

ISCKMC 2020**International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****TRAGEDY OF A WOMAN'S FATE OF IN THE WORKS OF
EILEEN CHANG**

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Abstract

For a long time in China a woman held a subordinate status only performing household and maternal duties. The society was influenced by a very strict patriarchy with deep and strong historical roots. The Chinese law stipulates the dominant position in a family to a husband. Apart from economic dependence, Chinese women in the society suffered from almost complete lack of rights in all spheres of life. Inheritance was built exclusively in the male line. In marriage, a woman was completely dependent on her husband, unmarried women were subordinate to their parents and relatives. A woman was forbidden to remarry in case her husband dies. Boys in a family were more respected than girls who were humiliated, and there was often a practice of selling them to other families. Women in a family were subjected to severe physical violence and pressure from their husbands and relatives. For many centuries, a woman has been in a subordinate status in a family and the society. The society was not interested in her inner world, feelings, desires. The status of women in patriarchal society was lower than that of men. This was the bitter, tragic fate of a woman, which was also reflected in the stories of Eileen Chang, a Chinese writer who in her works outlines her female characters and shows how a long-standing history of belittling women forces them to do certain things, as well as to look for ways to a new life, to a new status in the society.

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1. Introduction

The social status of women in China (and they make up almost half of the country's population) has traditionally been low. Today one of the key areas of state social policy is to increase their role in the society, thus improving the social situation, involving them in solving state tasks, ensuring equality with men.

The previously existing feudal system of family creation legitimized the complete dependence of children on the will of their parents, who concluded marriage agreements for their children. In her work Tsypilova (2015) describes that a woman had a subordinate status, the dominant position of her husband was stipulated in medieval Chinese law: "A wife was severely punished for inappropriate treatment of her husband, insult or harm to her father-in-law/mother-in-law, for killing her husband by mistake" (p. 11).

In China, trafficking in women has been widespread for a long time, as a rule, such actions were committed by fathers, spouses and brothers of the victims, the government did not hold them accountable. Regarding the status of a woman, there was a separate concept of "triple submission", or "triple obedience" (san tsun). According to this concept, a woman obeyed her father or older brother in childhood, her spouse and his mother after marriage and her own sons after the death of her husband. In her article Kupriyanova (2016) states that a woman should have been unconditionally submissive to the will of men: "If her name is called, she must immediately come; if she is ordered to leave, she must leave immediately" (p. 38). The woman did not have the right to vote at the time of choosing a mate and in everything she promised to obey the will of her father. After marriage, she did not become an independent member of the society, but, on the contrary, falling under the rule of her husband and his family, she lived according to their rules and principles. The family was considered the only area of activity of women, dependence on the will of men accompanied them throughout their lives.

Due to difficult life and lack of funds the population of rural outskirts were forced to work together, they were not able to establish a framework for the distinction between a man and a woman. For a long time, peasants made up the vast majority of the population of the Middle Kingdom.

The studies of the European missionary Martin de Rada, who visited China in the 16th century, state the following: Women there are imprisoned and modest, so, apart from some old witch, we very rarely managed to see a woman in cities and large settlements. Only in villages where, apparently, the mores are simpler, we were given the opportunity to see them more often, even working in the field. From early childhood, they are trained to bandage their legs, so the feet are deformed so that all their fingers, with the exception of the big one, turn out to be bent (Mendoza et al., 1970).

This state of affairs existed for a long time, until the 20th century. Let us consider how the fate of a woman was reflected in Chinese literature on the example of the works of the writer Eileen Chang.

2. Problem Statement

Describing women too many educated people endowed their vivid images with tenderness, kindness and mildness. For example, the mother's image is characterized by great selfless holy praise. But Eileen Chang did the opposite, with the help of her unusual written form, she showed the world the other side of women, their selfish soul. Other writers in China assigned a woman an active role in finding

her way. For example, U Ying in his first collection of short stories *Two Poles* (两极) (1939) tells about heroines who were victims of old customs and religious prejudices. Later, other stories appear in which women act as active forces (Lebedeva, 2012).

The images of widows, alienated images created by Eileen (2015a) made people feel sorry for, afraid or hate them. The fanatical desire for enrichment and the prolonged emotional suppression led to their suffering. By the time they suffered all their adversity, they had already lost their humanity, and they were overwhelmed with a furious sense of revenge that made up for the emptiness of their souls making their hearts cruel.

The story *Golden Cangue* (金锁记) describes the distortion and perversion of human nature undermining maternal love, a critical analysis of the image of a mother. Eileen Chang created a typical psychopathic image of the heroine Qi Qiao. It can be replaced by the word “evil”. It is difficult to find the same vicious, selfish image in the history of Chinese literature. Prolonged suppression of feelings and golden bonds seriously distorted her mentality, turned her into a crazy avenger, even making her own children suffer. She then disclosed a confidential conversation with her son to everyone to get psychological satisfaction, then tortured two daughters-in-law to death. “Chih-Shou suddenly sat down, opened the canopy, it turned out that this is a crazy world, the husband does not look like her husband, the wife does not look like his wife” (Eileen, 2015b, par. 4). Hair rises from the darkness of Qi Qiao’s soul, from her cruelty to Ch’ang-an’s daughter. Even the maids believed that foot binding was a relic of the past, and would affect the future marriage of a young lady, but Qi Qiao still forced Ch’ang-an to bandage her legs, which is why Ch’ang-an was anguishely crying from pain. She did everything possible to prevent her daughter from loving, she herself did not experience this feeling, so her daughter did not allow her to survive the tenderness of love, she viciously and sarcastically said about her daughter: “Ch’ang-an returned home bringing chaos with her, became unusually quiet, smiled little. As she sees her Qi Qiao immediately begins to get angry, and then she will say with sarcasm that all these years the girl was neglected, it is not surprising that she smiles a little” (Eileen, 2015b, par. 5). Not coming to terms with the happiness of her daughter, she seemed to matter-of-factly destroy the Ch’ang-an marriage, ruined the only hope in Ch’ang-an’s life, and the daughter had to continue to live quietly under the supervision of her mother.

The son’s wife committed suicide by swallowing an opium pill. Ch’ang-pai did not dare to marry again, just went to a brothel, and Ch’ang-an abandoned the idea of marriage (Eileen, 2015c). And all this is because of the psychologically ill mother, who, in order to satisfy her own desires, ruled the tragic fate of her son, daughter, daughter-in-law. Such heroes are rare, but they are very realistic.

Eileen Chang created another image of the widow, Mrs. Liang from the story *First Flavor* (第一炉香). In her youth, despite the disagreement of her relatives, she married a wealthy old man, specially waiting for his death to become a rich widow. There was a thirst for profit in her heart, so she used her niece as a bait to attract young people and fall in love with them. She did not notice her own depravity, but also pulled others behind her, as if an executioner turning good girls into prostitutes.

Indi from the story *Angry Lady* (怨女) is also a money slave. A pharmacist and a young rich man proposed to her on the same day. Despite the fact that she loved a pharmacist, she chose a rich young man.

In ancient times, China had two judgments about a beautiful woman marriage: the first was to marry an ordinary person and live a happy life; the second was to marry and enjoy wealth and status, but if you do not win love and respect, then life will be desolate and unhappy. The women described by Eileen Chang more tend to a second judgment. Regardless of Qi Qiao, Ms. Liang or Indi, at a key moment they all pledge their own happiness to satisfy their desire to enrich themselves. This desire is constantly growing, and in combination with depressed feelings leads the main characters to emptiness.

Another heroine Xiu Xiaohan from the story Canon of the Soul (心经) differs from the above heroines in that she was born in a privileged environment, in a happy family it would seem. She is a smart, young, beautiful girl, looked after by enviable young grooms. But she suffered from the Electra complex, was attracted to her own father, and could not get rid of it. This is an abnormal and unhealthy attitude, it is not surprising that she was overcome by contradictions and driven her crazy. Gradually, she put pressure on her father and destroyed feelings between her parents with her own hands. If the mother sometimes wore a beautiful dress or showed her feelings towards her husband, then Xiu Xiaohan laughed at her mother. This continued for a long time, and the relationship between the parents became colder and more indifferent and, at last, died. She slowly killed love between her parents, broke, cut love into piece. To hide and escape from everything her father left home and began to live with another girl. Only when nothing could be returned, Xiu Xiaohan hugged her mother firmly and burst into tears.

In order to get education Ge Weilong from the story First Flavor (第一炉香) from an impoverished family had to live with her aunt, Mrs. Liang. Although Ge Weilong knew that the atmosphere in the house was not very good, because her aunt brought men to the house, but she confidently said to herself: "Let the aunt treat me rudely, others spread rumors, I will not pay attention, I will continue to study" (Eileen, 2015d, par. 17). But over time, beautiful clothes, young people, lively evenings fascinated her, she gradually became addicted to this decadent hustle of life, from a simple confident girl she turned into the aunt's bait to seduce men. By nature, she was a pure, highly moral girl, but voluntarily became a tool in the hands of her aunt and became a prostitute for a long time, she chose self-sacrifice and self-extinction to support non-existent love. Life in pain and contradictions gradually led to emptiness, she buried all her anxieties and physical pleasures, when youth passed, emptiness would turn her into the second Mrs. Liang.

Marriage is insurance, a long-term food ticket, there are many women with have the only goal to get married. This does not fall within statistics, be it antiquity or modernity. Women's economic dependence leads to spiritual slavery, their numb life takes place in the castle of marriage without love, where they are used to being in the shadow of a man. For example, the main character Dunfeng of the story Mercy (留情) wanted to marry so that there was something to dress and to eat, so the search for a husband who could guarantee a comfortable life became the meaning of her life. To survive, she, using youth, at the expense of love and happiness, received support in the form of marriage. Even if someone wakes up and wants to leave, the social pressure of economic dependence weakens and devastates their struggle and resistance, creates problems, forcing them to return to the castle again. Bai Liusu from the story Love in a Fallen City (倾城之恋) no longer withstanding the bullying of her husband, risked a divorce. But after her older brother's wife cheated on her money, she, chasing Bai Liusu away, fervently said that "as soon as she got married and entered their family, her husband immediately became futile, as

soon as she returned to her mother's house, we would go broke, she was just a walking disaster!" (Eileen, 2015d, par. 24). In a difficult situation, Bai Liusu was devastated and could only whisper that "it is impossible to live in this house" (Eileen, 2015d). Bai Liusu could not get rid of the shackles that kept her, as if she were in prison. In order to survive, she could only use the remaining youth and exchange it for protection, she had no choice, and the fall of Hong Kong supported her false love. As she wanted, she became Mrs. Fan, Fan Liuyan left her ridicule for other women, Bai Liusu was patient, there was no impulse in her, which was in her first marriage, the voluntary alienation of a bird in a cage. Although then disappointment filled her humble soul, but still she can return home the winner to take revenge on her older brother's wife.

Niecy from the novel Chain (连环套) was not as lucky as Bai Liusu, Niecy wanted to immediately become the wife of a wealthy man. But she was like a straw flying in the wind, and finally she did not grasp the essence of marriage. She followed three men, but could only follow them and did not marry, because from a legal point of view, she could not marry. She was fourteen years old when her adoptive mother sold her as a commodity to an Indian, she had no position, she was even simply called the "upper floor" (Eileen, 2015c). Having given birth to a boy and a girl, she still could not improve her situation, she was kicked out of the house. Then Niecy went after Dow's owner, but the good times did not last long, Dow's owner died, and she was kicked out again. Despite all the experience, she never wanted to provide herself, so she again followed the Englishman nearby. As a homeless straw, Niecy will never build a real house. The Englishman wanted to marry, and she was married, she took the children with her. Having once again survived the break at the end she turned into an indifferent person, in whose soul it seemed that something had broken. "Her dream broke!" (Eileen, 2015c) – to become a woman with high status.

The works of Eileen Chang still feature traditional women, unlike Wang Anyi, who describes a modern Chinese woman, the exact opposite of the traditional type of a Chinese woman *xian qi liang mu* 贤妻良母 (virtuous wife and good mother) (Kupriyanova, 2015).

Eileen Chang is a woman with a special charm. Her life experience and unique observation became the basis for creating works that sound like beautiful music in the history of Chinese literature. The female images created by the writer are either sad, or hateful, or touching.

3. Research Questions

In this work, we try to answer the question of what are the images of female characters in the works of Eileen Chang, how the writer sees the fate of women in her modern society.

4. Purpose of the Study

This work analyzes in detail the main female images in the works of Eileen Chang, thus ensuring the rethinking of society through them.

5. Research Methods

Descriptive and cultural-historical methods were used in this study.

6. Findings

The readers see sad, bloodthirsty, poor women forcing them to worry about them, empathize with them. Therefore, the success of Eileen Chang's works lies not only in reflecting that era and its features, not only in the magnificent language of her works, but also in the images of women described by the author. These female images have many differences with the female images described by most writers, they shock the readers with some sadness, humiliation, tragic fate. Therefore, Eileen Chang is a bright glow not only of Chinese, but also of world literature.

7. Conclusion

After reading any story by Eileen Chang you can understand why she was an unusual woman. The author matter-of-factly draws female images that are either ready to cry with bloody tears, or are full of pity or hatred. She seems to slightly open a thin veil with her fingertips covering her family, marriage, love for a thousand years, thus allowing people to see the shocking truth. The writer with her pen reaches places invisible by God, dark corners not illuminated by a stream of sun.

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