world that lacks justice. It appears that those men are not concerned with the common people’s interest; they care about their own desire. However, considering that those men already know that they have more agency than women, why did they still need to step on their female counterpart? What do they gain by doing so besides boosting their ego?

In “The Huge Shadow,” one should ask why the Chairman promotes Hsu Chi-min and seemingly grants the latter’s wish to fire Pai Yu-shan, who is one of his valuable workers and does not deserve such ending. One knows that he is concerned with the inheritance of the company through a progeny, which suggests that he hopes to have his company exist beyond his time. However, he seems to use Hsu Chi-min as bait to lure Pai Yu-shan to marry him, since to introduce an unvirtuous person like Hsu Chi-min was a dangerous project. Could it possibly be the Chairman’s plan?

Despite of living in the modern economic independence, these women are still falling back in the description of Confucian conformity due to the responsibility that they owe to the environment. One cannot spontaneously assert that those characters that carry the patriarchal authority in the stories are evil, because the reader is not explicitly informed of their side. However, the

protagonists also behave based on their own interest as well, although the impact is not as damaging as the patriarchal authority. These women are forced into this kind of behaviour, but in the end, they manage to preserve their virtue. Modernity has made them more conscious of their rights, choice and responsibility. Even if women are oppressed under modern structures of the society, they now have the right to contest their freedom and their perception as human beings.

Tzeng Ching-wen's work is truly about human suffering, although he narrowed down to women's suffering. In each of Tzeng Ching-wen's stories, women suffer because of the unequal treatment they receive from the patriarchal figure. One should however think in terms of the men. One should ask why one would drive another to transgress conformity if it is part of human commitment to take care of one another. Because conformity suppresses all questions, some of the stories are initiated without providing any background about the abandonment. The narratives of the stories only represent one side of the story. Hence, the reader would sympathise with the side that has been presented. It is part of human nature to sympathise with the known side, because in most cases, the narrative is subjective. The subjectivity in literature will bring the reader to the inner world of the character. In the character's inner world, one can see how parsimonious the world is and understand why the protagonist suffers because he or she needs to protect himself or herself from other people's intentions.

Tzeng's protagonists face choices, whether they want to pursue a life based on their own interests or the life based on their responsibility as mother, wife or an active member of the labour force. Jean-Paul Sartre writes that choices

allow people to claim their existence.⁴ Choice can reflect many human aspects. It could be reflected on one's responsibility or it could be decided upon one's own interest. Choice requires a human being to decide on his definition of existence, whether it revolves around themselves or another person.

⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme* (Paris: Les éditions Nagel, 1970), 15.

Works Cited

- Bendix, Reinhard. "Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered." In *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 9 No. 3 (April 1967): 292-346.
- Booth, Wayne C.. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961.
- Brown, Melissa J.. *Is Taiwan Chinese?: The Impact of Culture, Power, and Migration on Changing Identities*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004.
- Butler, Judith. *Undoing Gender*. New York and London. Routledge, 2004.
- Canadian Oxford Dictionary*. 2nd Edition. Edited by Katherine Barber. Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Chekhov, Anton. *How To Write Like Chekhov: Advice and inspiration, Straight from his own letters and work*. Translated by Lena Lencek. Da Capo Press, 2008.
- Chi, Pang-Yuan. "Taiwan Literature, 1945-1999." In *Chinese Literature in the Second Half of a Modern Century: A Critical Survey*, edited by Pang-Yuan Chi and David Der-Wei Wang, 14-30. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000.
- Croll, Elizabeth. *Feminism and Socialism in China*. London, Henley and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.
- De Beauvoir, Simone. *Le deuxième sexe, tome II: L'expérience vécue* (The Second Sex, volume II: Lived Experience). Paris: Gallimard, 1986.
- Diamond, Norma. "Women and Industry in Taiwan." In *Modern China* 5, No. 3 (July, 1979): 317-340.
- Docherty, Thomas. *Reading (Absent) Character: Towards a Theory of Characterization in Fiction*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983.
- Fetzer, Joel S. and J. Christopher Soper. *Confucianism, Democratization, and Human Rights in Taiwan*. Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2013.
- Foran, John, David Lane and Andreja Zivkovic. "Revolution in the making of the modern world." in *Revolution in the Making of the Modern World: Social identities, globalization and modernity*, edited by John Foran, David Lane and Andreja Zivkovic, 1-13. Routledge, 2008.

- Foucault, Michel. *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison). Paris: Édition Gallimard, 1975.
- Freiner, Nicole. *The Social and Gender Politics of Confucian Nationalism: Women and the Japanese Nation-State*. New York: Palgrave MacMilan, 2012.
- Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Translated by Jane E. Lewin. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980.
- Hinsch, Bret. "The Origins of Separation of the Sexes in China." In *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 123, No. 3 (July-September 2003): 595-616.
- "The Criticism of Power Women by Western Han Dynasty Portent Experts" In *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 49, No. 1(2006): 96-121.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. "Introduction: Inventing Traditions." In *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 1-14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Hu, Shih, "Women's Place in Chinese History." In *Chinese Women through Chinese Eyes*, edited by Li Yü-ning, 3-15. Armonk, and London: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1992.
- Jiang, Yi-huan. "Confucianism and East Asian public philosophy: an analysis of harmonize but not conform." In *National Taiwan University Journal* (2007).
Available online at: <http://homepage.ntu.edu.tw/~jiang/PDF/D11.pdf>
- Jiang Baochai 江寶釵 and J.B. Rollins. "Lunyingyi Zheng Qingwen xiaoshuoshuan «Yulanhua» de yuedu yu wenhuajieru" 論英譯鄭清文小說選《玉蘭花》的閱讀與文化介入(Discussion on the Reading of the English Translation of Tzeng Ching-wen's Collection of Short Stories "Magnolia" and Cultural Interventions), in *Shudejianzheng: Zheng Qingwen wenxuelunji* 樹的見證：鄭清文文學論集(Testimonies of Trees: Essay Collections on Tzeng Ching-wen, edited by Baochai Jiang and Jenn-Shann Lin, 231-238. Taipei: Rye Field Publications 麥田出版, 2007.
- Klöter, Henning. "Re-Writing Language in Taiwan." In *Re-Writing Culture in Taiwan*, edited by Fang-long Shih, Stuart Thompson and Paul-François Tremlett, 102-122. London and New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Ko, Dorothy, Jahyun Kim Haboush and Joan R. Piggott. "Introduction." In *Women and Confucian Cultures: In Premodern China, Korea, and Japan*,

- edited by Dorothy Ko, Jahyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott.
Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2003.
- Kristeva, Julia. *About Chinese Women*. Translated by Anita Barrows. London: Marion Boyars Publishers, 1977.
- Lee, Lily Xiao Hong. *The Virtue of Yin: Studies on Chinese Women*. Australia: Wild Peony, 1994.
- Li, Chenyang “The Confucian Concept of Jen and the Feminist Ethics of Care: A Comparative Study.” In *The Sage and the Second Sex: Confucianism, Ethics, and Gender*, edited by Chenyang Li, 23-42. Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 2000.
- Li Qiao 李喬, “Jiuzhende Yezishu: xu Zheng Qingwen quanji” 舊鎮的椰子樹: 序 鄭清文全集(The Coconut Tree from the Old Town: Preface to Tzeng Ching-wen’s collection). In *Zheng Qingwen 鄭清文*, edited by Jinyi Li 李進益: 155-162. Tainan: Guoli Taiwan Wenxueguan 國立台灣文學館, 2012.
- Lin, I-Fen, Noreen Goldman, Maxine Weinstein, Yu-Hsuan Lin, Tristan Gorrindo and Teresa Seeman. “Gender Differences in Adult Children’s Support of Their Parents in Taiwan.” In *Journal of Marriage and Family* 65 (February 2003): 184-200.
- Lin, Jenn-shann 林鎮山. *Yuanxiang, Nüxing, Xiandaixing: lun dangdai Taiwan xiaohuo* 原鄉・女性・現代性：論當代台灣小說 (Native place, Women, and Modernity: A Critique of Contemporary Taiwan Fiction). Taipei: Avanguard Publishing House, 2011.
- Lin, Jenn-shann, and Lois Stanford. “Xingbie, wenxuepingwei, xushicelüe: zuozhe yu yizhe youguan Magnolia «yulanhua» de duihua” 性別・文學品味・敘事策略：作者與譯者有關 *Magnolia* 《玉蘭花》的對話 (Gender, Literary Style and Narrative Strategy: A Conversation on Magnolia between the Author and the Translators). In *Lisan, Jiaguo, Xushu: Dangdai Taiwan xiaoshuolunshu* 離散・家國・敘述：當代台灣小說論述，林鎮山著 (Diaspora, Homeland and Narration: Discourse in Contemporary Taiwan Fiction), by Jenn-Shann Lin, 237-280. Taipei: Avanguard Publishing House, 2006.
- Lü, Annette Hsiu-Lien 呂秀蓮. *Xin nüxingzhuyi* 新女性主義 (New Feminism). Kaohsiung: Dunli Chubanshe 敦理出版社, 1986.

- Man, Eva K.W. "The Relation of "Self" and "Others" in the Confucian traditions and its Implications to Global Feminisms and Public Philosophies." In *Contemporary Asian Modernities: Transnationality, Interculturality, and Hybridity*. Edited by Eva Kit-Wah Man and Yiu-Wai Chu, 231-244. Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang AG International Academic Publishers, 2010.
- Mei Jialing 梅家玲. "Shijian, nüxing, xushu: xiaoshuo Zheng Qingwen" 時間・女性・敘述：小說鄭清文 (Time, Femininity, Narrative: Tzeng Chingwen's Short Stories). In *Zheng Qingwen 鄭清文*, edited by Deping Feng 封德屏 and Jinyi Li 李進益, 255-263. Tainan, Guoli Taiwan Wenxueguan 國立台灣文學館, 2012.
- Mill, John Stuart, and Harriet Hardy Taylor Mill. *The Subjection of Women*. Auckland, NZ: The Floating Press, 2009.
- Raphals, Lisa. *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China*. Albany: State University of New York, 1998.
- Rosenlee, Lisa Li-Hsiang. *Confucianism and Women: A Philosophical Interpretation*. Albany: State of University of New York, 2006.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Du contrat social (The Social Contract)*, presented by Bruno Bernardi. Paris, France: Flammarion, 2001.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *L'existentialisme est un humanisme (Existentialism Is a Humanism)*. Paris: Les Éditions Nagel, 1970.
- Sievers, Sharon. "Part II: Women in East Asia." In *Women in Asia: Restoring Women in Asia*, by Barbara N. Ramusack and Sharon Sievers: 145-254. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999.
- Schwartz, Benjamin. "Ideas and Values." In *Confucianism and Chinese Civilization*, edited by Arthur F. Wright, 3-15. New York: Atheneum, 1965.
- Sternberg, Meir. *Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.
- Tan, Zhengbi 譚正璧. *Zhongguo wenxuejia dacidian 中國文學家大辭典 (Dictionary of Chinese Writers)*. Hong Kong: Xianggang wenshi chubanshe yinxing 香港文史出版社印行, 1961.

- Teng, Ying-ch'ao. "Remembrances of the May Fourth Movement." In *Chinese Women through Chinese Eyes*, edited by Li Yü-ning, 144-155. Armonk, and London: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1992.
- The Kiriyaama Prize*. "Kiriyaama Prize, Winners & Finalists 1999." Accessed July 19, 2013. <http://www.kiriyaamaprize.org/winners/1999/1999winners.shtml>.
- Tseng, Pao-sun. "The Chinese Woman Past and Present." In *Chinese Women through Chinese Eyes*, edited by Li Yü-ning, 72-86. Armonk, and London: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1992.
- Tzeng, Ching-wen 鄭清文. *Xiaoguoja Dawenxue* 小國家大文學 (Small Country, Great Literature). Taipei: Yushanshe 玉山社, 2000.
- . *Magnolia: Stories of Taiwanese Women by Tzeng Ching-wen*. Translated by Jenn-Shann Lin and Lois Stanford. Santa Barbara: Center for Taiwan Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2005.
- . *Yulanhua: Zheng Qingwen Duanpian Xiaoshuo Xuan 2* 玉蘭花: 鄭清文短篇小說選 2 (Magnolia: Collection of Tzeng Ching-wen's Short Stories 2). Taipei: Ryefield, 2006.
- . "Xunzhao Ziji, Xunzhao Rensheng" 尋找自己 • 尋找人生 (Searching for the Self, Searching for Human Life). In *Zheng Qingwen* 鄭清文, edited by Jinyi Li 李進益: 101-103. Tainan: Guoli Taiwan Wenxueguan 國立台灣文學館, 2012.
- . "Shudejianzheng: xiezai Zheng Qingwen guoji xueshuyantaohui zhiqian" 樹的見證: 寫在鄭清文國際學術研討會之前 (Testimonies of the Trees: Writing before an international conference on Tzeng Ching-wen). In *Zheng Qingwen* 鄭清文, edited by Jinyi Li 李進益: 104-110. Tainan: Guoli Taiwan Wenxueguan 國立台灣文學館, 2012.
- Wang, David Der-Wei. *The Monster that Is History: History, Violence, and Fictional Writing in Twentieth-Century China*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2004.
- Wang, Robin R. "Dong Zhongshu's Transformation of 'Yin-Yang' Theory and Contesting of Gender Identity." In *Philosophy East and West* 55 No. 2 (April, 2005): 209-231.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary. *Vindication of the Rights of Women: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*. Auckland, NZ: Floating Press, 2010.

- Yang, Chao. "Beyond 'Nativist Realism': Taiwan Fiction in the 1970s and 1980s." In *Chinese Literature in the Second Half of a Modern Century: A Critical Survey*, edited by Pang-Yuan Chi and David Der-Wei Wang: 96-109. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000.
- Yeh, Shitao 葉石濤. Lun Zheng Qingwen xiaoshuolide "Shehuiyishi" 倫鄭清文小說裡的「社會意識」(Discussing "Social Consciousness" in Tzeng Ching-wen's Short Stories). In *Zheng Qingwen 鄭清文*, edited by Jinyi Li 李進益: 141-147. Tainan: Guoli Taiwan Wenxueguan 國立台灣文學館, 2012.
- Zhang, Jinfen 張晉芬. "Mianmian cihen, keyoujueqi? – Nüxinggongzuo kunjing zhi paoxi" 綿綿此恨，可有絕期？ -- 女性工作困境之剖析 (Can this Continuous Hatred End?: An Analysis on the Difficulty in Working Conditions for Women). In *Taiwan Funü chujing baipishu: 1995 nian 台灣婦女處境白皮書: 1995 年* (A Report on Taiwanese Women's Situation: Year 1995), edited by Yuxiu Liu 劉毓秀: 145-180. Taipei: Wenhua Congshu 文化叢書, 1995.