

The Construction of Color Aesthetics at the Threshold of Cross-Sensory Narrative – Study of Color Depiction in Eileen Chang's Literary Creation

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Abstract: Eileen Chang is a strange woman in the history of modern literature, and her works are complete with a peculiar sense of color. Since the 1980s, the study of Eileen Chang's literature in mainland China has matured, but the aesthetics of color in her literary works has rarely been explored. This paper explores the background of Eileen Chang's color aesthetics, the narrative function of color, and the long-lasting artistic value from an aesthetic point of view, using color as a link between literature, history, visual representation, and modern expression, and attempts to activate the contemporary vitality of the classic texts in a new dimension. Through the research, this paper takes the unique color aesthetics of Eileen Chang's novels as the starting point, deeply explores the color writing style of her novels and the reasons for its formation, analyses how the color aesthetics of her novels are constructed on this basis, and then explores the multiple values of her works and their far-reaching influence on the future generations.

1. Introduction

Growing up in a special era of "breaking with the old and establishing the new", Shanghai was by no means the only important literary space for Eileen Chang, and Hong Kong and the United States were not necessarily less important than Shanghai [1]. The experience of moving from one place to another allowed Eileen Chang to form a unique observation perspective and creative habits in the multi-cultural intertwining of classical and modern Western cultures, and she integrated her criticism of human nature into her daily life. As a gifted female writer with keen social observation, Eileen Chang was good at depicting colors, and used color imagery to refer to the inconvenient reality, leaving the twentieth-century literary world a lot of shocking and thought-provoking feelings.

Wen Rumin pointed out that since the end of the 70s, Eileen Chang "has suddenly changed our view of literature"[2]. Unlike the scarred novels and reflective novels that appeared, at that time Eileen Chang's works present us with a timeless picture scroll". In her writing, there exists both the strong aristocratic interest brought by the birth of a young lady

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from a big family, as well as the despicable thoughts of the "little people"; there exists the romance between men and women, and she does not avoid the tragic end of love. All these are the important factors that make up the "Eileen Chang" fever. Zhang Ailing's works were not only respected by critics and readers but also influenced the new-era literati. For example, she inherited the tradition of writing about worldly affairs in *Dream of the Red Chamber* and created a new paradigm of urban literature, which directly influenced the creations of writers such as Bai Xianyong and Wang Anyi. Hong Kong, Taiwan, and U.S. writers group to its creative achievements analogous to Lu Xun Yun Yun, and even more, such as overseas Chinese scholar Xia Zhiqing, Zhang Ailing as "China's unique figure in the literary world in the year" Fu Lei has also commented on the "Golden Lock" as "one of the most beautiful harvests of the literary world!" [3,4]. The rapid spread of these remarks has raised Eileen Zhang to an unprecedented height and laid an important foundation for the study of Eileen Zhang's works at home and abroad.

2 . The historical background of Eileen Chang's color aesthetics

During the Jiaqing period of the Qing Dynasty, Shanghai, as a coastal area, developed rapidly, and its developed economic conditions and multicultural background made it become the "capital of the southeast"[5]. After the Opium War, a large number of foreigners moved into Shanghai and built up a large number of rented properties. Their modern lifestyles and the introduction of a large number of modern technological machinery brought Shanghai into line with the world's first-class modern cities, and in the 1920s and 1930s, Shanghai became the most modern city in East Asia, the closest to the "modern" Western culture.

The Westernized social environment and commercialized cultural market not only facilitated the spread and development of modernism in China but also contributed to the expansion and prosperity of the popular fiction market, which had often been regarded as inferior. The turbulent international and domestic environments also heightened writers' desire to reshape society with a romantic approach. During this rich and complex period, Shanghai literature entered an era of diversified development, a time when Shanghai literature, torn by multiple cultural tensions, burst into a unique light of modernity. The unique background of artistic creation allowed Shanghai writers to receive the inculcation of traditional literature, revolutionary novels, and other artistic styles, which are reflected in their works, such as Su Qing's *Ten Years of Marriage* and Mao Dun's *Zi Yi*), etc. Zhang Eiling was no exception. Zhang Ailing was no exception, but as a gifted female writer in the Shanghai Bund, she integrated these creative concepts and took the essence of them, forming a highly personal style of literary creation. Her works are the products of the intersection of the old and new eras, revealing the mentality of the lost and the bleakness of the times in feudalism under the impact of capitalism and colonialism.

In prosperous Shanghai, the color culture developed rapidly, and the bubble-like economy made Shanghai full of colorful extravagance, but under the rich colors, there was a semi-colonial and semi-feudal grey society. At that time, many writers were fond of colorful descriptions, for example, in Shen Congwen's *Border Town*, "the river is turquoise, like a transparent emerald, and the sunlight shines on the water, causing golden ripples", which is used to show the serenity and simplicity of the countryside in western Hunan. Shanghai in Eileen Chang's writing is a brocade woven with peacock plumes, scarlet neon rainbow drenches the windows of silk farms, and gold and silver threads flow through the slits of the cheongsam at Paramount. Shen Congwen's emerald-colored streams are transformed into a yellow cab driver's sweaty indigo tunic under Eileen Chang's pen; the snowy brightness of the silver bracelets in western Hunan is transformed into the scarlet of the cardamom on the fingertips of the dancers; and the emerald ripples are finally condensed into the spreading mildew spots at the root of the walls of the alleys. Eileen Chang crumbled the bleak

undertones that the new school writers avoided into individual and blended color blocks, opening a new era of color aesthetics in Chinese literary history.

3 . Colors in Eileen Chang's works

Writers, like painters, touch the reader's heart through the association of colors, "the visual psychological and physiological systems that have the ability to perceive light and color are gradually generated and developed along with the growth and development of human beings [6]." A famous example is Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*, which uses "red" and "black" as metaphors to symbolize the opposing meanings of revolution and religion [7]. The colors in Eileen Chang's writing have become an expression of her mind and spirit. Color in her writing not only serves to describe the environment but is also an important part of character description, she poured all her understanding of the real world, men and women's human nature into her color language: for example, the "pink shirt" in *Flowers wither* reflects the doomed withering of life, which is a projection of Chuan'e's illness; color is also a symbol of power and desire, the "Pink Shirt" in *Flowers wither* is a symbol of power and desire. Color is also a symbol of power and desire, the "silver light of the diamond ring" in *Lust Ring* is the game of desire between Mr. Yi and Wang Jiazhi. On a deeper level, "the color of cheongsam gradually changed from elegant pink and light blue to bright red and deep purple, as if it had changed from a young girl to a young woman", etc. The description and rigorous evidence of the Republican dresses in *The Dress Code* are also symbols of the national culture of traditional China, which has played a great role in the dissemination of Chinese culture from a different perspective. It has played a great role in the dissemination of Chinese culture.

Reviewing Eileen Chang's creation, it is not difficult to find that her works as a whole present a serious and tragic concept, while she makes extensive use of gaudy and flamboyant language, she also narrates some plain and monotonous colors of cold tones, for example, repeated use of grey, white and other colors [8]. A sense of loss and abandonment led to the writer's pessimistic undertones in the depiction of human nature and his pessimistic vision of the development of history and civilization [9]. "I always feel infinitely miserable when I see our shrinking and shrinking aspirations [10]." This pessimistic symbolic coloring is found throughout Eileen Chang's works, for example, in *The Book of Golden Locks*, "deep purple curtains", "thick white powder on her face", "lips as red as snow", the contrast between dark purple and white symbolizes the repressed and twisted nature of Qixiao's inner self. According to Dorothy Sun, a color psychologist, "material love and carnal pleasure are synonymous with red, so red adds to her excessive desire and self-destructive tendencies, symbolizing the irreversibility of Qixiao's tragic fate; or in *"Jasmine Fragrance Pieces"*, "a layer of thick white powder on her face with a hint of clear grey", symbolizing the character's destiny [11]. Or in *"Jasmine Fragrance Pieces"*, which symbolizes the tragic and irreversible nature of the characters' withered fate, suggesting the hopelessness of life.

With her deep understanding and perfect use of color, Eileen Chang confirms that her color language not only belongs to the realm of technique and form but also builds up the overall framework of her network of works through color.

4 . Eileen Chang's novels color: The narrative function of aesthetics

4.1 . Color and the atmosphere of Eileen Chang's novels

The strong visual and symbolic qualities of the colors in Eileen Chang's novels enable her to build a bridge of spatial transition, which not only implies the subtle changes in the characters' psychology but also promotes the dramatic twists and turns of the plot. In *Half a Life*, the attic where Manjing is imprisoned is always covered with "water stains on the walls of the yellow moldy sky", and when she meets Shijun 18 years later, "the flowing neon on the glass windows of the trolley bus" integrates the real scene into the illusory light and shadow, and the colors become the filters between the memory and the reality, so that the conversion of the physical space carries a flashback of the traumatic experience; at the end of "Staying in the Heart", the "yellow sun" penetrates through the clouds but turns into "ice-sugar yellow" in the eyes of Mr. Mi. The "yellow sun" at the end of "Remaining Love" penetrates the clouds, but in Mr. Mi's eyes, it turns into "icing-sugar yellow", the sweet metaphor and aging reality collide with each other in the color mismatch, and the closure of the scene becomes a visual fixation of the existentialist dilemma.

Eileen Chang likes to use environmental description to imply the background and character of the characters, stuffs more colors into the limited space. In *The Love of a Fallen City*, the night between Bai Liusu and Fan Liubuan, late-night Hong Kong has a "pale yellow moon", "dark blue sea water" and "grey white beach", a lot of cold-tone imagery creates a lonely and alienated atmosphere, implying the complexity and uncertainty of their relationship; Tong Zhenbao and Wang Jiaorui first met in Wang Jiaorui. "grey white sandy beach", a lot of cold-tone imagery to create a lonely, detached atmosphere, suggesting the complexity and uncertainty of the relationship between the two; Tong Zhenbao and Wang Jiaorui first met at Wang Jiaorui's home, she was wearing a "scarlet robe", in the body of the "crimson curtains", the "red curtains", the "red curtains", the "red curtains", the "red curtains", the "red curtains", the "red curtains". Tong Zhenbao's first encounter with Wang Jiaorui is at Wang Jiaorui's home, where she is dressed in a "scarlet robe" and a room with "crimson curtains" and "golden lights". The warm colors of red and gold collide with each other to create a strong and unidentified sentiment, implying the danger and immorality of the relationship. It can be said that the direction and end of the story can be foreseen through the types of colors used by Eileen Chang to portray the environment.

Under different story environments, the colors of Eileen Chang's writing are also very different. The memories in "Jasmine Pieces" are warm and peaceful, filled with soft color imagery such as "yellowish jasmine", "light green curtains", and "soft sunlight", contrasting with the cold and gloomy reality. "The author uses a lot of ink to describe the scene of Hong Kong's Christmas Eve party: "The mountains are planted with short pines and firs, and the sky is full of stone-green clouds. The clouds and trees were generally blown by the wind, thick in the east, thin in the west, pushed and squeezed, a moment of blackness embraced into a ball, a moment, and then turned into a canopy of green air dispersed." The author, a literary painter, blends and unifies various colors, using large color blocks to shape the scene completely. The multiple color blocks are conflicting and contradictory, but they also blend into one, and the stillness of the picture shows the flow of colors, which is in harmony with Nie Chuanqing's inner dynamics, forming a wonderful realm of celestial and human sensation.

This creative technique of reconstructing narrative time and space with visual symbols not only continues the oriental aesthetics of *Dream of Red Mansions* but also alludes to the stream-of-consciousness techniques of Western modernism.

4.2 . Color and image-making in Eileen Chang's novels

Image is the artistic kernel of a literary work. Only when color and image are tightly combined can the mind of the creative subject be connected with the mind of the reading subject, the narrative of the novel be strongly supported, and the color be able to fully emanate its artistic quality through the function of the narrative [12]. Eileen Chang's essays

use strong colors to weave a bizarre picture but aim to expose a decaying world. The gorgeous and clear language tells the contradictory and entangled human nature and her unique insights into the nature of life. In the shaping of characters, Eileen Chang also pays special attention to the "color" qualities of the characters, starting from the angles of facial skin color, clothing color, etc., and "painting people with colors", in a vivid and vivid image of the characters. She started from the angles of facial complexion and clothing color, "painting people with color", and at the same time, she projected her feelings into the use of colors in the vivid expression of her characters' personality traits. Color plays an important role in the expression of character and psychology. Different people have different color preferences, and the tendency of color preference is, to a certain extent, the externalization of the character's psychology [13]. There are countless characters in Eileen Chang's novels with rich colors, and the contrasting and strong colors make the readers perceive the author's subjective emotions for the first time.

Eileen Chang said, "I learned to write by using colorful and sonorous words." She loved to use contrasting and exciting colors, and the characters in her writings were often accompanied by dazzling colors [14]. According to Kandinsky, "the painter must consider not only the meaning of the red coat itself, but also the relationship of the wearer to it, and this to the whole picture" [15]. For example, if a painting wants to convey to the audience low and sad emotions, then the painting of the characters wearing warm-colored clothing will make people have a sense of disharmony, thus reducing the emotional conveyance effect of the picture; if the characters are wearing cold-colored clothes, blue skirts, black tops, and so on, the tragic effect will become strong and positive. It can be seen that the close combination of clothing and colors implies a wealth of symbolic. This shows that the close combination of dress and color is rich in symbolism. The appearance of Cao Qixiao in *The Book of Golden Locks* is quite similar to the rhyme of Wang Xifeng. "That Cao Qixiao not sit down, a hand supporting the door, a hand to support the waist, narrow cuffs hanging down a snowy green handkerchief to the handkerchief, the upper body wearing a silver and red shirt, onion and white thread set roll, snowy green and blue Ruyi small foot trousers, skinny bone face, Zhu mouth fine teeth, triangular eyes, small mountain eyebrows." In just a few strokes, the image of an articulate heroine leaped onto the page. Eileen Chang, the master of color, precisely and artistically constructed a living soul by giving colors a character connotation.

This habit of color depiction may be related to the influence of the Red Study on Zhang Eiling, her use of color is redundant and complex, strange and flamboyant, but without losing the lightness, similar to Cao Xueqin's use of color in *Dream of Red Mansions* and fused into Zhang Eiling's writing habits, for example, in the appearance of Jia Baoyu, Cao writes: "On his head, he wore a crown with hair embedded in the treasure of purple and gold, and his eyebrow was strung with a two-dragon-jewel-grabbing gold forehead; he wore A two-color gold hundred butterflies through the flower red arrow sleeves, bundled with colorful silk save flower knot long spangled palace tapestry, covered with stone green flower eight groups of Japanese satin rows of spangled coats; boarded with green satin pink-soled small dynasty boots." Rich and gorgeous colors make the image of Baoyu alive on paper, the big red arrow sleeves symbolize Baoyu's generations of aristocratic identity and domineering character, a stone green lab coat and hidden calm and noble background, green satin boots with pink soles and in the details of Baoyu's big family's strict requirements of education. The similarity of the use of this color contrast is not empty talk, Eileen Chang spent ten years researching and examining the "*Dream of Red Mansions*", several times specifically to Nanjing to study and examine, and wrote the book "*Nightmare in the Red Mansions*", "ten years of a sleep obsessed with the examination, won the name of the nightmare in the Red Mansions," her "red" achievement was supported by Zhou Ruyi, the "red" achievement was supported by Zhou Ruyi. Her "red science" achievements have been Zhou Ruchang and other red science everyone's affirmation, it can be said that Zhang Ailing is one of the earlier systematic study

of the "Dream of Red Mansions" scholars, so in the color shaping on the shadow of the work is also excusable and traceable.

4.3 . Color and the depiction of imagery in Eileen Chang's novels

The novel is the art of narration, "a narrative of a series of events arranged in chronological order" [16]. Compared with the lyrical function of imagery, the color imagery in Eileen Chang's novels has gone beyond the need for shallow aesthetic expression and has entered into the theme and structure of the novels, becoming the core part of the novels, and assuming the function of narrative. Of course, not all color imagery is the core of the novels, but as long as certain color imagery appears in the works, its existence has its deep meaning and requires special attention. Eileen Chang's novels often have more than one color imagery, which constitutes a color imagery group. The construction of the color imagery group for the story text is mainly embodied in its metaphorical and symbolic qualities, which can imply the fate of the characters and deepen the character image, and the richness of the color meanings also expands the "extra-linguistic meaning" of the works [6]. Her novels are full of vivid and complex color imagery, but under her pen, it seems light and subtle, hazy and cold moon, fragile and ice-cold mirror, colorful glass windows, burning azaleas, loads of glowing blue teeth, the impressionist painter-like splash of ink has become a reflection of Eileen Chang's and her characters' subjective information and emotion of the embodied embodiment of the background of this almost bleak, sad song Against this almost bleak backdrop, the sad song sings of unfortunate marriages, crippling gender relations, and so on. In *Half a Life*, the "light pink oleander" when Manzhen and Shijun fall in love with each other and the "iron grey rain curtain" when they said goodbye form a conspicuous contrast of cold and warm tones, while the "scarlet cover" when Manlu got married was quietly transformed into the "bloodstained sheet" of her sister's ward eighteen years later, and the same color palette reappears in different space and time, which, by the temporal and spatial collapsing of the colorful images, sublimates the individual tragedy into the philosophical proposition of existentialism, and takes the article to a new level of thought. The level of thought of the article is brought to a new height.

5 . The enduring value of Eileen Chang's color aesthetics

Realism was in vogue in the 1940s, but Eileen Chang was able to break the rules and push the boundaries by consciously using colorful imagery to paint a colorful picture scroll with great visual effects. In Eileen Chang's writing, there is a hazy, cool moon, and a blue, cold and piercing mirror ... Eileen Chang delights in her novels, over and over again, using color to create atmosphere and analyze human nature. This color depiction is fused with the modern Western art of psychoanalytical fiction, and the characters are lyrical and complete with precision and exactness. This aesthetics of color achieves a paradigm breakthrough in literary creation. She breaks with the traditional single depiction of color in literature, elevating color imagery to new heights and giving it new ways of use.

Normally, red and green are extremely incongruous on a person, but Wang Jiao Rui's clothing in *The Red Rose* and *The White Rose* has a wonderful mix of red and green. "She wore a floor-length gown of the spiciest damp green that stained green when it clung to anything. She moved slightly as if a green stain had been left on the very air she had just possessed. The dress seemed to have been made too small, bursting open an inch and a half at the sides, and was wound up with green ribbons crisscrossing all the way around, revealing a deep pink petticoat underneath. The overly harsh hue would cause color blindness if one looked at it for too long. She's the only one who can wear such a dress without a care in the

world." The green and red, which were originally taboo to be put together, are mixed by the author, making an organic fusion of the author's color consciousness and unique aesthetic creation. It is this extreme contrast of colors that makes the picture piercing, suggesting the strong temptation and attraction of the red rose to Zhenbao, and highlighting the exuberant vitality of the red rose. Eileen Chang wrote such strong and rich colors over and over again, and what was staged in such a colorful world was a tragedy of life.

Zhang Ailing was "extremely good at 'mixing' various colors in a mocking and mean tone of writing, and the more she used the language of color with a high density of messy and large scale in her portrayal of ugly places and misbehaving characters". This pioneering innovation not only enriched the literary expression of Chinese literature since the twentieth century but also provided new creative ideas for later writers, such as Wang Anyi and Bai Xianying. In Zhang Ailing's works, color is no longer just an accessory to visual elements, but also a tool for her to express complex emotions and profound thoughts.

6 . Conclusion

Eileen Chang's writing, exquisite and gorgeous appearance hides the sharp edge of the criticism of the times, with cold and profound strokes to depict the desolate core of the city under the glamour, "The Book of Golden Locks" narrates the tragedy of Cao Qixiao being alienated by the golden shackles, "green rust", "snow-green cicada-winged yarn" implies the corrosion and decay of human nature. The "Green Rust" and "Snowy Green Cicada Wing Veil" imply the corrosion and decay of human nature, which is far away and indifferent. Several typical or atypical characters are portrayed, fully exposing the dark side of human nature in front of the world, comprehensively and profoundly criticizing and flogging. The extreme tragedy is the essence and reality of the society at that time. The delicate and gorgeous narrative is inseparable from Eileen Chang's keen perception and integration of traditional Chinese culture and Western popular trends, and the common imagery in life is artistically handled and cleverly, and refreshingly specialized and complicated. The concept of "in the period of Laozi" imagery was classified into the basic category of traditional Chinese aesthetics. Eileen Chang studied traditional Chinese culture from childhood and came into contact with a large number of Western ideas at an early age. At that time when realism was highly regarded, she boldly innovated and used a large number of classical vernaculars, perfectly combining imagery techniques and realism, which made her become the "modernity" of Chinese literature in the 20th century. She was a key figure in the transformation of Chinese literature into "modernity" in the 20th century.

All in all, the importance of Eileen Chang's unique color aesthetics, which provides brand new possibilities for the use of colors and enriches the expressive methods of 20th-century Chinese literature, cannot be overstated. How to inherit and develop Eileen Chang's color imagery and how to better combine color with other artistic elements in contemporary literary creation are worth further exploration. Through in-depth study and promotion of Eileen Chang's color aesthetics, new vitality and impetus can be injected into the creation of contemporary literature, and the development of Chinese local literature in the context of globalization can be promoted.

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