

UNIVERSITE D'ANGERS

UFR Lettres, Langues et Sciences Humaines

MASTER 2

ANGLAIS

The Awakening of Female Consciousness in Pearl Buck's *Pavilion of Women* (1948), and Eileen Chang's *The Rouge of the North* (1955)

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Soutenu publiquement le : 4 juillet 2013

Année universitaire 2012-2013



Acknowledgements

First and foremost, my sincere thanks go to my supervisor Professor Emmanuel Vernadakis who has been providing me with a lot of guidance and support. He has walked me through all the stages of this thesis---choosing a subject, and modifying the outline and the thesis many a time. Even though sometimes I had some difficulty in understanding his way of thinking because of cultural differences, he is always very patient to me. Without his consistent and illuminating instruction, this thesis wouldn't have reached its present form.

Secondly, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to other professors and teachers at the department of English in University of Angers, Martine CHARD Hutchison, Jacque Sohier, John Cassini, Linda Collinge German, Graham Woodroffe, Gelareh Yvard-Djahansouz, and Jean Yvard and so on, who have instructed, encouraged, inspired and helped me a lot in the past two semesters.

Thirdly, I would like to thank to my French classmates such as Julie Bonniord, who provided me a lot of help for the classes during last two semesters and the writing of this thesis. She is a really nice girl. At the same time, I'd also like to thank to my classmates in China who helped me to check a lot of references in different libraries.

Last, many thanks would to my beloved Ocean University of China, University of Angers and my family. Without their consistent supports, loving considerations and great confidence in me, I wouldn't have been in Europe all through ten months.

Thank you very much for what you have done for me. I love you all!

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Introduction

According to *Modern History of China* written by Chen Gonglu¹, China had seen a long period of extraordinary political disorders, instability, changes and progress, which includes the extreme poverty of people, wars in home and abroad, movements for human rights and economy such as “The May 4th New Culture Movement” (535-36), “the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution”², and the awakening consciousness of the whole nation in difference strata³ etc. Actually, overthrown by revolutionaries and succeeded by the Republic of China, the Qing Dynasty that was the last imperial dynasty of China implemented the closed-door and anti-foreignism policy until the abortive restoration happened in 1917. After hundreds of years’ closure policy and the consistent endeavor of people with lofty ideals, China became more and more backward compared with Western imperialist powers. Meanwhile, Western culture started to permeate into various domains of China in various forms. For example, the introduction of Christianity propagandized by a lot of Western priests went into different regions and different ethnic communities of China. Chinese Scholar Fan suggests that most of them were motivated by their strong religious belief and the mission of transmitting religion, and simultaneously played an important role in the inchoation of cross-cultural communication between China and Western countries.⁴

All of these activities and efforts greatly promoted the awakening consciousness of the whole nation not only at the level of society, classes, politics, or economy but also in terms of mentality and culture, of which, obviously, Chinese women were not the exception in such an adventurous stream. Over the centuries, women were overtly discriminated, oppressed and relegated, which was especially true in China. Living in a miserable plight as victims of oppression and enslavement, they were expected to be a subordinate for sons-bearing, and even sex slavery of their husband and always obey their husband’s orders as long as they submitted to an arranged marriage that their parents had deliberately matched without letting

¹ Chen Gonglu (1900-1966) was a distinguished Chinese historian specializing in the Japanese history, Indian history and Chinese modern history. Chen, Gonglu. *Modern History of China*. Beijing: Chinese Worker Press, 2012. (535-36). Print.

² It is specifically elaborated by Zheng, Qian and Zhang Hua in *The People's Republic of China in 1976-1996*. Beijing: People’s Press, 2010. (1-46). Print.

³ It is also specifically written by Song, Jingjing, and Niu Ruilian in “Feminism in China in 20th”. *Journal of Liaoning Administration College* 11. 8 (2009): 124-125. Print.

⁴ FAN, Zheng-yi. “Repelling and Accepting: the cultural investigation of relationships between the dissemination of Christianity in China and the Chinese popular faiths.” *Journal of Fujian Teachers University (Philosophy and Social Science Edition)* 3 (2001): 101-106.

them knowing even seeing each other before the marital ceremony. All of these facts are reflected in many works of literature, such as the novel *Red Sorghum*, written by Mo Yan who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2012, and also studied by sociology home and abroad. As far as education was concerned, most Chinese women could hardly get access to school because of both poverty and the prevailing patriarchal tradition. It was social norms that required them to remain illiterate and live a life of torment and ignorance. However, Pearl notes in “Chinese Women: Their Predicament in the China of Today” that women were not as ignorant as men considered them but only a little bit powerless with long-standing feudal oppression and enslavement. Indeed, they were diligent, dutiful, steadfast, and enduring.⁵

According to Song’s study of the development of Chinese feminism, with the consistent occurrence of consciousness-raising, gender-enlightened efforts and movements in Western countries, Chinese women could no longer continue to be silent and voiceless, and started to break through feudal family bonds and struggle for the freedom of love and choosing their own spouse.⁶ During the critical period, intellectuals, especially feminist writers contributed a lot in enlightening Chinese women to struggle for their freedom and rights by numerous immortal and inspiring works.

The present thesis will address the issue of cultural conflicts and social changes through the lens of American writer Pearl Buck’s *Pavilion of Women* (1948) and Chinese writer Eileen Chang’s *The Rouge of the North* (1955). It sets out to examine the cultural perspectives and representation of the awakening of female consciousness in these two novels. Both of them are concerned with the place of women in Chinese society.

Pearl Sydenstricker Buck was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1932. She was praised highly “for her rich and truly epic descriptions of peasant life in China and for her biographical masterpieces”, which is noted in *Pearl Buck: a biography* written by Hao Zhigang.⁷ Born in a family of Presbyterian missionaries in 1857, she was taken to China by her parents as an infant before 1900s and grew up in China. Although Pearl Buck deeply loved China and acted as a pioneer for introducing “the Third World” to America or even the

⁵ Buck, Pearl S. “Chinese Women: Their Predicament in the China of Today.” *Pacific Affairs* 4.10 (Oct., 1931): 905-09. *JSTOR*. Web. 15 March 2013.

⁶ Song, Jingjing, and Niu Ruilian. “Feminism in China in 20th”. *Journal of Liaoning Administration College* 11. 8 (2009): 124-125. Print.

⁷ It is suggested by Hao Zhigang in *Pearl Buck: a biography* compiled in Biography series of Nobel Prize winners and *Symposium of Pearl Buck* edited by Guo Yingjian in 1998.

world, at the same time she was also denounced and misunderstood as an "*American cultural imperialist*" by some critics.⁸ There are also some other critics like Zeng Qingmei who holds that Pearl Buck as an American, who was an enthusiastic observer and witness of Chinese society, devoted to contemplating women's miserable plight and promoting the awakening of Chinese women.⁹

Compared with Pearl S. Buck, Eileen Chang was born to a prestigious family of gentlefolk in Shanghai, China in 1920. When Eileen was 3 years old, her mother left for the United Kingdom to study. She returned in 1927 but bravely divorced her husband who was an opium addict. As a matter of fact, divorce was almost impossible in China at the first half of 20th century especially if it were a woman who initiated the proceedings. Thus, to a certain extent, her mother's courage might have been an example for her to follow. Afterwards, Chang subsequently received Chinese traditional, religious, and Western education, though both the ongoing Second Sino-Japanese War and her own financial issues made her study on and off. Being strikingly different from Pearl Buck, she seldom tries to plot her female characters violating or protesting against the social norms under a suffocating environment; instead, as David Der-Wei Wang has pointed out in his preface to *The Rouge of the North*, Chang achieves illuminating, and thought-provoking effects by making them obey the long-standing feudal rituals in an extreme way and join in the cannibalistic and patriarchal feudal society, which leaves readers a feeling of desolation in novels in an embittered and depressive way.¹⁰ Sometimes, it also makes readers feel very revolted and resentful rather than sympathetic. Nonetheless, Eileen Chang never stopped contemplating Chinese women's predicaments and the possible ways out. However, as Wang suggested, due to her eccentric but fantastic ideas with a critical point of view, she never managed to be included into the mainstream. (xvi)

When contemporary Chinese writers, such as Bingxin, were overtly committed to changing China's traditional mores into a westernized mode, Pearl Buck seemed very calm and said in her autobiography "我的中国世界" (*My Several Worlds*), "中国的文化比任何一个欧洲国家都更源远流长" (Chinese culture is far more extensive, profound and immemorial than any

⁸ Guo, Yingjian, ed. *Symposium of Pearl Buck*. Guilin: Lijiang Press, 1998. 134. Print.

⁹ Zeng, Qingmei, "The Analysis of the Cultural meaning of Pearl S Buck's and Eileen Chang's Female Consciousness." *Journal of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies* 18.6 (2007): 63-65. Print.

¹⁰ David Der-Wei Wang in Eileen Chang, *The Rouge of the North* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967, foreword, p xx.

country in Europe).¹¹ On the one hand, she was a representative of Western world. On the other hand, she appreciated some of Chinese traditions.

In this aspect, Eileen Chang shares some similar points of view with Pearl Buck. Since Chang has grown up in semi-feudal and semi-colonial society and received a sort of mixed education, she is familiar to a typical ancient Chinese life style which made it possible for her to observe Chinese culture and social changes around 1950s in an even more critical way. She points out in *洋人看京戏及其他* (*Foreigners' Views on Peking Opera and Something Else*), “多数中国人爱中国，而不知道他们所爱的究竟是一些什么东西” (Most Chinese shout to love China but don't know what they are loving).¹² She also mentions in *My Own Articles*, “象我们都是在英美的思想空气里长大的，有很多的机会看出他们的破绽” (People like us who've grown up under Western environment of ideology are more likely to see their flaws).¹³ She neither pinns her hopes on the prospect of Western culture, nor envisions a more beautiful and better future with traditional Chinese civilization like her contemporaries like Shen Congwen who is a Chinese writer known for combining the vernacular style of writing with classical Chinese writing techniques.

Besides, no obvious evidence shows that they had met each other during their lifetime and no scholars has ever stated in their critical works that they had read any of each other's works such as fiction or criticism until now. In fact, when Pearl Buck left China for America in 1934, Chang was only 14 years old at school, and While Buck was being active in America, Chang was primarily being active in the mainland China, Hongkong and Taiwan under a quite different political situation and cultural background. But, both of them, coincidently, censor female's predicament under traditions by taking love and marriage in a big family as a genre in their works.

In the next pages I shall address the following issues: How is the awakening of female consciousness in Chinese culture and society viewed through Pearl Buck's *Pavilion of Women*

¹¹ See *My Several Worlds*. Pearl Buck wrote that Chinese is equal to Westerners in all aspects and should be respected including in the aspects of civilization concerning philosophy and religion. The quotations above can be found in Chinese version of *My Several Worlds* by Shang Yinglin (Changsha: Hunan Literature and Art Press, 1991. 48. Print). (赛珍珠.我的中国世界[M].尚营林等译.长沙: 湖南文艺出版社, 1991: 48)

¹² In Chang's own words in *Foreigners' Views on Peking Opera and Something Else* (洋人看京戏及其他). Changsha: Hunan Literature and Art Press, 2003. 108. Print.

¹³ Eileen Chang wrote in *My Own Articles* (自己的文章), Changsha: Hunan Literature and Art Press, 2003. 105.

and Eileen Chang's *The Rouge of the North*? From what perspective is the awakening of female consciousness represented in each work?

Due to the influence of Western culture, China in the first half of 20th century saw more dramatic changes in traditions and culture, in both positive and negative ways, than ever before. The representation of the awakening of female consciousness in Pearl Buck's *Pavilion of Women* (1948), and Eileen Chang's *The Rouge of the North* (1955) echoes a series of notable social changes and cultural conflicts at the level of the individual and of social life in China during the nineteen-forties and nineteen-fifties. Cultural conflicts can be seen as the social changes in a negative way, but in turn, to a certain degree, conflicts can be seen as a crucial agent of promoting social changes in many aspects, such as in the awakening of female consciousness. In other words, along with cultural conflicts, female consciousness was gradually aroused in seeking for equality and freedom in physical, cultural and intellectual life. As far as the two works are concerned, although there is only a seven year span between them, the protagonists' consciousness is viewed through quite different prisms.

Madame Wu who is the heroine in Pearl S. Buck's *Pavilion of Women*, and Yindi who is the heroine in Eileen Chang's *The Rouge of the North* are devoted to representing female struggle actually both versed in two cultures. Both of them benefit and suffer from it in the process of striving for a sense of self-belonging or self-governance. The benefit lies in the Western innovation offers them a sort of inspiring power. They are suffering because at the same time they have to continue to struggle and find a way out for the constant cultural conflicts and unsettled identity that the new things bring about.

The texts of the two novels share several common points not only in terms of subject matter but also in terms of structure and content. They notably resort to representations of Chinese traditions and rites; in both books, however, western ideals of liberty and individual freedom are, as we shall see, promoted, or positively evaluated. As we shall also see, this attitude, to a certain degree, encourages the development of female consciousness in various ways. Moreover, in order to depict the awakening of female consciousness, both writers resort to the experience that they have of conventions. In both stories the female protagonists struggle for the same purpose and against similar opponents. At the same time, the bond of religion and tradition is a primary hindrance to the characters' development. Nevertheless, to a certain extent, when the awakening of consciousness was encouraged by Western ideology in China,

there also existed a regressive phenomenon in the process of civilization. After 1940s, the fervor of following Western world during “May 4th Movement” had gradually reduced, and intellectuals, such as Shen Congwen, Zhou Zuoren, turned back to the revival of traditional civilization, which is indicated in Chang’s work *Foreigners’ Views on Peking Opera and Something Else*.¹⁴

However, In spite of the common points shared by the two works, there are also fundamental differences between them. The most striking one is their way of representing the theme in fictions. To be more specific, Buck generally prefers to reflect society in a positive and progressive way and often offer an outlet for its victims, whereas unlike other contemporary popular writers, Chang is more inclined to show or denounce the senseless qualities of traditional society in a revolting and regressive way and leave readers with a feeling of tragedy in a desolate way.

The present essay will explore the awakening of female consciousness by taking the above American and Chinese pieces of fiction as examples, so as to highlight the poetics of each work of the cultural conflicts and the individual and social changes that occur during the first half of 20th century in China.

¹⁴ Chang’s work *Foreigners’ Views on Peking Opera and Something Else*, 2003. 108.

I A Study of Thematic and Narrative Issues

I.1 Womanhood, Femininity and Female Consciousness

One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one.

—Simone de Beauvoir

I.1.a Two Characteristic Examples of Chinese Womanhood

Generally speaking, when a girl has passed the menarche around eighteen years old, or rather, if she shows a state of being a woman, she would be seen at her “womanhood”. These two novels both develop around the theme of women. Barbara Walker suggests in *The Woman’s Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects* that “Earth has been the universal Goddess Mother at the fountainhead of all mythologies” (Walker 339). Womanhood is a major issue in both books as both writers insist on the intrinsic virtues of it by symbolically connecting their characters with the earth that is a universal symbol of womanliness and motherhood.

At the beginning of the novel *Pavilion of Women*, Madame Wu impresses readers with her endowment of intelligence, beauty, and an image of a perfect wife and mother living a perfect, happy life. With the development of the story, it is finally proved that she is not as perfect as we thought. She is hard, weak and lonely. She is not satisfied with her life and craves for love and freedom. Unlike the way of representation in Buck’s novel, Chang brings us a sort of regressive and illuminating changes. What Yindi firstly impresses readers is her saucy and resourceful characteristics, but later she becomes totally another eccentric women. Both stories are set in China and the protagonists are women. In both stories the narration and point of view favor a female perspective by making men absent or invisible deliberately during the process of the presentation of women in these two novels. This narrative strategy, which privileges the female perspective, is probably meant to emphasize the female’s capability in managing family affairs and their strong mental fortitude in struggling for life and their tolerant spirits for gender responsibilities. Judith Butler gives the definition in *Gender Trouble* that “gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex” (Butler 9-10). They perform exactly their roles to be subject to family affairs because it is the tradition that tells them to do so. Women can still “love” their

husbands even if they commit adultery out of home because women firmly believe that their husbands are destined to be their only men with providence. Additionally, women are expected to maintain strictly their chastity throughout their lives, and be good wives and devoted mothers by sticking to feudal ethical norms until their death.

Besides being representative of their gender, the two heroines also perform the roles traditionally prescribed to women in China. Consistent with this perspective, both writers resort to various devices in order to have their protagonists fulfill the role of a typical Chinese woman. In Buck's in the *Pavilion of Women* for instance, Madame Wu says to her husband when they get married, "I want nothing but your happiness... You know that I have always held your happiness in my hands" (Buck 32). She also complains to Brother André who is a foreign priest and the foreign teacher of Wu family that "You can have no understanding of what it is to be compelled to yield your body to a man year after year without your own will" (Buck 205). She has to make love with her husband whenever he wants her, which is mostly against her own will. As for the duty of bearing children, "In young women one asked nothing except that they fulfill their functions" (Buck 83). In other words, bearing children is one of the conventional functions of women. A typical Chinese wife is expected to make them either she means or not. "To bear him many children was her sole desire" (Buck 49), and "Each time through the ten moon months the burden within her had grown heavier, closer, and more invading until only her most careful self-control had made it possible for her to keep the gentle poise which was her atmosphere. Then had come the birth of the child" (Buck 93). For Madame Wu, the baby in her belly is not a gift given by her husband, but just a burden in both body and mentality. The bigger it grows, the more aggressive she feels and the less freedom she might have. Nonetheless, she has to make as much effort as possible to keep her elegance as ever even when she is in her tiring pregnancy, which actually implies that women, in Pearl Buck's *Pavilion of Women*, struggle for dignity and respect in strict social norms, and therefore are generally suffering from more than enjoying their gender duties of being a woman.

A similar point of view and perspective concerning womanhood can be noticed as well in Eileen Chang's *The Rouge of the North*, in which women show their obedience to mother-in-law and husbands, and taking the birth of children as their conventional duties and responsibilities. For instance, "The daughters-in-law were getting ready to go and wish Old Mistress good morning. She was an early riser" (Chang 32). Every morning, all the

daughters-in-law have to get up earlier than the Old Mistress (their mother-in-law), and wait beside her bed until she wakes up so as to say “good morning” to her. “See what a model wife she is telling lies to shield her husband” (Chang 39). When the Third Master goes gambling, drinking and whoring out of home during night, the next morning his wife—the Third Mistress has to shield him and tells the Old Mistress beside her bed that he hadn’t been out. “She poured out all her complaints and often ended in tears” (Chang 55). Even if Yindi feels aggrieved and insulted, she can’t show her dissatisfactions in the face and oppresses all her feelings within herself. She has “a pleasant sense of anonymity as just a new mother”, of which Yindi, the protagonist, feels really proud of herself and her status in the family is much more elevated” (Chang 55). It seems that in the traditionally patriarchal context of the novel, motherhood is a prerogative and the only way for women to claim an identity in the family structure.

The above analysis shows that Pearl Buck and Eileen Chang respond in a similar way to the traditional model of the Chinese woman—one subjected to biased, unacceptable or degrading attitude, customs or laws. Both writers insist on the significance of women’s reproductive role in this context. However interestingly and ironically, these sons are actually just simple creatures holding a symbol of continuing life at their hands. In other words, sons are just the carrier of the chain of family. Were they to die, undoubtedly, no one would have cared about their loss of an individual, and another would take his place as a son subsequently. Sons are important just because their identities are sons, but not because they are unique individuals.

As it is cited in Barbara G. Walker’s dictionary, “As the Gypsies put it, ‘the earth is our mother...the secret of life comes from the ground,’ and ‘...the Earth Goddess encompasses the mystery of every woman; the Goddess is the beginning and end of all life on earth’ ”(Walker 339).¹⁵ Besides, Herodotus points that “all known names of the earth were female” (Herodotus 226).¹⁶ Therefore, women are symbolically considered to have a close relationship with the earth. The earth is part of nature, which carries every creature equally to multiply and live on it. As far as this regard is concerned, sharing some similar virtues with the earth, a typically traditional Chinese woman has a lenient heart to hold and forgive everything with her silence and eternal sacrifices. As long as she gets married, she has to

¹⁵ Walker, Barbara. *The Woman’s Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects*. New York: Harper Collins, 1988. 339. Print.

¹⁶ Herodotus. *The Histories* (Henry Cary, trans.). New York: D. Appleton, 1899.

sacrifice almost all her life for her husband and family, and “She is tired because in this great house all feed on her, like suckling children,” wrote Buck (Buck 48). Nevertheless, in Buck’s novel, the heroine feels satisfied to sacrifice herself and to make men benefit from her because it is her responsibility as a woman to do so even if she has no particular feelings with respect to those she has sacrificed herself. Madame Wu says to her son, “In you, I have built my house upon a rock” (Buck 17). Having a biblical undertone, this sentence conjures Jesus’ statement to Peter whose name means “rock” in Greek: “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18). But in the case of *Pavilion of Women*, if a woman’s heart is compared to the earth, man may be “the seed” to be sowed in (Buck 60). Man is compared to the ground base, upon which a woman starts to build her life. Madame Wu knows that as long as she lives she could not be totally free from her husband, because “Through her body he had entered into her soul, too” (Buck 193). Very similarly and coincidentally, Eileen Chang writes in the short story 《色戒》 (*Lust, Caution*), 到男人心里去的路通过胃; 到女人心里去的路通过阴道 (“The road to touch a man’s soul is through his stomach, whereas the road to reach a woman’s soul is through her vagina”; Chang 2007: 8).¹⁷

In the given national and historical context, both heroines are, therefore, represented as models of the Chinese housewife and epitomize womanhood in general. The heroines comply with the expected functions of being a traditional housewife. They are obedient, devoted and loyal to their mothers-in-law and husbands, and do the biddings of social norms by having as many sons as possible against their own will. They live “a standard life” of a woman but at the great price of the loss of their true femininity. To a certain degree, it is gender performativity¹⁸ that makes it plausible for men to exploit the benefit from women, and sometimes it is women who offer the motor to facilitate them for such a kind of oppression by their own hands unconsciously as it will be argued in a subsequent section.

I.1.b Stifled Femininity

Compared with “womanhood”, “femininity” is not a settled state but rather a set of typical female qualities, behaviors, roles or attributes associated with a certain attitude to gender roles.

¹⁷ Chang, Eileen (see also Chang, Ailing). *Lust, Caution* (色, 戒). Trans. Julia Lovell. New York: Anchor Books, 2007. 8.

¹⁸ It will be further developed and illustrated in the section of I.2.

It is suggested in *Women's Studies* that “the assertion that women could escape their biological destiny to forge an existence apart from the family also opened the way to gender theory by detaching femininity from the body” (Smith, 86). To a certain extent, being socially constructed in carrying the general traits of gentleness, empathy and sensitivity, femininity is hardly dependent on biological sex but rather on social and cultural factors, of which women, men, or even transgender people can all possibly exhibit the traits both psychologically and physically. However, the protagonists seem to find it difficult to fulfill their assigned gender roles and functions. They suffer psychologically and socially for being women since their femininity is repressed and stifled. Thus, they start to strive for a sense of self belonging. In the opening pages of Buck's novel we can read the following description of her heroine's physique:

Madame Wu took off her last garments and walked, as slender as a young girl, quite naked across the room and into the bathroom. She took Ying's hand and stepped into the tub, and sat cross-legged in the water while Ying washed her as tenderly as though she were a child. The water was clear, and Madame Wu's exquisite flesh was ivory white against the deep green of the porcelain. The water was about her shoulders and as she thus sat submerged she reflected on her own wisdom. Her body was actually as beautiful as it had ever been. (Buck 28)

Madame Wu is already forty years old but her figure is described in a light which endows the character with grace (cf. slender) youth (cf. young girl), innocence (cf. child) and sensuousness (cf. exquisite flesh). More traits of femininity find their way in the character through behavior. Madame Wu is also perfectly gentle, soft and tender in temperament to everyone, and she always maintains her delicate dignity in front of public and speaks little. However, in order to maintain such a kind of feminine traits and different gender roles assigned to her such as being an authoritative mother-in-law, she doesn't dare to allow herself to be weary as long as she is not alone. Just “a moment she looked wilted as a flower and now almost her age and then she straightened her slender shoulders. It was too soon to be weary; the day was not yet ended” (Buck 26). Even though she is exhausted, she has to pluck up all her spirits to maintain the femininity that a woman should have.

Madame Wu is supposed to be always silent behind her husband by using all her wisdom to stand and suffer his presence only if some decision has to be made by her, for everyone knows that she is the most intelligent figure in the house. So whenever there are some issues to be solved, people come to her to ask for her suggestions. Indeed, she is also intelligent enough to know how to be a silent but pivotal figure without being noticed by the others. However, when she talks with Brother André, she can't help bursting into laughter without

caring to maintain a certain decorum, “now she laughed too, and the deep roar and the delicate silvery laughter mingled together... laugh heartily and did not hide from herself her own wonder”, which causes the astonishment of those who witness the scene. Thus, “Out in the court a bondmaid was washing Madam Wu’s fine undergarments while Ying sat beside her to tell her what to do; Ying caught the bondmaid’s upward wondering look”.

However, everyone dares not think there is some special relationship between them because for Madame Wu herself, “The lady was too rigorous for that” (Buck 186). Everyone can make a big fuss over a minor issue from such a perfect woman who possesses all the feminine virtues endowed by nature. In others words, if “the laughter” is made by an ordinary woman, it is a common thing, but if it is made by Madame Wu who is a perfect woman in Chinese standards, most people might think that it is a strange thing. Therefore, another issue connected with femininity is desire. A woman may become attracted to someone else than her husband, especially when she is not in love with him. We can address that issue in relation to Madame Wu’s femininity. Only after the death of Brother André does she “suddenly recognized him, ‘You whom I love’ she murmured in profound astonishment” (Buck 210). Instead of being sad, Madame Wu is rather calm and said to him, “You live in me; I will do my utmost to preserve your life” (Buck 211). She keeps her feelings for the other man which are not able to be expressed in reality because of conventions. That’s why actually after André died she felt extremely relieved only because he would belong to her and live with her for life by sparing a great misery of being revealed. As it is written in the text, “Death had relieved her of his body. Had he lived they might lost their souls in the snare of the flesh” (Buck 215). The possible scene that she imagines with Brother André is absolutely forbidden by social norms. Even if she realizes that she feels in love with André she has to put all her instinctive desires aside and loves him secretly in her dreams only.

In addition to it, another example of her stifled femininity is that although she craves for freedom by buying her husband a concubine, she finally realizes “as long as she lived, she could not be free from him”, or never (Buck 193). For her, a typical Chinese woman, “love has nothing to do with responsibility” (Buck 193). She doesn’t love him, but she still has to serve him, and fulfills all the normative responsibility except having sex with him.

Correspondingly, femininity is also represented in Chang’s *The Rouge of the North*. A traditional unmarried Chinese girl should know how to show her shyness at the mention of

man and marriage. Yindi, the heroine, “kept her head down and started to pluck veins off her palm-leaf fan” so as to show her consent of marrying such a man that she never met before. After the ceremony of marriage, she is supposed to be dressed and behaved in a very typical feminine but oppressive way, as it is written in the text:

Her elaborate pearl cap covered the hair completely, making a pointed arch low on the forehead like the cut of the bangs. The encrusted head flashed white in the sun. The eyes looked down under the overhanging pearl tassels and pearl flowers, the rouged eyelid all one piece with the deep with the deep pink cheek. She wore a dark blue loose jacket and scarlet pleated skirt. A sash hung down in each narrow pleat, dangling a little gold bell, the tinkle drowned by the firecrackers. (Chang 25)

She performs her female role as a woman dressing herself in such a sullen way to cater to the standards of the family that she married. Nonetheless, after the death of her husband, she has to wear the white mourning during and after the funeral to show her love and respect to her dead husband so that she can get her part of inheritance. However, she attempts to take off the heavy mourning as soon as possible rather than performs the rules strictly. In fact, she sacrifices all her youth while waiting for her husband’s death miserably to get the inheritance. Even if she knows that money may change nothing of her life any more, she still continues to be the slaves of money afterwards, because it has already been part of her life as a married woman.

Besides, because of her husband’s disabilities of being blind and a puny invalid, she has strong desires for sexual fulfillment even if he helped her bear a son. She did have sex with him, but of course she is not satisfied. She even laughs at herself in front of her sisters-in-law, “I don’t know how it (her son) got itself born” (Chang 76). A traditional Chinese concept holds that the bodily harmony and the balance of sexual act between husband and wife are important and necessary for health and life. Obviously, for Yindi, this is impossible to fulfill. So, she sets eyes on her husband’s younger brother called Third Master. When she attempts to seduce him in a Buddhist temple, she expresses herself boldly, “What am I afraid of? All I have is my life, they can take it if they want” (Chang 82).

The malformed marriage (that she got married only for the sake of money, and later found her husband to be an inborn invalid) in her youth made her enter the golden-like bonds, which deprived her from living a normal life. Nonetheless, as a woman, belonging to a marginal group in society, she still desires to be heard and valued as a full member in the family. It is almost futile for her to struggle for her rights in a normal, visible and tender way. Thus, her

only option is to be a fiendish tyrant in a more perverse way than the way people had behaved with her. She does try to pursue her love for the Third Master (who is her husband's younger brother), but she loves him in a desperate and dissipated way against the social norms. Thus, later she at once realizes "she had said the wrong thing" (Chang 82). She regretted expressing her strong will of having sex with the Third Master in such a bold way, especially when she found that he doesn't really want to make love with her. He does like to flirt with her but nothing more, because he is "afraid of hurting" her husband (Chang 83). The specific scene of their struggle is described in the text:

They were pressed so close she could hear a warning gong strike inside him. Theirs was such a desperate situation that they were bound to get found out before long, hardly worthwhile for a man when there were so many women legitimately available. But it really did not feel good to let go at this stage. He managed a half laugh. (Chang 82-83)

Therefore, frustrated and ashamed by the rendez-vous with him, Yindi is very afraid that this shameful secret might be disclosed by Third Master, and tries to commit suicide so as to avoid much more possible persecution or insult from the family. As a matter of fact, the suicide in this context shows that there are a lot of brutal and hidden violence in the way of a transition from the feudal conception to another new way of life.

Therefore, on the way of demonstrating their feminine virtues, both protagonists are frustrated, embittered, and suffocated. Bonnie Smith suggests that femininity as most women lived it was an inauthentic identity (Smith 86). On the one hand, they strive for a sense of self-belonging; on the other hand, they have to surrender to reality. In this way, Buck and Chang ingeniously shape a dramatic tension between the acceptance of an excluding past and the rejection of a more inclusive time to come. Both heroines oscillate between these two identities painfully: either the acceptance of the identity in the past and the rejection of the identity in the future, or the rejection of the identity in the past or the acceptance of the identity in the future. Love, freedom and desire that women dream to accomplish are likely to be strangled at its beginning. Consequently, their situation is that of a victim.

I.1.c The Awakening of Female Consciousness

In both stories the female characters are represented in a lower position than men. For husband, especially in a big house, wife is just like furniture, used without heeding. Buck writes in *Pavilion of Women*, Madame Wu says, "As men and women go, there could be

better than we have had. But now the half of my life is over...Yet the half of ours is far away, Heaven has made this difference between men and women” (Buck 31). Women intrinsically admit that they are lower than men and should act according to men’s view of them. In China, there is a proverb saying that man is the sky of woman. Madame Wu says to her husband, “I want nothing but your happiness...I have always held your happiness in my hands,” (Buck 32) and almost every night, she has to serve him and lull him to go to bed that “she guided him by quick soft pressures on his shoulders, on his arms and hands...And she drew the covers over him and put back one curtain for air and let down the other against the morning light when it came” (Buck 33). She has served him for twenty-four years since they got married. Day after day, year after year, she gets more and more bored. Yindi, the heroine written by Chang, is also taken for granted to take good care of her man. Chosen by the family of Yao (her husband’s family name), she is expected and supposed to compensate the man’s puny invalid body by her rather strong and vigorous body.

The two protagonists are both aware of a fundamental bias regarding gender determined roles and feel frustrated. They desire to break the law of virtuous womanhood in patriarchal strata. In the process of pursuing freedom from man and responsibilities, Madame Wu is aware that “nothing was as easy as she had thought. Freedom was not a matter of arrangement. She had seen freedom hanging like a peach upon a tree. She had nurtured the tree, and when it bore she had seized upon the fruit and found it green” (Buck 201).

As far as freedom is concerned, she is a shrewd planner and plotter in gaining it before her 40th birthday. Nonetheless, she never reaches it completely even she did buy her husband a concubine to free herself. She wins it physically but loses it mentally because her husband reached to her soul through her body. However, having been enlightened by André, a Western ideology’s spokesman, she is “free from these walls” and “her soul is fled” (Buck 155).

Chang’s heroine, Yindi, has a much more frustrated position than Madame Wu. Everyone in Yao’s family including servants look down upon her just because of her low birth origin. She desires to have her own man, and yet is rewarded with a living dead man lying in bed. When she got up late to say her greeting to her mother-in-law, people think that “with the bridegroom in such poor health, the bride must be really rapacious and inconsiderate” (Chang 34). When she was young, she was full of rebellious spirits. She bravely cries for the unfairness given by Yao’s family in the division of inheritance that she waits for, or even

attempts to transgress long-standing ethics to have an adulterous relationship with her brother-in-law. She miserably waits her husbands' death since they got married, by which she can free herself with money. However, with the aging Yindi becomes more and more pious in her observance of established patriarchal ideology which will be further analyzed in other parts of this thesis.

Generally speaking, both protagonists long for freedom to escape the wall built by men with similar drive and resolve. Simultaneously, they are both striving to break the gender determined roles that constrain them. Therefore, the primary task to fulfill feminist propositions is to abolish the unfair authority of cultural determination and social hierarchies, which is likely to pave the way for the awakening of consciousness, and thereby the cause of feminism can be preceded successfully.

I.2 Men Versus Women (Gender Politics): Performance, Stereotypes and Performativity

I.2.a Ethics and Gender

During the first half of 20th century, Chinese people are deeply influenced by feudal traditions and colonialism. The ingrained traditions are usually represented as a series of ritual performances. In order to cater for the social morality or ethics, people, especially women, are expected to stick to traditions, indeed to be its guardian angels. Sometimes when they are too oppressed to stand the rules upon them, they started to think their situation repeatedly or consider how to find an outlet to live in a better way. However, when contemplated acts become habitual year after year, woman usually become more and more coward until she shrinks from taking any action at the end. And thus, year after year, generation after generation, woman is taken for granted to serve for and depend on their man since thousands of years in Chinese history so that even though they are free from man, they still have the latent propensity to behave in an old way. Probably, only in this way can they identify themselves. Otherwise they may suffer from the loss of identity. In other words, women are accustomed to view themselves from the mirror of men, while men gradually gain a kind of dominating power and stipulated rules for protecting their own profits. As for the power of rules, Smith states that "As one performs rules, one empowers them and simultaneously performs their power" (Smith 110). Thus, with this cyclic nature, traditions are enforced repeatedly within generations and among generations with invisible power to make woman

protect man's profits consistently and unconsciously, the role of which is thereby very paramount in the shaping of female consciousness.

In the past of China, woman and man never meet each other before their wedding ceremony. Their marriage is arranged by their parents. It is acknowledged to all that marriage is just a process of mating, and it is a matter of two families rather than the couple themselves. As for a woman, trying her best to love her husband and his family, and to know how to love them is her primary duty and responsibility after marriage. Woman should ask for nothing except that they fulfill their functions. They are also supposed to be not too knowing since no man can endure her woman's greater wisdom. For instance, when Madame Wu chose a concubine for her husband, she has a clear picture of such an appropriate and good one in her mind how this woman should be like:

A country woman would have health and no bad habits and would be likely to have sound children...Mr. Wu must not be made less happy, certainly, by his concubine. "She must be a little stupid", Madame Wu reflected, "in order that she will be content with what he gives her, and not wonder what is between him and me"...she would be a little fearful of this house, and one not stubborn or proud....(Buck 36)

There is also a traditional concept that a woman's body is more important than her brain, "into her body, as into a chalice" (Buck 60). If man is the seed, what woman should do is to bring it to flower and fruit with her fertility in creating another being like him. Otherwise, a sterile woman is considered "evil", for no woman is content without children. Or rather, if a woman gives birth to a girl, it makes no difference than none. In this regard, it is also shown in Chang's story. When Yindi bears her first child, Old Mistress (who is her mother-in-law) is very pleased, especially when it turns out to be a boy. People think that her belly "has shown them", though her husband suffers from inborn disability (Chang 54). More interestingly, no one cares about who this boy is, but rather just considers him a symbol of continuing life and immortality. Afterwards, a woman becomes a mother since she performed the tasks assigned to her, and thereby her female identity becomes established under the force of socially and culturally constructed traditions.

I.2.b Stereotypical Roles: Resisting Traditions Leads to Cultural Conflicts.

According to the book named *Stereotypes as Explanations: the formation of meaningful beliefs about social groups* written by Craig McGarty, Vincent Y. Yzerbyt and Russel Spears, stereotypes are individual perceptions of belonging to groups that share similar characteristics,

circumstances, values and beliefs, which is a crucial part for social psychology because social objects affect us through psychological representation within individual minds rather than through the application of physical force. Social, cultural and cognitive factors are crucial in the formation of stereotypes. Besides, they identify three principles for stereotypes as follows: a) stereotypes are aids to explanation, b) stereotypes are energy-saving devices, and c) stereotypes are shared group belief.¹⁹

In the two novels, with the intervention of foreign culture, more and more women deviate from the “correct” stereotypical way that they were instructed by Confucianism (whose function is actually similar to the Western “Church”). Although the two protagonists deviate into totally different ways, Buck and Chang both convey the same theme—the awakening of female consciousness around 1950s, which rightly finds its way from the consistent changes of heroines’ gender roles in the novels.

A. The Stereotype of Being a Daughter Before Marriage

Madame Wu and Yindi, the two protagonists, at the first appear to be naïve but intelligent and resourceful, saucy but not evil and think in a spontaneous and independent way. All of them are expected to have small, delicate bound feet with the help of bondage since they were very young. Serving as both a slave and child bride, some of girls are sold by their parents since they were only around five years old or a little more for child marriage just for the sake of money-saving. Their wisdom and talents are much less appreciated and encouraged than that of men. It is acknowledged and accepted to all that “It is not all evil that our ancestors taught us that women ought not to read and write” (Buck 175). However, with the deepening of oppression from the bondage of religion and social norms in both mental and physical, they lose the original themselves or are directed to live in a more and more marginal and suffocating way. Sometimes they are possibly at the edge of thinking about how to break the bonds, but most of time, they forget to take any actions because the over years thinking has become habitual and part of their life. Afterwards, they destroy and bury all their spontaneous and instinctive ideas before the coming of marriage.

B. The Stereotype of Being a Wife in Marriage

¹⁹ McGarty, Craig, Vincent Y. Yzerbyt, and Russell Spears. *Stereotypes as Explanations: the formation of meaningful beliefs about social groups*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 2. Print.

(a) The good and responsible wife

An acknowledged stereotypical good Chinese wife should be responsible for the whole family especially for pleasing her husband. Husband can regulate the sexual disposition and fertility of his wife's body. To a certain degree, wife lacks self-autonomy in their relationship. As long as a woman marries with a man, she should submit herself completely to him.

However, Madame Wu, who is the protagonist in Pearl Buck's *Pavilion of Women*, refuses to give birth to any child for her husband after her 40th birthday to express her individuality among the whole big family so as to catch or grasp her last self-esteem and freedom. She uses her unique bodily maternity to protest against the bidding of social norms that women should be children-bearing for life.

(b). The devil-like and desirous wife

According to Freudian theories, women are said to be consumed by penis envy and other disagreeable qualities such as neuroses and psychoses, on display when they try to resist the internal power of patriarchy in the psyche.²⁰ That's possibly the reason for why women obey to men. In the novel of *the Rouge of the North*, the protagonist has a strong desire for sex since her husband is innately disabled. She is not satisfied with her comfortable affluent life and attempted to seduce her husband's younger brother bravely, which is definitely forbidden and unforgivable by society at the time. For the purpose of getting much more lands and assets after the death of her husband, she additionally hails curses down on others in order to be valued and articulates her resistance in a bizarre voice so as to be heard.

C. The stereotype of being sons' mother

A mother is a woman, who has given birth to a child, supposed to be nice, kind and responsible to the whole family. In Eileen Chang's own words, from her essay, "*On Women*," "No matter how vicious a woman is, she still carries at least a little goodness like 'mother earth' in her spirits. A lovely woman is really lovely...."²¹ Besides, in a traditional Confucian family, the mother of grown sons has great influence over them, and wields almost absolute authority over her daughters-in-law through economy or long-standing Confucian instructions,

²⁰ Smith, Bonnie G. *Women's Studies: The Basics*. London: Routledge, 2013.106. Print.

²¹ Chang, Eileen. *Tan Nü Ren (On Women)*, in *Liuyan (Floating words)*. Changsha: Hunan Literature and Art Press. 2003. 88. Print.

just like the two heroines' performances in the two novels. However, their identities in terms of names and attributes are variable and changes from story to story, though they perform the same gender roles as a mother. According to the novels, mothers are represented in two ways as follows:

(a). The responsible but love-lacking mother

Madame Wu, in the novel of Pearl Buck's *Pavilion of Women*, is responsible for everyone in the family and well-behaved in front of public, but she loves nobody. She is a mother of four sons but she loves neither of them. She never allows any of her children to suck her breasts so as to "keep her little breasts like lotus buds under water" (Buck 28). Being a biological mother, she doesn't play the role of providing the overflowing nourishment for her creatures as a nursing mother does. Walker suggests in *The Women's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects* that "mother's milk created mystic connections with the home place and the clan spirit" (Walker 303).²² Thus, obviously Madame Wu is never identified with the family in the Wu house and she wouldn't like to do so as well. Even if her body is performing rites and rituals, her spirits may wander far away. She is an entire imposter in all of her roles. What she desires is nothing but freedom. However, she at last finds her own way to balance the real life and her spiritual world at the end with the help of the foreign priest—Brother André. If she is a patient, Western culture could be a physician who saves her from many roles for the rest of life after the age of 40.

(b). The egoistic and imposing mother

According to the psychological analysis of Lacan's theories, the "mirror stage" functions in the formation of any personality, which occurs in infancy when a child, identifying with the mother as part of his or her self, finds her absent (Smith 88). Thus, likewise, if the mother identifies with her child as part of herself, the mother may suffer from the splitting of the self with distress, and trauma, and even search for wholeness for life when her child leaves or is leaving her, for example, a son's absence for marriage. In the novel of *The Rouge of the North*, the protagonist Yindi, an extreme egoist, tries her best to identify with her son as part of herself even after he gets married. In order to confine her son completely at home, she even tempts him to smoke opium in the bed just beside her. Only in this way can she feel that he

²² Walker, Barbara. *The Woman's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects*. New York: Harper Collins, 1988. 303. Print.

belongs to her wholly, as it is written in the text, “They felt so safe together, a little sad too at the reunion. For a moment she was close to tears, willing to live her life through him. He was a part of her and male” (Chang 150). She sees her son as her only man in life. Thus, she imposes her animal-like devoted love on her son with castration and brutality so as to construct her ego. She curses her first daughter-in-law and hounds her to death cruelly so that no one can share her son with herself. She spends all her life in searching for the only wholeness from her son because she has never succeeded in gaining something completely. She abandons to marry her lover Mr. Liu when she was young for the sake of money. Nevertheless, she finally finds that she has no money at hands, and is still deeply looked down upon even though she get married in a big and rich family. She risks the rest of her life for merely seeking sexual satisfaction from a man but fails. Therefore, finally what she can do is only to find some compensation from her son to heal her wound of previous frustration, because he is the only one to connect and construct her past and current life. In this sense, still, the protagonist is actually more of a victim than a booty-holder.

However, at the same time, it is true that resisting tradition usually leads to cultural conflicts, because no one can immediately accept something as opposed to stereotypical concepts formed over centuries. Take *Pavilion of Women* for example. There appear conflicts between Madame Wu, the protagonist, who is the Mistress of the whole family, and Madame Kang who is the Mistress of another family whose social status is almost parallel to Madame Wu. They are close friends since they have been little kids. Craving for true freedom and knowledge, Madame Wu who learns from not only the traditional Chinese books but also foreign classes later, is much more informed than Madame Kang, which leads to the divergence in term of the marriage life between Madame Wu’ s son Liangmo and Madam Kang’s daughter Linyi:

“That’s to say, he demands something a little above the common,” Madame Wu said bitterly.

Madame Kang wagged her head, “Then let him find it outside,” she said. “Let him take up his book learning and let him find a work to soak up his discontent. It has nothing to do with Linyi.”

“Meichen, you affront me!” Madame Wu exclaimed.

“Linyi had better to come home for a while,” Madame Kang replied. “You and Fengmo, you can study your books and do without her until you see her value!”

Madame Wu saw this friendship, deeply dear, tremble and crack. “Meichen, do we quarrel?” she exclaimed.

Kang replied with passion, “I have been a good friend to you always, and I have never judged you even though I saw you thinking thoughts above a woman. But I have always known that you were too wise, too clever for happiness....” (Buck 167)

The text shows that, between Madame Wu and Madame Kang, there exist not only conflicts in the arranged marriage in the past, but also the conflicts between modern westernized things and traditional concepts. People do need knowledge or innovations from other cultures to make progress. Nonetheless, they might confront a lot of difficulties from the traditional environment because sometimes it is easy to absorb new ideas and involved with it unconsciously, but it is hard to convince and identify themselves with the rest people of the society who prefer to stick to traditions. It is essential to make themselves be accepted and understood in order to achieve their own female identity. Nonetheless, conflicts can still be seen as a primary agent of social changes and progress. Therefore, no matter how adventuresome the attempts of consciousness are, it is possible that the society could move and thrive on contradictions and obstacles.

Women belong to one of the oppressive groups in all strata of society, but to some extent, they are also the motor and grease for a family or even world by sticking to different stereotypes. Meanwhile, the changes of two heroines' social roles with ageing can also indicate that the awakening female consciousness has already been on its way. It is just a matter of time.

I.2.c Rites Versus Rights: A Performative Repetition of Gender Roles.

Rituals and rites are used frequently and repeatedly in daily life. For example, we utilize them in holding a marriage ceremony or an opening ceremony of Olympic Games so as to have some performative effects. According to Judith Butler in *Bodies that matter*, performativity is thus not a singular "act", for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition. (Butler 12)²³

The same set of rules or conventions can be repeatedly used to represent various acts by performers. For instance, in the past of Chinese feudal society, women were considered generally inferior to men and supposed to submit to their husband after marriage. Moreover, a lot of women were illiterate, because people said that women shouldn't read books or much more learning than men. Otherwise, they were not a qualified wife for their husband. On the contrary, they had to obey to their husband's orders and served him heartedly. In this regard,

²³ Butler, Judith, *Bodies That Matter*. New York: Routledge, 1993. Print.

performativity is closely related to gender roles, which is through the perception of a certain image as a role pertaining to tradition and law, or rather culture and time. The cyclic nature of their relationship is performed within each generation and generation after generation. Butler notes in *Bodies that matter*: “As a result of this reformulation of performativity, gender performativity cannot be theorized apart from the forcible and reiterative practice of regulatory sexual regimes” (Butler P15).

As far as these two novels are concerned, long-standing Confucian instructions are the primary source of their gender performativity. It has been formed since thousands of years. Women are educated and cultivated by its stipulations and standards. Smith makes a statement in *Women’s Studies* that “There is no ‘originality’ in a person’s character or internal life but rather the performances of powerful rules in thought and deed” (Smith 110). Undeniably, rites and rituals play an important role in the formation of social values in terms of marriage, love and life and so on.

In both of the two novels, when protagonists play the role as son’s mother, they both help their son choose a wife whose status corresponds to their social positions, classes, and family reputations. And then, they would get married without seeing mutual appearances not to mention mutual acquaintance. In *Pavilion of Women*, Madame Wu chooses a wife for her sons one by one. She takes it as a sort of responsibility to arrange her children’s marriage. Whenever one is finished, she feels much more relieved. In *The Rouge of the North*, Yindi just could not stop inflicting all her previous miserable experiences that she suffered when she was as a daughter-in-law upon her own daughters-in-law until they subsequently die of physical or mental torment from Yindi and until her son says to her “he didn’t want one” any more (Chang 173). In this case, female and male are deprived of freedom of marriage, while they take it for granted that marriages should be like this, generations by generations. In other words, people are not aware of what they suffered, or they never bother to break long-standing performative rules. Otherwise, various conflicts emerge.

Consequently, the transmission of this kind of gender performativity hinders the evolution necessary to move towards a well balanced social model. Before their secular concepts are formed by gender performativity, Madame Wu once said enthusiastically that she loves her handsome husband, and Yindi falls in love with Xiao Liu secretly. Nevertheless, afterwards, both of them lose their ability to love anyone wholeheartedly but only with duty or desire

lingering on their mind. Therefore, resistance to the bonds of social norms or religion is essential to the resistance to the patriarchal order, and thereby the feminine roles can be renegotiated.

I.3 Is the poetics of gender in the two novels echoing an awakening?

I.3.a Performances of Female Identity

Generally speaking, the performances of female identity are under the forms of silent submission in one way or another in the society as a whole. Judith Butler suggests that, as far as gender identity is concerned, people become intelligible through becoming gendered in conformity with recognizable standards of gender intelligibility in society to a certain degree.²⁴ Gender, class and religion are all markers of female identity. Correspondingly, female identity is easily to be “in a state of flux”²⁵ because of gender, class and religion. In fact, Chinese women are terribly constrained by deep-rooted traditions and conceptions which have been inherited by ancestors over thousands of years. They perform their gender and identity in exactly the same way that they are told and taught. Instead of acting according to their own will, women get accustomed to act in accordance with men’s view of them unconsciously. According to de Beauvoir,

A man formed his subjectivity in the relationship to “woman” as other or object, spinning his own identity by creating images of someone that was not him. Instead of building selves in a parallel way, women accepted male images of them as their identity....it was the result of a misguided choice to accept someone else’s construction of their being. (Smith 86)

Thus, the development of male-female relationship is imbalanced at the beginning of the formation of gender identity, and thereby the opposition between male and female causes struggle and gender conflicts.

Chinese women participate in the performance of sex and gender roles in the same oppressive way over thousands of years. They are supposed to be slaves of men and willing to be their loving slaves since they were born. It is a kind of rules and regulations to see themselves from men’s perspectives. Thus, put it into another way, it is the cultural force that plays the performative roles and determines women’s body images so as to create sexual difference and their identity.

²⁴ Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge, 1999. 22. Print.

²⁵ Suggested in Smith. Bonnie G. *Women’s Studies: The Basics*. London: Routledge, 2013.161. Print

Additionally, apart from the influence of the “Other” sex in constructing female identity, a long-term cruel oppression and with the cultural integration of Chinese culture and Western culture also contribute to the reconstruct of it, some women start to think about their situation and position in society and realize that the rejection of their previous identity and femininity so as to evolve is necessary for freedom and equality, which coincidentally corresponds to the spirits of Queer Theory. In this case, language can play a decisive role in such an action and has crucial functions for representing the poetics of female identity, so that women can find an outlet and give voice to demeaned constraints and overt discrimination from society. In these two novels, many symbols are employed to indicate the awakening of a gender oriented perception of society leading to the female consciousness.

I.3.b Symbolism is a poetic item that connects the protagonists’ awakening in the two novels

Different from naturalism and realism, symbolism is an anti-idealistic style to represent reality through creative, individual imaginations. If one knows the symbol’s past implications, it is true that different people may provide different imaginative responses within the same context. Additionally, writers can also use symbols to convey their distinctive ideas that may be constrained by public opinions or easily cause social issues in a euphemistic way. As for the use of symbols, Barbara G. Walker suggests in *Women’s Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects* that:

It is especially important for women to learn more about the language of symbols, because many common religious symbols were stolen from ancient women-centered systems and reinterpreted in the contexts of patriarchy. As women struggle out from under centuries of patriarchal oppression, they find it necessary to reclaim their symbols and reapply them to feminine interests (Walker xi).

The awakening of female consciousness is indeed explored and indicated by Buck and Chang through various symbols. For example, in Buck’s *Pavilion of Women*, “wall” is mentioned many times by the author. The soul of Madame Wu “had outstripped her life” and “had gone out far beyond the four walls within her body lived” (Buck 110). “Wall”, as a symbol of confinement and hindrance, is constructed by men, which prevents Madame Wu from gaining the freedom that she craves for. She gets married within these walls, she bears children within these walls and she performs all her roles and duties within these walls. Before the awakening of her life situation, “her soul has never left this house before...” (Buck 157). Nevertheless, “she longed to rise out of these four walls and travel everywhere upon the earth to see

everything and to know all” (Buck 156). The mother earth is a tolerant and lenient space, from which human spirits can be revitalized and new life can be revived equally no matter who you are and where you are from.

By contrast, Eileen Chang has found her own cynically special way in contributing to gender politics by depicting Yindi as an abject, dangerous but vulnerable figure. To an extent, Chang is a marginal writer in the field of gender politics in this aspect. Take the Chang’s heroine as an example, when Yindi gets older and older, she wouldn’t like to go out of her house and just confine herself to her opium bed. For her, room is her shelter from chaos outside the door in that “They had their own atmosphere here in the clouds of blue smoke, and this was home....” (Chang 170). She closes the door of her soul as a human being and acts like a ghost-like defender to hurt anyone who approaches her. Yindi lives in an extremely self-closed world by only lying on her opium couch year after year to prevent herself from being victimized by the turbulent society. She never expects something better in life, but only not much worse than others.

At the beginning, the door-pounding scene occurs by describing someone who “kept pounding the board” (Chang 2) so as to flirt with the young heroine Yindi, and at the very end of the novel the pounding recurs in her remembrance of things past. She is shrinking from opening the door. If human’s spiritual world is compared to a room, the door of the room must be an outlet of soul. Pounding the door is endowed with a symbolic, compelling force to open Yindi’s soul or universal women’s spiritual world in general. Thus, from the beginning to the end, the “door-pounding” scene is a kind symbolism of actions resonating loudly throughout the whole novel, which echoes the awakening of female consciousness.

Besides, in both of these novels, names of characters symbolize and represent the general gender oriented perception of society in different ways. Names, a part of every culture, are determined according to definite rituals and specific rules respectively. In Chinese culture, names are divined with some magic power that is expected to provide for the needs of individuals and have certain positive effects on people’s destiny, life or career. Certainly, a name doesn’t change something except that it has some psychological effects and magical, religious aspects. Nonetheless, names can be used to identify ourselves and they are also personal ways of identifying someone else. Based on this idea, name and identity can possibly have a kind of symbolic relations between the society and the individual in literary writings so

that writers can present their pivotal theme concisely but expressively.

Take the name of the concubine of Mr. Wu in Buck's novel as an example. When she firstly comes to the family Wu, she has no name because she is a foundling. Actually, no name might mean that she can be named in numerous possible ways. Or rather, she represents a group of women as a whole instead of only herself in Chinese society who lives in the same poor and oppressive conditions as her. Later, Madame Wu said, "you must have a name, and I will give it to you. I will name you Ch'iuming. It means Bright Autumn. In this name I set your duty clear. His is the autumn, yours the brightness" (Buck 74). Madame Wu means to expect another woman to bring much more happiness and pleasures to her husband Mr. Wu. However, the fact is that her brightness doesn't fall upon Mr. Wu but upon Ch'iuming herself who carries the name. She prefers to die rather than force herself to love someone that she can't, and she does get the bright freedom that she deserves at the end.

Meanwhile, the symbolic meaning of the two protagonists' names has closer relations with the themes that Buck and Chang would like to convey.

1.3.c Symbolism in the Name of Buck's Heroine—Ailian

The name of Buck's heroine Madame Wu is "爱莲"(Ailian) in Chinese. It means "loving lotus" or "love and lotus". As for the symbol of lotus, Barbara G. Walker suggests in the dictionary that:

In the Middle East, the primal lotus was Lilith, named from the *lilu* or lotus. She could be identified with both the Egyptian Goddess and with India's Mother Kali, to whom the lotus was also sacred. In fact, Kali was one of Lilith's other names. Bearing bud, bloom, and seed pod together, a lotus is Virgin-Mother Crone.

The lotus was often taken as a symbol of all four of the classical elements, indicating the primal condition before creation when all these elements were united in the cosmic womb. **Earth** is the mud in which the flower is rooted; **water** the surrounding support of its stalk. Its blossom is said to partake of the essence of **air**, releasing its perfume into the breezes; and its fertility is drawn from the **fire** of the sun. (Walker 429)

If a woman is compared to lotus, she should have the virtues of being sacred like Virgin-Mother, being like earth and water nurturing the seeds sown inside, and being nice and passionate providing agreeableness for surroundings. Correspondingly, Madame Wu, rightly pragmatically similar to such a lotus, almost has all these virtues. Being a mother, she is dutiful but awesome in front of four sons who trust her wisdom far more than they do their own. In order to make them have a happy marriage, she handles and solves family problems

in an organized way. Being a Mistress, she is seemingly gentle, kind and tender with delicate dignity and promising, beautiful voice. Being an adopted mother of twenty children, she is dutiful and caring. Being a mother-in-law, she is always capable of reconciling the conflicts between sons and their wives.

However, even though there is a word “love” in her name, ironically, she never knows how to love someone. She performs exactly and perfectly her gender roles in part of her name “lotus”, but in reality she doesn’t perform the other part of her name “love”. So, she is not an entirely accomplished woman that her name expects her to achieve, because her life is without “love”. She finally acknowledges that she has “never loved any child” and “never been able to love anyone” (Buck 202) and she realizes that nothing could be reward enough to her husband and sons for her unloving heart (Buck 233). Being awakened by the Western priest, Brother André she comes to know that she must primarily think how she can free others so as to free herself, and she must know how to help others fulfill their love so as to know how to love and be truly loved instead of being awesomely respected by others. André as a Western representative, effects her transformation from a given order to a complete identity as her name suggests.

1.3.d Symbolism in the Name of Chang’s Heroine—Yindi

The name of Chang’s heroine is “银蒂” (Yindi), which is the homophone of the Chinese phrase “阴蒂” (Yindi) that means “Vagina” in English. As for the symbol of “Vagina”, Barbara G. Walker suggests that:

As the gate of life and the “devourer” of men, figuratively speaking, the vagina has been given elaborate and euphemistic symbolism. The many substitutes for it in symbol and myth show how men have concentrated on its attributes with a mixture of awe, fear and desire.

Vagina symbolism is plain in the sacred trumpets of the male-dominated Mundurucu people of South America....

Euphemism is more the rule than the exception in vagina symbols, showing that men generally feel uneasy or threatened by their meaning. Many stories about vagina imply danger to men. (Walker 328)

According to the above definition, it can be concluded that Vagina is generally a symbol of something awesome, fearful, dangerous, dominating and desirous. If so, being a wife, mother and mother-in-law, Yindi rightly partakes of such a figure. Being a wife, she is demanding, desirous and disgruntled with her blind, puny invalid husband. Being a mother, she is dominating and coercive in arranging his marriage and social activities that a normal man

may possibly participate till her son is totally demoralized by her plots. Being a mother-in-law, she is rather miserly tyrant and torments her daughter-in-law with a spiteful and vengeful mentality.

Besides, being similar to Madame Wu, the protagonist in *The Rouge of North* named Yindi doesn't know how to love someone. Even though she craves for grandsons, paradoxically and ironically, she not only doesn't love them at all but also feel sick of them, not to mention love. As the text goes in the novel, "The Children were underfoot all the time but to move the lot of them downstairs would be letting Dungmei off lightly, although there were times when she got on her nerves" (Chang 173). For her, grandsons are nothing but symbols of her victory over other people who once looked down upon her. She outlives these people, and her grandsons, as symbols of continuity of her life, will continue outliving much more people whom she hated and was jealous of.

All in all, she almost transgresses all the conventional concepts of Chinese feminine virtues. In this sense, her name symbolizes all her characteristics during life-time and the typical female performances for fighting against the social oppression as the name "Ailian" of the character Madame Wu in *Pavilion of Women* does, though the way of her awakening is comparatively brutal, rancorous and perverse. Rose holds that social and political change requires an acceptance of the symbolic order of language and she appeals to a conception of language as the means of articulating one's position "in a voice which can be heard" (Weir, 140; cited from Rose, 147).²⁶ Thus, in this case, being a crucial part of some languages especially Chinese, names are meaningfully used as a theme-expressing and thought-provoking medium in a symbolic way so that female voice can be articulated euphemistically but powerfully.

II. Fundamental Differences between the two representations of the awakening of female consciousness in the two novels disclosed by the handling of the narrative and thematic, other poetic items.

II.1 Two Fundamentally Different Novels (Narrative)

²⁶ Weir, Allison. *Sacrificial Logics: Feminist Theory and the Critique of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1996. Print.

II.1.a. Major Differences of Cultural Perspectives, Coming of Age, and Struggle Between Good and Evil in terms of Story, Text and Narration

From the above analysis of Chinese womanhood, femininity, stereotypes, performativity, the poetics of gender etc, we can see that there are a lot of similarities between two novels. However, specific ways of highlighting the performance of female identity, changes of protagonists' family roles and specific ways of protagonists' struggle for true love and freedom, contributing to the representation of cultural conflicts, and social and individual changes, are viewed and represented by two writers through different social and cultural prisms in the same circumstance. Thus, to a certain degree, they are fundamentally different novels in terms of conveying the theme—the awakening of consciousness, from the perspectives of culture and narrative techniques.

A. Cultural Conflicts

The cultural integration of Chinese culture and Western culture brings out a lot of social changes and provides Chinese women with some fresh air for being conscious of their social position, which, at the same time, effects a revolutionary transformation of social orders. According to Rose's theory, in this period, there appears the maintenance of the tension between identity and resistance to identity (Weir 137).²⁷ Some women are indeed awakened by its influences to different degrees. However, later, some women, whenever new ideas approach them from time to time, are at an extreme loss in mentality by either becoming more and more conservative or not knowing how to behave themselves both in body and language. They are facing the conflict between "identity and nonidentity", which is "essential for social and political change"²⁸. Therefore, the cultural integration usually has two effects: negative and positive. Buck's *Pavilion of Women* is the representative of its positive influences, which is inclined to stress the beauty and kindness of female life and social progress. On the contrary, Chang's *The Rouge of the North* represents some of its negative regards by focusing on the ugliness and abjection of female mentality and feudal oppression.

B. The Coming of Age

²⁷ Cited from Allison Weir's *Sacrificial Logics*, P137.

²⁸ Cited from Allison Weir's *Sacrificial Logics*, P138.

Moreover, when Buck's protagonist Madame Wu is a young wife, what she knows is just how to be loyal and responsible to her husband and family. With the coming of age, she becomes much happier and richer in a state of "good" mind and mentality. However, she suffers a lot from the experience of changes before she really grows. For instance, after the conversation with Brother André, the soul of Madame Wu is "fled":

For a while her soul had been wandering among the stars she had neglected all else, and the burdens of this great house had dropped from her. She had cast them off and left them behind her as surely as a nun escapes the travail of womanhood, as surely as a priest escapes the burden of manhood. She felt angry with Brother André this morning because he had tempted her to such freedom, and she was afraid of herself because she had yielded. When she woke guilt was as heavy on her as though she had given herself to a secret lover. (Buck 158)

The above description shows that Madame Wu is experiencing a period of self-contradiction and self-persuasion. On the one hand, she desires for freedom and rights. On the other hand, when freedom really approaches her, she is at a loss and upset in that she is afraid of any possible changes in her present life. Nonetheless, after André points out her selfishness in the role of being a mother and wife, she finally realizes that she should live a life for love rather than just performing her duties and responsibilities.

On the contrary, with the coming of age, Chang's protagonist Yindi becomes more and more conservative and evil. All her youthful desire is to break the law of virtuous womanhood. For instance, she boldly opposes the arrangement of marriage by her brother in a patriarchal society. She boldly reproaches her brother,

And you have shame? You've lost all of Father and Mother's face. So I'm shouting—if I didn't make enough of row you'd have sold your own sister even. If I had known I'd never have shown myself. I felt so cheap and all your doing and you call me shameless? (Chang 4)

However, unfortunately, she fails in opposing her brother's arrangement and in transgressing the feudal restraints. Besides, she is also tempted by money and accepts this arranged marriage without noticing a snare in it. As for the reason for confusion and dismay in consciousness-raising, Bonnie G. Smith suggests in *Women's studies*,

A consciousness-raised woman or one who identifies as feminist is often ridiculed, verbally abused, or even assaulted for daring to speak up for herself and against inequality because she is going against the idea that everyone is equal, when all the statistics show clearly that they are not. (Smith 143)

After the marriage, she bravely transgresses the traditional boundary of feminine virtues by succumbing to the seduction of her brother-in-law rather than living a decent and loyal life that a traditional Chinese woman is supposed to observe, but finally she fails to do so as well.

Thus, she gets frustrated time after time and cools down again and again, thereby becoming more and more pious, conservative and evil in observing the patriarchal ideology to extreme with the aging.

She dressed conservatively but even she showed her ankles, whittled slim, in white cotton stockings (Chang 101).

She kept to Old Mistress's way in everything except for her mouthful of smoke (Chang 121).

Moreover, she rejects and tries her best to avoid any western influence to herself and her son:

Those that could afford it got round the rule by sending their sons abroad or to British Hong Kong for schooling. Even girls went to school in the last couple of years, at least the younger ones. Hers was about the only household that adhered strictly to the unspoken tradition. Yensheng (her son) filled his father's place and lay low...she knew it would be a losing business one way or another for him to go out into the world. It was not that she didn't think him intelligent enough—just innate motherly pessimism, as common and incurable as a mother's pessimism. (Chang 146)

Maybe only in this way can she feel that she would lose nothing, though she gains nothing. She wishes that nothing becomes worse, though she never expects anything to become much better. Chang narrates “a belated epiphany” (Wang xxiv) to her at the end of novel by her thinking and remembrance implicitly, which leaves a sort of mysterious and ambiguous echo to readers.

C. The Protagonist's Perspectives in the Text

As an individual in society, Madame Wu in *Pavilion of Women* is an entire outsider. She is the only and also the first woman who thinks about the question of love and freedom. She is the cleverest figure of the family as a whole, but she can't love anyone of them. On the one hand, she does everything possible to keep her husband satisfied in all things; on the other hand, she opens her mind to Western ideology and observes people and things around her in a critical way.

However, Yindi in *The Rouge of the North*, as an extreme observer of old traditions, is not an outsider but an extreme insider especially when she gets older and older. When she is

young, she does think about marrying herself with a man that she loves. But when she contemplates the poverty that she has suffered when she was young and she would suffer if she marries a poor man, she prefers to yield herself to marry for money than for love. She doesn't like to distinguish herself but to make herself as common as possible, because she never expects something better but only not worse than others. It is just her way of life.

D. The Deliberate Underrepresentation of Men in the Narration

Besides, both writers represent the awakening of female consciousness under the condition of men-dominated culture and society that should take men as a pivotal idea. Nonetheless, they deliberately make men underrepresented or disabled in the text during the process of representing women in these two novels. The understatement of one character may be an improvement of highlighting the other character. There are not so many actions about what men do in the novels, but mostly some descriptions of their states. According to Rimmon-Kenan,

I do not insist on an opposition between state and event (or stasis and process), because it seems to me that an account of an event may be broken down into an infinite number of intermediary states. This is why a narrative text for a story-paraphrase need not include any sentence denoting a dynamic event; a succession of states would imply a succession of events...(Rimmon-Kenan 15)

Once a succession of events involving the same individuals establishes itself as the predominant story element of a text (and, unfortunately, there are no clear-out criteria for predominance), it becomes the main story-line. (ibid, 16)

Thus, based on the above statements, we can see that it is not necessarily to represent all the events out. State itself is a special form of event. Sometimes, a plain state can indicate more things than a specifically elaborated event. Otherwise, the kernel figure may be switched to the other gender and the representation of the theme, for instance, of feminism in the awakening of female consciousness is likely to be weakened or even overlapped.

For example, in *Pavilion of Women*, after living with the new concubine—Ch'iuming, Mr. Wu is surprising to be “thinner and less ruddy than he had been”, his eyes are “now dull” , and his full lips are “pale” (Buck 191). Afterwards, while he lives with his beloved lover—Jasmine, he becomes “drowsy and content and asked nothing but to be let alone” (Buck 310). All know that whatever has been his place it is all but empty now. No one pays attention to his existence during a long period of time. Similarly, Chang takes the way of ellipsis to extreme in *The Rouge of the North*. After the psychological depiction of the

hanging of Yindi herself for attempted adultery, the image is suddenly switched to “A large black-framed photograph of Second Master knocked on the wall”. It tells that the death does come to the family after the hanging, but it is not related to the protagonist Yindi, but her invalid husband. As to what happens to her man, no one knows. What readers know about him is only from the impression of an invalid, blind man to his static, desolate burial. Thus, the briefly narrated or omitted content produces a sense of shock and irony. For that matter, Rimmon-Kenan suggests clearly that,

Not only can the story be recognized as story even without them, but the text goes a long way toward preventing such causal connections from becoming obvious and presenting the conjunction of events as inevitable but not necessarily casual. Likewise, the chain of events does not display any obvious inversion or closed cycle: the state of affairs at the end is different from the initial one, but they are not symmetrically related (ibid, 19).

In the past, normally speaking, it could be catastrophe for a Chinese woman without a husband because she may become harshly despised of all. Ironically, as for the protagonist Yindi, she becomes much stronger than ever before. She feels more and more resolute that “a good death is not as good as a bad life” (Chang 89), thereby the theme of representing female fortitude and perseverance floating on the narrative surface naturally.

The difference is that men in Buck’s novel are mainly weak in mentality and intelligence. She provides readers with an impression of the husband’s incapability of handling his own personal love affairs, not to mention managing and undertaking family inheritance. Accordingly, men in Chang’s novel are primarily disabled in body. The biggest disability for a traditional Chinese woman might be infertility. The husband of the protagonist in *The Rouge of the North* is born with post-polio syndrome, which means her masculinity is at risk as he is unable to be “a real man”. Nonetheless, the female protagonist is fertile and gives birth to a son for him. So, in this regard, compared with men, female are much more powerful, fertile and vital. It is male whose body is connected with disabilities but rather female. Actually, the representation of female’s able-bodied is one of the conditions for female consciousness.

It is far from enough to talk about female consciousness without men, because it makes it easier to understand and investigate violence, economic inequity, or the place of women in the social hierarchy. Additionally, women construct their identity by creating images of someone that is not her---“Other” (Smith 86). In the past, women took it for granted that their life should be husband-centered and they were subordinate to their husband since the day when

they got married. However, undeniably, men are still very powerful even if they are absent. According to the studies of Smith in the classroom,

Woman may speak about their own feeling of powerless but not want to confront the invisible power of masculinity because to do so go against unspoken social norms... (female students) mostly wanted to hear male opinions and also men's opinions ring in students' ears even when there are no men present, and they can censor women's thought and speech even in their absence. (Smith 143)

In fact, the female performativity of the unspoken social norms are one of the biggest obstacles that prevent women from making progress on the way to the awakening. Men have the absolute power in Chinese culture, but they are omitted deliberately in both two stories, which actually contributes to the representation of women and the depreciation of man. In this way, ellipse does create an ironic stance of men.

Therefore, from the above, we can see that even though these two similar works—Pearl Buck's *Pavilion of Women* (1948) and Eileen Chang's *The Rouge of the North* (1955) are almost equally forceful and influential to awaken women from their deep slumber and arouse their attention for the oppression, they interpret and promote the awakening of female consciousness from fundamentally different social perspectives in terms of story, text and narration. In this sense, they are fundamentally different novels. At the same time, the theme of the awakening of female consciousness is vividly embodied by female characters and various character-indicators in novels.

II.1.b Major Differences Leading to Different Characterizations of Two Heroines

In fact, a traditional Chinese family is a sort of symbolic unit of fertility. Even if women couldn't give birth to Children anymore, or rather even if they get their "Sexual Freedom" from their husbands due to another woman's interference, their familial relationships still don't enter into a breakdown, for she fulfills her productive duty and it turns to another woman. Parents are affectionate, Children are dutiful, and Siblings show their love and respect to each other according to principles, which is essentially influenced by Confucianism. Besides, in a traditional Confucian family, the mother of grown sons has great influence over them, and especially wields almost absolute authority over her daughters-in-law through economy or long-standing Confucian instructions.

Due to the different backgrounds of Eileen Chang and Pearl S. Buck, they perceive the same society from different perspectives. They also belong to different traditions. Thus, the two heroines in two novels are characterized differently in many respects, which will be analyzed respectively in the next pages.

A. Buck's Characterization of Madame Wu in *Pavilion of Women*

From Pearl S. Buck's perspective as a foreigner influenced profoundly by Confucian ideology, a typical Chinese wife has a strong sense of responsibility or duty for carrying on the family line in marriage, which has nothing to do with love but socially approved morality. As mentioned in the novel, "Love is not necessary for life" (Buck 297). Or rather, the term "family" is already understood to mean purely and simply the ethical act of biological reproduction. However, to a certain degree, Buck sees it as a sort of merit, which slowly finds its way in the characterization of her heroine.

In *Pavilion of Women*, Buck mainly characterizes her protagonist from direct textual definition, indirect textual presentation and analogy between characters. In addition, she mainly exposes the indirect presentation by the heroine's external appearance, actions and speech, which contribute to the construct of the character Madame Wu.

Madame Wu was born in an aristocratic family and has grown up with enough education. Her father, who returns from traveling in foreign countries, "had taken off the bandages and made her feet free" with his own hands (Buck 94). Besides, as a rich noble woman, Madame Wu is very courteous to the poor and could never bear oppression of any sort (Buck 96).

Her external appearance is described in the text: "she had examined her face minutely, broad low forehead, yesterday stripped of its girlhood fringe, long eyes, delicate nose, the oval of cheeks and chin and the small red mouth, that morning very red" (Buck 1). She is a perfect beauty if evaluated by Chinese standards at the time. According to Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, such external descriptions may function as disguised definitions, which contribute to the characterization of Madame Wu. Possibly, it speaks for itself and needs no more explications (Rimmon-Kenan 66). Besides, Buck presents a kind of analogy between characters so as to highlight the protagonist's virtues and merits. At the same time, Rimmon-Kenan says that "what an improvement in the state of one character may be a

deterioration in the state of another” (Rimmon-Kenan 27). For instance, Buck suggests a reciprocal characterization between Madame Wu and her son Fengmo:

He could not keep from answering his mother’s smile. There was great affection between them. He trusted her wisdom far more than he did his own, and because of this when she had asked him to marry in order that there would not be confusion in the family because of the marriage of his younger brother ahead of him, he had said at once, “Choose someone for me, Mother. You know me better than I know myself (Buck 15).

Everyone relies on her, and everyone believes her every decision. As for her own life, she voluntarily gives up her role serving as a cohabitant of her husband after her 40th birthday by buying him a poor foundling girl as a concubine so as to free herself. Nevertheless, she is still the wife of Mr. Wu and performs exactly the same role of being a responsible mother, mother-in-law, wife and Mistress in the whole family except to cohabit with her husband. Madame Wu holds back her true but only spiritual love for Brother André, who is an Italian, just for the sake of the reputation of the whole family. She is brave enough to love, but not bold enough to break the solid bonds of the whole family. At the end, she partially breaks the traditions to free her sons and helps other women find their true love and freedom. All of her actions speak of themselves in presenting her characteristics. However, as for the hierarchies of character and actions, Rimmon-Kenan makes his point of view,

Different hierarchies may be established in different readings of the same text but also at different points within the same reading. The reversibility of hierarchies is characteristic not only of ordinary reading but also of literary criticism and theory. Hence it is legitimate to subordinate character to action when we study action but equally legitimate to subordinate action to character when the latter is the focus of our study. (Rimmon-Kenan 36)

In the *Pavilion of Women*, characters are primarily predominated by female actions and speeches, through which readers construct the figure of Madame Wu consistently in the mind and are generally impressed with her beauty, wisdom, intelligence, kindness, softness and tenderness and dignity in front of public. She has a hard heart to love someone but she is dutiful to do everything. And she can also keep all her anger behind her face and still speak in a promising and beautiful way. She says to her husband and children that she never forces anyone to do something, but actually she is indeed the complete planner and plotter in both their life and marriage.

In any case, Buck is always trying to find an outlet for the existing and potential cultural conflicts in her novels. Madame Wu “knew that as long as she lived she could not be free,” (Buck 193) so she has to be capable of solving all the conflicts among family members

whenever she is needed since she is also clever and shrew enough to handle it. However, as she says in the text, “I, who myself crave my freedom!” (Buck 185). She sacrifices herself to help others to fulfill their wishes and become free. Nonetheless, the more she reads, the more confused, lonely, embittered and “stupefied” she becomes at her own contradiction, sometimes, or even in danger of losing her capacity for love, as mentioned above in I.3.c.

However, Buck succeeds in brightening and refreshing her life by the involvement of the character—Brother André who represents the Western scientific knowledge, free spirits and civilization, by which the characterization of Madame Wu has been developed at its most. Simultaneously, Madame Wu is one of the typical representations of the integration of Chinese traditional culture and Western modern civilization.

B. Chang’s Characterization of Yindi in *The Rouge of the North*

In *The Rouge of the North*, Eileen Chang mainly characterizes her protagonist from both direct textual definition and indirect textual presentation. Besides, the indirect textual presentation is basically exposed by her external appearance, actions and speech.

However, unlike Buck’s protagonist, Chang’s protagonist Yindi, cheated by others and obliged to get married with an invalid man just for money, is not so much lucky as Madame Wu. And then, she is trapped by money in a moribund-like marriage with the price of all her youth for waiting for money of inheritance after his death. Yindi lives in her own world all her life so as not to be changed by any new and modern things that happen in society not to mention to expect something better in her life because only in this way can she have a sense of success and pseudo superiority, as it is written in the text,

She watched them as you watch birds and animals in a cage. Now that the world was rid of her enemies there were no people left (Chang 112).

News came far in between but the days and months were going so fast it seemed to her that endings caught up with people quickly nowadays. Time was always on her side. The worse the times the more it proved she was right (Chang 184).

At the same time, to a certain extent, she is a pitiful victim and also a hateful victimizer. She maltreats and curses her daughter-in-law cruelly,

Life is hard here, then don’t marry into our house. More like an ancestor has come to stay! Want to go home, go and never come back again...What did we want a daughter-in-law for? If not for carrying on the line, I’d like to ask our in-laws. They want to talk to talk to the

matchmaker too. Cheating with a photograph. Then palming a tubercular demon on us.
(Chang 171)

Her speech, full of vicious curse, can hurt anyone who approaches her just as a dangerous mad man wielding a sword. Here, her daughter-in-law is just like the so-called “flat character” that is easily recognized and easily remembered by the reader but usually simple and undeveloping. To an extent, she is an insignificant, static figure but as expressive as any “round figures”.²⁹

Besides, Yindi interferes into her son’s life completely. Unlike the conventional impression of a mother, her love for him is perverse, or rather, invisible violent and brutal. Her own love affairs is considered desperate and dissipated by social norms. She resists the old traditions of arranged marriages, but later she accepts it willingly for the sake of money. She loathes the bonds of social norms, but later she also obeys them in an extreme way. She almost dies of hanging herself for she is ashamed of committing attempted adultery with her brother-in-law, but she attempts to commit it again with the same person sixteen years later. So, it is very difficult to have a coherent and unified construct of this character from the very beginning to the very end. Rimmon-Kenan gives a general explanation for such a “person-like” character:

When, in the process of reconstruction, the reader reaches a point where he can no longer integrate an element within a constructed category, the implication would seem to be either that the generalization established so far has been mistaken (a mistake which the text may have encouraged), or that the character has changed (Rimmon-Kenan 39).

Unlike Madame Wu who is born in a prestigious and rich family environment, and is respected by everyone in the Wu House, Yindi, born in a poor family of selling sesame oil, is abashed, impoverished and embittered. The family environment and social classes can be seen as one of the crucial reasons for the formation of their different actions and comportments. The witness and their own behavior make them question their role models in society, but in a different way. Both have effectively nurturing female influence, but one questions the traditional old beliefs in the past directly, the other obeys the former beliefs to an extreme so as to arouse readers’ attention.

Additionally, the death of character can be viewed as one of the similarities in characterizing heroines. To be more specific, the death of André makes Madame Wu’

²⁹ The concepts of “flat character” and “round figure” are both suggested in Rimmon-Kenan’s *Narrative Fiction*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2002. 40. Print.

spiritual world richer and more complete, and she learns to dialogue with her own soul. The death of Yindi's husband helps Chang to fulfill the characterization of a radical and extreme figure incisively. However, if the analysis is started from the other point of view, Madame Wu and Yindi are not any particular characters. Instead, both of them possibly represent a group of women, or even a kind of social phenomena. In the analysis of the mode of existence of character, Rimmon-Kenan makes the following statement: "Although these constructs are by no means human beings in the literal sense of the word, they are partly modeled on the reader's conception of people and in this they are person-like." (Rimmon-Kenan 33)

II. 2 Women Versus Women: the Burden of the Past

II.2.a The Contrastive Relationships in the Representation of Changes and Cultural Conflicts

Female relationships in the two novels enormously indicate the unavoidable female psychological self-contradiction and inter-contradiction in the process of fighting for their own identity. Class is one of the markers of female's identity, which also causes to some women's inferiority by social norms. However, different characters react in different ways in the writings of different writers. Some female characters are transformed in a positive way and elevated spiritually after a period of painful culture shock. Or, some of them commit suicide or transfer their sufferings to others as a result of the disconnection of psyche and reality. Actually, it seems logical that female are inferior to male, and male try to dominate female, but it must be shocking that "superior female" in the novels treat female servants or someone who is beneath them in status with the same disregard, humiliation and abuse as men do. Nonetheless, both of them contribute greatly to representing the rise of female consciousness not only in the hetero-relationships but also in homo-relationships.

II.2.b Female Mutual Relationships (Thematic): Buck: from Mutual Persecution to Mutual Comprehension

At the beginning of the novel, the protagonist Madame Wu in Pearl S. Buck's *Pavilion of Women* tries to find another "appropriate" woman to be her husband's concubine to replace her, but only to take on the part of sexual life with her husband so that she can free her own body after she finishes the ceremony of her 40th birthday. She does get a little bit freedom but it is at the price of happiness of another woman—Ch'iuming and even at the risk of her life.

Madame Wu is normally a good sympathetic woman with a generous heart. Since she has been mistress in the Wu house no slave has been beaten nor any servant offended. When she makes the decision to take Ch'iuming as concubine, she feels very sinful for such a naïve and nice young girl. "Watching Ch'iuming, Madame Wu felt again that strange pang of guilt, as though she were about to do this girl a wrong" (Buck 77). Even so, she still decides to do it immediately because she is extremely craving for the freedom that she has been waiting for 24 years.

However, at last, enlightened by Western culture represented by the priest André, she realizes her selfishness and hidden violence for another innocent woman—Ch'iuming. André says gently to her, "instead of your own freedom, think how you can free others" (201). Madame Wu frees her at the end. Ch'iuming is only a poor foundling without home and food and has to sell her body to make money, but at last it is proved that she doesn't sell her own soul. Just like Madame Wu said, "The soul of every creature must take its own shape, and none can compel another without hurting himself" (Buck 311). Ch'iuming bravely resists loving someone that she can't for life by her suicidal. "In her silent way she had protested with her life" (Buck 198).

At the same time, Madame Wu finds that actually she doesn't know men as she has thought. "She had taken it for granted that all men were only males...now she perceived that she was silly to consider that all men were alike" (Buck 169). She plans all her children's marriage and her husband's concubinage to get a kind of life that she wanted for herself. Although all her life she struggles for freedom and calmness, it often turns out that she was wrong and "make herself a prisoner inside the confines of her will" (Buck 223). Nothing could compensate a man for the lack of love in the woman who is his wife. But she loves him by no means. So she must give him the love that he wants and deserves. Then, there comes a character of a prostitute called Jasmine, who is the lover of Mr. Wu. Madame Wu permits her to live in the same court and to live with Mr. Wu, to love the man and to be loved by the man that Madame Wu is unable to love. Therefore, generally speaking, she finally shows her true love and real comprehension to women that she has despised and persecuted.

However, to some extent, Madame Wu is galvanized and inspired by Western culture but not completely, because whenever there is a problem, she has to find a solution to balance the new ideas and deep-rooted traditions. For instance, when one of her sons—Tsemo dies of an

airplane crash, she becomes more confused and doubtful of western technologies (Buck 272). Over centuries, the general situation is that women are oppressed by men, and poor women are oppressed by superior women. In order to get out of the oppression, superior women throw out their hatred and concealed tyranny upon poor women first. Nevertheless, as for the oppressed inferior women, sometimes, what they want to struggle is only to be equally oppressed with the superior women, just like “African women must fight so that they can be equally oppressed with African men” (Smith 2000: 69). On the one hand, it is a sort of vicious cycle of tragedy; on the other hand, actually it indicates that the awakening of female consciousness is to be achieved step by step.

II.2.c Female Mutual Relationships (Thematic): Chang: from Mutual Persecution to Much More Mutual Persecution

When Eileen Chang was child, she lacked parental love and even had been seriously maltreated by her step mother. Possibly, that’s why there are always full of cruelty and mutual persecution either among siblings or between parents and children in her writing of romantic love stories.

When Yindi, in Eileen Chang’s *The Rouge of the North*, is just a bride in the family, everyone looks down upon her because of her humble birth background. She is extremely depressed and stifled both emotionally and physically. Gradually she becomes a shrewish and malevolent mistress and always finds faults on her servants who rely on her for a living. Most of her servants are listless after a long-time suffering under the austerities of these years with her. Even so, they “wouldn’t dare show it but they wouldn’t put themselves out” and “had learned to get by merely keeping out of her way” (Chang 143). Her daughter-in-law, who plays almost the same role with hers, is disdained due to her ugliness. What she can do is only to keep her defensive calm and assume her duties in the house matter-of-factly. In spite of this, Yindi finds fault with her all the time. A Chinese proverb goes that “Thirty years a daughter-in-law, thirty years a mother-in-law, every woman has her turn.” The moment when she is less oppressed is also the moment to make reprisals for what she has been inflicted in the last thirty years as a poor girl, wife and daughter-in-law. All her youthful desire is to keep away from poverty in spite of risking all her life. When she becomes ageing and ageing, all her desire is to get what she deserves for her risk of youth. Therefore, she unconsciously tries to ruin the happiness and life of another woman as a result of her own miserable experience

when she is an unmarried naïve girl. It seems, only in this way can the protagonist feel much more just and assured that she is indeed being the master of her own fate and even that of others. Yindi eventually closes and depraves herself in a tomblike house enshrouded with opium smoke with despair and frustration, and becomes unable to articulate her pain, based on which Chang conveys a kind of extremely enormous but unspeakable pain.

Overall speaking, the mutual oppression and duplicity spreads across the texts among characters by creating an atmosphere of desolation in an ironic tone. Nonetheless, some women fight just because they want to be equally oppressed with other women rather than really get out of their plight. The protagonist is just like the “Mad women in the attic” in *Jane Eyre* who lives in the margin of society and asserts her values in a bizarre and Gothic way, through which Chang spins her own unique way of writing.

II.3 The Significance of the Earth in Symbolizing the Protagonists’ Awakening in the Two Novels

II.3.a Resistance Based on Earth

We human beings are born from the earth, and die into the earth. The symbolic relationship between womanhood and the earth has been analyzed in I.1.a. Over centuries, woman has been considered to have some similar intrinsic virtues to the earth, such as being sacrificial, devoted and silent. Thus, we can see that the earth plays an important role in symbolizing female spiritual aspects. Besides, in China, the earth provides people not only with bread to eat but also a guarantee of having a say in the family or even the society in the past. So, to a certain degree, for women, the symbolism of the earth in the text embodies the female self-independence and psychological courage significantly. In the past hundreds of years, women gradually realize their social status and started to struggle for freedom and rights. As a matter of fact, for women, freedom is basically a symbol of a sense of self-belonging. Female rights are the fundamental social and normative rules or principles that are based on freedom, which can allow women proving themselves to be as competent as men in fulfilling the works.

Generally speaking, the representation of the female oppression and the consciousness in the two novels are both based on the earth in certain aspects. However, the ways of female

awakening are different.

II.3.b The Continuity of Survival of Mankind by Standing up on the Earth in Buck's *Pavilion of Women*

Pearl Buck was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for her rich and truly epic descriptions of peasant life in China in her best-selling fiction book "*The Good Earth*" in 1931 and 1932. She stresses on the importance of the earth in many of her works. Wang Long, the hero in "*The Good Earth*", loves the earth deeply. Whenever he is tired or how much he suffers, as long as he touches the earth, his body and soul would recover and healed immediately.³⁰ Her ideology is usually in the way that people who rely on the earth can thrive with it. However, people who deviate from the earth are always proved to live a miserable life.

Firstly, we stand by our feet with the contact with the earth. However, in the past, Chinese women's feet are bound into deformed shapes with the size as small as possible. In this sense, if a Chinese woman wants to be really self-independent and free, it is primarily essential to take off the bandages in her feet and make them free in a natural condition instead of being bound. Madame Wu in Buck's *Pavilion of Women* is one of such lucky women. Her father who was influenced by Western culture helps her take off the bandages in her feet and rubbed them gently to bring in the blood again, and "the blood running into the pinched veins had been first agony and then joy" (Buck 94). Only in this way can women walk as fast as men do, and work as efficiently as men do.

Establishing house up the earth, Chinese people have lived and multiplied on their own land generations after generations. They love and praise the earth as it is written in the text,

When Wu house was founded, the hands that dug the earth out had placed the stones not upon earth but upon rubble and cracked porcelains and potsherds and fragments of tile. "No house can reach to the bottom of our earth," Old Gentleman had told her. "City upon city, our ancestors have built five cities one upon another. Man has built upon man, and others will build upon us" (Buck 155).

The real value of the earth here lies in providing a base and a support for the human's existence, development and even death. Food is planted in the earth for a living. Wu house does business of it for "seventy-five dollars to the fifth of an acre" (Buck 80). Brother

³⁰ Buck, Pearl S. "The Earth" in *The Good Earth*. Vol.1. New York : Spark Publishing. 2003. Chapter 15.

André the beloved lover of Madame Wu, dies and is buried into the land that belongs to Madame Wu. “The earth was filled into the cave and the mound made” (Buck 217). When children that André adopted cry, Madame Wu stands unusually motionless and silent, because at this very moment Madame Wu really feels that she has much more closer connections with the true love and freedom that she seeks for all her life, though André is deeply covered by the earth. Death has relieved her of his body and elevated her spiritual life.

II.3.c The Victorious Failure by Taking the Earth as a Carrier of Money in Chang’s *The Rouge of the North*

The heroine Yindi detests the earth since it brings her nothing but poverty before her marriage. She is deeply in love with Mr. Liu, but she gets bored with poverty and feels afraid of continuing to live a poor life with him as she did before:

Somehow she had never thought of it from that angle, that she would be living with his mother in the country raising cabbages, in a yellow mud house surrounded by yellow mud smelling of night soil with here and there a tree misted by pink blossoms for a short while in spring. (Chang 16)

She is in such a fear of touching the earth that she prefers to choose a wealthy life even though there would be no love. Unlike the case of Madame Wu, who doesn’t choose her husband by her own free will, thinks that “had she chosen him of her own free will, she could not have forgiven herself” (Chang 233). Therefore, comparatively speaking, Yindi does choose the man and the life by herself in spite of against her own real will. Even if she almost knows what kind of life that she may have, she still heads straight for that, because she knows “How tired she was of being poor” and every little thing could become a sin or sacrifice and turn people against each other” (Chang 22). From her point of view, the earth is just a symbol of evilness and conflicts over property.

However, when it comes to divide the inheritance of the family after the death of her husband and the mother-in-law, she fanatically struggles for much more earth and houses. She “had to stiffen her scalp to make herself speak” (Chang 95), otherwise she would be a total loser. Perhaps she had never thought about the importance of the earth to her as then. Actually, she doesn’t change to love the earth, but, for her, the earth is not the earth that carries many values and virtues; instead, the earth is purely the money that she craves at the price of all her youth. In other words, from the earth, she sees nothing but money. Thus, generally speaking,

what she impresses readers most is that she desires so much for sex and money. In a certain sense, she does win, because all the male characters undergo their own end of failures. She outlives her husband who is an invalid man and can almost be negligible. Her brother-in-law whom she attempted adultery with ends up relying on two concubines for a living. Her unique son is almost to be castrated by her interference. Nonetheless, to certain degree, she is also a total failure of cherishing the value of life, and a failure of being a really virtuous woman by Chinese standards.

In this sense, Yindi in *the Rouge of the North* is represented by Eileen Change in a very perverse and abnormal way, and thereby the fates of Chinese women are renegotiated.

II.3.d The Significance of the Earth for the Awakening of Female Consciousness

From the above analysis of the earth as a symbol in two novels, we can see that no matter which way the writers take, the earth is usually the springboard of any forms of social and psychological changes. As far as women are concerned, it is also the economic guarantee of their existence, spiritual support and individual autonomy. At the same time, the struggle for individual autonomy has always been an important part of feminist politics and also an ideal goal of political struggles. Therefore, the symbolism of the earth in two novels both implicates constant awakening of female consciousness, but conveys in different ways. The earth, as a source of nourishment of life, should be attached much more importance rather than be taken just for the sake of personal profits. Otherwise, we will get lost as Yindi does in *The Rouge of the North*.

III Appeal to Response

With the influence of Western Culture, the development of Chinese woman gradually deviates from the basic instructions of Confucianism. Buck's women are mostly inclined to inherit and develop the positive aspects, while Chang's women are inclined to keep and magnify their negatives sides. The theme of the awakening of female consciousness in the light of cultural conflicts and changes can find its way in the characters' different gender roles in different periods with the coming of age, which simultaneously reflects the social issues and promotes the consciousness-raising activities.

III.1 Do the books open up to a fruitful questioning of social values: love, freedom (self-belonging)?

III.1.a The protagonists' strong desire for the pursuit of true love heartens women to start to think about their own situation

Julia Kristeva and Ellen Conroy Kennedy suggests ideas about love in the thesis of *On the Women of China*, "The love they are referring to, at least the love that they tell us about, is neither a psychological bond nor a sexual desire: it is a recognition of the other person's moral, political, or professional qualities and cooperation in common or parallel tasks."³¹ Thus, it is generally referred to as a variety of different psychological feelings, states, and attitudes. It is one of the best virtues that human beings possess in terms of their kindness, passion, and affection. However, according to ancient Greek precedent, there are generally four forms of love: the love of kinship of familiarity, the love of friendship, the love of sexual desire and divine love.³²

The protagonists in the two novels both have a yearning attitude to true love and bravely risk themselves in breaking their reputation and marriage as a traditional Chinese woman. The difference is that Madame Wu longs for the love of kinship and divine love, while Yindi lusts for the love of sexual desire.

For example, in Buck's *Pavilion of Women*, Madame Wu changes from her ignorance of how to love people at the beginning to her capability of lover's love, maternal love, and fraternal love at the end. Before the enlightenment of Western culture, Madame thinks that marriage is just a family matter and it is a discipline. But later, she realizes that "Nothing that she had given him, neither her body nor her sons, could be reward enough for her unloving heart" (Buck 233). Through the psychological changes of Madame Wu, Buck makes it possible to enlarge the connotation of lover's love and maternal love, and elevates them into a kind of universal fraternal love of human beings. After the murder of André Madame Wu courageously takes over the responsibility of adopting the twenty orphans who are all abandoned girls by their parents and discriminated foundlings by society. Love makes it possible for her to live till eternity, through which Buck is trying to extricate female from a

³¹ Kristeva, Julia. "On the Women of China". Trans. Ellen Conroy Kennedy. *Signs*. 1.1 (1975): 68. *JSTOR*. Web. 2nd May 2013.

³² C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*. Northern Ireland: Geoffrey Bles. 1960.

plight. It is the Western Priest Brother André who teaches Madame Wu to know her selfishness in freedom and disability in love. His faith of religion is “in bread and in water, in sleeping and in walking, in cleaning my house and making my garden, in feeding the lost children I find and take under my roof...in sitting by those who are ill, and in helping those who must die, that they may die in peace” (Buck 153), with which people can always enjoy their loneliness and have no longer feeling of being isolated. Thus, in this sense, André functions as an effective prescription that bridges the conception of individualism and universalism of human beings.

Actually, Buck primarily advocates that love should be seen as a moral bond in modern marriage. People should not only consider himself but also take on the responsibility of this bond based on love. It could be better that love and responsibility coexist in a family. This is the most balanced and integrated ideology of Western culture and Chinese traditions.

III.1.b The protagonists’ strong desire for the pursuit of freedom heartens women to start to think about their own situation

Apart from the knowledge for love, André also teaches Madame Wu how to get her real freedom. Madame thinks “I thought, if I did my duty to everyone, I could be free...Simply to be mistress of my own person and my own time” (Buck 200). However, André instructs her that “Forget your own self...Instead of your own freedom, think how you can free others” (Buck 201). So, Madame Wu frees her third son to study abroad, supports her second son Tsemo to work outside, and allows her husband to live with his true lover. As for women, she is quite considerate to her second daughter-in-law Rulan after the death of her second son Tsemo and even she suggests freeing this young wife to find a new lover. Actually, although a Chinese widow is not expected to be like an Indian woman immolating herself on the funeral pyre of her dead husband, a feudal traditional Chinese woman is expected to maintain the widowhood for her husband for the rest of her life. Thus, the deeds of Madame Wu start to be separate from the feudal way. Besides, Madame Wu frees the concubine of her husband Ch’iuming whom she did a big wrong for. In this way, she really feels relieved at the end.

Compared with Madame Wu, Yindi is different. When she is young girl, she longs for true love and freedom. However, when it comes to money, she resolutely chooses a rich life rather than freedom. She prisons herself by her own choice. After the marriage, what she can do is

only to wait for the death her husband and her mother-in-law. She closes herself in her own world where she can do whatever she wants in an eccentric and conservative way. She can openly smoke as much opium as she wants. She demoralizes her own son and constantly aggravates the death of her daughter-in-law so as to be assured that she has the absolute power to manipulate someone else. Yindi tries to seek all the possible outlets for her freedom, but her life amounts to nothing but a bitter spiral, circuitous closed in upon itself. Generally speaking, some critics, such as David Der-wei Wang, think that *The Rouge of the North* does contemplate Chinese women's predicament and thinking about any possible ways out, because it is probable that Chang deliberately reverses the normative social values and makes her figures behave strangely to achieve a unique effect of feminist assertions in her literary writing (Wang xix).

However, according to Smith, post-modernist theory suggests that the individual is not an autonomous actor making rational choices about her life course, but rather that there is a set of behavior that are followed as part of living in a society structured by laws and norms. That is to say, each individual, being born into this set of norms, is thus already programmed, as the rules produce the individual and as the power of the rules flows through her (Smith 109). So no matter how many efforts female make for freedom or other feminist causes, we can only get a limited number of fruits with limited forces. The consistent struggle for self-governance has always been and also would be the crucial part of feminist politics, through which women can make individual decisions more and more freely and independently.

III.1.c (However), women paid a great price on the way to struggle for their gender balance or equality

Over thousands of years in China, it is true that women are born independently, but unfortunately in full freedom is just an illusion. Women are not an autonomous group making rational choices for their own life course, but rather confined to a society structured by a set of laws and norms. Some women are possibly even afraid to mention "inequality", whereas some women rise up against the unjust positions between genders. Allison Weir gives her point of view in terms of "Self-Identity as Domination":

The imbalance in the male-female relationship can be remedied only by women's assumption of the position of subject, against an other/object.

For de Beauvoir, the essential opposition between self and other, and the struggle for domination between self and other, are fundamental facts of human existence (Weir 15).

After the experience of new culture, most of the Chinese female intellectuals start to think about some unjust issues, fight for some basic rights, and correct people's world outlook, views on life and social values. Nonetheless, social values are something abstract as well as very stubborn. Therefore, meanwhile, most of the activists pay a heavy price for their struggle for changes. As a result, either some women are oriented to live a self-imposed and conservative life like Yindi, or led to a self-regulating life with the integration of Western culture and Chinese culture. It is undeniable that when there come some difficulties, they start to reflect and doubt themselves whether they are heading to the right way or whether it is worthy of doing that or not. Or rather, some of them find that they lose their own female identity and do not know how to behave themselves appropriately in the society, because, on the one hand, they want to abandon the old identity, while, on the other hand, they are agonized and sullen, for nobody can understand and accept their spiritual state in the new identity. They are so helpless and isolated that they have to either compromise to old culture and old forces of feudal society or continue struggling, sometimes even committing suicide to demonstrate their resistance.

For example, the protagonist in *The Rouge of the North* Yindi attempts to commit suicide after seducing her husband's younger brother, though she fails to do so. She takes her suicide as a way of her revival. She reflects this accident after 16 years, "A Ghost. Perhaps she had hanged herself sixteen years ago and did not know it." She ends her pre-life deliberately but lives with her current life unconsciously. She changes into a vampirish figure in a ghastly way and imposes all her misfortunes on her entourages. Consequently, she can't even recognize herself.

Ch'iuming, the concubine of Mr. Wu in *Pavilion of Women*, attempts to commit suicide when she is still pregnant. She bravely admits to Madame Wu, "It is too much for me, whatever it is...I cannot love him," though she did try her best to love him (Buck 190). It should have been her duty to love her husband, but now she prefers to die rather than continue to love someone that she couldn't all life. She attempts to suicide because she thinks she has been a foundling girl and her child proved to be a daughter should also be a foundling as well. If she dies, they would "both go together and be no trouble to anybody" (Buck 203). In other words, she refuses to give birth to another female who is likely to be as oppressed as her so as to protest the possible violence from the male-dominated family and society. In this sense, through her, Buck presents another sort of gender and body politics. Encouraged by Brother

André Madame Wu finally gives her a complete freedom. After her new survival, unlike Yindi, Ch'iuming is very grateful to everything given to her and helps Madame Wu take care of the foundlings André had adopted.

Certainly, they don't accept the foreign ideologies immediately. When new things emerge in a new environment, it is unavoidable that it takes a buffer period to take it in. Or, instead, when the oppression gets to their utmost limit, they might start to adopt them and strive for their new identity. For instance, people are afraid of foreign doctors, which is written in the text of *Pavilion of Women*:

Madame Wu had never seen this foreign doctor and did not want to see him now. She had heard that such doctors went always with knives in their hands, ready to cut any who were ill. Sometimes they were clever in cutting off tumors and excrescences, but often they killed people, and there was no redress against a foreign doctor as there was against one of their own who killed instead of healing. For this reason few of the people in the city went near the foreign doctor unless they were already sure of death. (Buck 216)

No matter what kind of the operation is—"surgical" or "medical", it is hard and painful to accept it immediately especially in a period of transition. People often have a feeling of contradictions that is not only from public opinion but also from the inner demons of traditional concepts. In other words, they are fighting with themselves while fighting with social ethos. Madame Wu is one of the witnesses of such experience as the text indicates:

Madame Wu woke the next morning with great dread of what had happened to her the night before. Nothing in her life had been as sweet as those moments of whole freedom when her soul had left her body behind. She knew that this freedom could become drink to the soul, a liquor which could no more resist than a drunkard his wine...She felt angry with Brother André this morning because he had tempted her to such freedom, and she was afraid of herself because she had yielded....(Buck 158)

She desires for freedom, but she is afraid of indulging herself in the fantasy of it. Sometimes, she is sober enough to surrender herself in the way that social norms require, but sometimes, she is unconsciously to dream to fly out of the walls that enfeeble her. In fact, she is indeed very lonely. "She did not know she was lonely, and had anyone told her that she was, she would have denied it, amazed at such misreading. But she was too lonely for anyone to reach her soul" (Buck 110) She even splits up with her best friend Madame Kang who represents the typical traditional Chinese woman, because they are unable to share the same social views and values for the same discussing issues. From Madame Kang's point of view, Madame Wu requires and thinks too much for the definition of love and happiness. However, for Madame Wu, what she can do is inwardly to "withdraw from her" (Buck 269), for André directs her

that it is necessary to “tolerate the stupidity and malice of the small” (Buck 270). She thinks there is no way to communicate with Madame Kang. Therefore, to destroy their stupidity and malice is actually to destroy female themselves. Or rather, they are denying and deconstructing their own past female identity of themselves.

Anyway, despite the occurrence of conflicts, it is undeniable that the raised issues and changes greatly cause the public female attention and push the development of the awakening of female consciousness. However, admittedly, to address crucial questions regarding gender balance or equality, it really takes a long time to resolve it and needs numerous feminist activists making sacrifices to accomplish it. There is still a long way to go.

III.2 Do they participate in the general opening up of the awakening of female consciousness studies to a new era? Do they lead to dead ends?

III.2.a Eileen Chang’s Unique Way of Realistic Style

Although the first half of the twentieth century is a very tumultuous and painful transitional period in Chinese history, it simultaneously sparks and stimulates the spirit of reforming and literary renaissance. The chaos, hopelessness, and desire for change are readily apparent in the major novels of this era, from which readers can obviously find a way to perceive the modern realistic style of the authors who indeed live through a painful inter-contradictory and self-contradictory period. Each of them has their own way to express their cultural perspectives, and sometimes they couldn’t agree with each other, with the society and with the contemporarily dominating government or even with themselves.

Although Pearl S. Buck had grown up in China, she had typical characteristics of Western women. She did think that she was speaking for the Chinese people all her life. She tried to interpret China for the Western world³³. And she was known as “the novelist of China”³⁴ for realistic writings. She not only deconstructs Westerner’s clichés of Chinese people being irrational, illogical or even stupid by her literary works, but also contributes to speak for female through novels. *Pavilion of Women* is rightly one of her prominent feminist realistic writings.

³³ Gunton, Sharon R.ed. *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, Michigan: Gale Research Company vol 7, 11, 1981.

³⁴ Bentley, Phyllis. “The Art of Pearl S. Buck” *English Journal*. December 1935: 791-800.

Compared with Pearl S. Buck, Eileen Chang emphasizes more about the negative effects under the attack of Western culture by showing the great “re-vitality” of Chinese feudal culture after the “May Fourth Movement” from a very special but authentic perspective, which corresponds to the logic of verisimilitude. The most striking realistic characteristics in Chang’s novels are that she usually takes the choice of daily life as a cardinal line and specifically demonstrates the real living situation of a declining aristocratic family in material and cultural life. Usually, revolutionary movements are often struck for private and trivial motives. Conversely, trivial activities can often reflect the potential revolutionary events. Or rather, the choice of daily life as a main story-line can accompany the events and advance the characterization of the protagonist in various ways. In addition, rendering trivialities of life in detail sometimes can produce an effect of irony as opposed to the social circumstances. This is rightly what Eileen Chang was trying to do.

At the time, mimetic realism is the most popular format of modern Chinese fiction, in which characters are from the imitation of reality and can be equated with people in real life. The Frankfurt school critical theorist T. W. Adorno makes use of mimesis as a central philosophical term, interpreting it as a way in which works of art embodied a form of reason that is non-repressive and non-violent.³⁵ However, though Chang is famous for her realistic writings, *The Rouge of the North* is charged for being not realistic enough to reflect ethos corresponding to the time. Most characters in her stories are repressive and violent. In order to defend her concept of realism, she contends in “My writing”:

There aren’t many people around who are either enlightened or perverse to an extreme. This is a troubled era that does not allow for any easy enlightenment. In these years people have just gone on living and even though insanity is insanity, there are limits. *The Golden Cangue*³⁶, none of the characters are extreme...They have no tragedy, just desolation. (Chang 438)³⁷

It is obvious that, for Chang, realism is not necessarily to end the story with a tragedy or to show how much miserable their life is. On the contrary, the most shocking representation is that after reading the novel, we strongly feel life as desolation: no passion, no love, and no vitality. In fact, the most desolate thing is not how much misery poor people are inflicted, but somehow these things seem very normal for them. Chang writes of it in the novel, “The

³⁵ Karla L. Schultz. *Mimesis on the Move: Theodor W. Adorno's concept of imitation*, Bern: Peter Lang. AG. 1990. Print.

³⁶ *The Rouge of North* originally derives from Chang’s novella *The Golden Cangue* published in 1943.

³⁷ Chang, Eileen. “My Writing”. Trans. Wendy Larson, in *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893-1945*. Ed. Kirk Denton. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996. 438. Print.

hardships of life made their own rules. Some of those affaires lasted a lifetime. They did not have to end badly. But the people involved had to be poor, especially the woman” (*The Rouge of the North*, 106). Poor people are the victims, and women suffer most. Thus, Chang’s characters always inhabit a reality but sometimes they are too villainous to be real, too extreme to be true. They do impress readers with a sense of familiarity, but there are rarely such figures in reality. The process of reading Eileen Chang’s work is also a process of consistently making readers doubt either their memory, or the reality. Chang makes a comment on her writing,

A strange feeling toward surrounding reality emerges, a suspicion that this is an absurd, ancient world, dark and shadowy, and yet bright and clear. Between memory and reality an awkward disharmony frequently arises, and because of this a disruption—at once heavy and light—and a struggle—serious, yet still nameless—are produced. (Chang 438)

At the same time, she also changes our stereotypical view of the characterization in the novels that poor people who suffer innocently are not necessarily sanctified. Yindi’s story shows that whenever women get a chance, they can prove to be as shrewd as men or even go far beyond. Just as Chang writes in her essay “On Women”, “thanks to the confined space allowed to their activities, perfect women can appear more perfect than perfect men, while villainous women can be more thoroughly villainous than villainous men.”³⁸ As a result, concentrating on sexual satisfaction and owning material assets, most of the women in novels are always ubiquitous but powerless, and intelligent but totally apolitical.

Thus, theoretically speaking, Eileen Chang opens a new and unique perspective of realism. Everybody in her novel is almost abject in the same way. David Der-wei Wang gives a high praise for Eileen Chang’s writings in the part of foreword in *The Rouge of the North*: She has blurred the nation, making it appear as alienation, making humanity show itself as femininity, making revolution devolve into involution (Wang xxvii). However, for some feminist readers, they argue that this novel is so conservative that it can only reveal the predicaments of Chinese women but fail to lead them to the “correct” way of consciousness or provide them more strength in struggling. (Wang xix)

Therefore, in this sense, Eileen Chang holds a very polemical and marginal part of feminism or gender politics. But anyway, this novel reveals to an ultimate that any forms of

³⁸ Eileen Chang. *Tan Nü Ren (On Women)*, in *Liuyan (Floating words)*. Changsha: Hunan Literature and Art Press. 2003. 88. Print

unorthodox transformation from the feudal family to another “kind” of family in a transitional period are embittered and cannibalistic. Chang’s special perspective realistic writing at a unique stance as a woman is as much powerful as that of any other contemporary realists.

III.2.b Controversial Issues on Buck’s Cultural Identity

Around 1900s, a lot of activists among Western women tried to investigate the degraded condition of debased Chinese women in order to serve as spokeswomen for their human rights, mental and physical freedom, and equality under imperialism and post-colonialism in various ways. On the one hand, they made Chinese people more confused. On the other hand, they did raise greatly female consciousness in all walks of life. Generally speaking, based on *Pavilion of Women* or her biological works like *Fighting Angel* and *the Exile*, Pearl Buck can be seen as one of such feminism activists.

Although *Pavilion of Women* does cause the public attention for women’s status in society, there exist numerous controversial issues in Buck’s Cultural identity. As an American, or more specifically, as an enthusiastic observer and witness of Chinese society, most of the critics like Zeng Qingmei think that Pearl Buck is devoted to contemplating Chinese women’s miserable plight and promoting their awakening of female consciousness by her influential immortal writings. However, there are also a lot of critics giving a different point of view. For instance, a Chinese critic named Cheng Jing argues in her Master’s thesis that when Buck spoke for women in the Third World so as to be culturally identified with the First World, she had to convey herself in the language or discourse of the First World, which could not be fully realized without her unconsciously psychological construction of culture while describing Chinese culture.³⁹ That’s probably why although Pearl Buck deeply loved China and acted as a pioneer for introducing “the Third World” to America or even the world, she is still denounced and misunderstood by critics as an “*American cultural imperialist*” (Guo 134). As a result, some Chinese readers criticize that both the images of China and Chinese women are distorted by Pearl Buck in the guise of rescuing them, though possibly she does mean to make efforts to it well.

³⁹ Chen, Jing. Abstract in “A Perspective of Pearl Buck’s Cultural Identity Through *Fighting Angel* and *the Exile*”. Fu Jian University.

III.3 Do they advocate commitment to change? If so what are the further implications of their commitment?

III.3.a Changes in Buck's Novels

Buck is trying to use the Godly selfless, philanthropic spirits to save a restlessly struggling soul of Madame Wu and she succeeds in realizing it by the compromised combination of female integrity, dignity and individuality, which rightly leads the universal women who suffer from injustices in family and society to take actions to voice out their real demands. In *Pavilion of Women*, Buck expresses her point of view for changes through the conversation between Madame Wu and her son Fengmo who are both students of the Western Priest André

“I often consider and ponder what it was that tall priest brought into our house. We are a family so old it cannot be said we needed wisdom to live. We have continued as a family for hundreds of years, and our life goes on. He did not change us, and yet we are changed, you and I, and it is we who have brought change into the house. But what is this change?”

“We learned from him the right of the self to be,” Fengmo said.

“How well and easily you have put it,” she said.... (Buck 312)

With the new culture that André brings Wu house, people live in a less oppressive and promising way. Buck conveys the ideology that it is not someone living in one world that saves others who live in another world, but it is people who are enlightened by other ideologies that save both themselves and their hearers. Different people may get different illuminations through the same ideology and then develop into different directions based on their own understanding.

Besides, at the end of the novel, the birth of Fengmo (who is the third son of Madame Wu and has studied abroad) and Linyi's (who is the traditional arranged wife of Fengmo) children can also be seen as a symbol for cultural integration. Although being studied oversea, Fengmo returns home suddenly to escape the love of a foreign girl called Margaret for the sake of his strong sense of responsibility for whole family and his wife—Linyi, since she has always been waiting for her husband's homecoming at home. Though Fengmo has never loved Linyi, he is always trying to do so. Afterwards, the birth of their children is the symbol that they live harmoniously and peacefully. Therefore, the harmony and happiness in their following marriage life with the birth of their children can be seen as a positive assimilation of Western culture for love in marriage and Chinese traditional “family-centered” concept. This ideology

has been used in a similar way in Buck's another novel named *The Mother*.⁴⁰ After the death of the protagonist's younger son due to the cause of civil revolution between party politics, she is almost in desperation and ready to surrender herself to destiny. She asks herself, "Shall he die because he is my son and I am poor?" (Buck 293). However, at this moment, when the mother gets to know that her grandson was born, she bursts into cry for joy: "She laid her hand upon his arm and began to laugh a little, half weeping, too" (Buck 301). For her, this is not only a new creature, but also a sense of new hope and a source of strength for continuing her life, and waiting for endless unknown things: "She bent and seized him in her arms and held him and felt him hot and strong against her with new life" (Buck 302).

Therefore, Buck shows us more about the good things of cultural integration and assimilation in the light of changes, which simultaneously indicates that she is encouraging and inspiring people to pursue bravely what they deserve and to resist what they are not equally treated for, in family or in society as a whole.

However, although she advocates changes, she also gives a highly evaluation of some traditional merits—the concept of filial piety and responsibility in a traditional, familial institutions. Buck seems inclined to promote a sort of relative and conservative change. For instance, Madame Wu in *Pavilion of Women*, intensively characterized by Buck throughout the novel, gets well along with the whole family members in a harmonious and peaceful way. The inter-conflicts can be easily solved through the instructions of their elders. Madame Wu is one of such traditional Chinese women who can always handle everything in a wise and shrewd way. Besides, in order to maintain the good reputation of Wu family, Madame Wu keeps the true love for her spiritual lover Brother André by which Buck highlights and appreciates the traditional "family-centered" conception.

III.3.b Changes in Chang's Novel

Eileen Chang also advocates changes, but she is very disappointed and frustrated at the social changes in the general situation that culture shock and imperialism bring about at the time. Through her writings, she tries to tell readers that new and positives changes must be done urgently rather than blindly following the Western world. Her point of view is almost shown in the text:

⁴⁰ Buck, Pearl. "The Mother" in *The Good Earth*. Vol. 3. Wakefield: Moyer Bell, 1993. Print.

Here in Shanghai under the protection of the foreign settlements they attracted more attention than elsewhere with their own newspapers and their speechifying plays, called “civilized plays” because they were imported at a time when the reformers deemed most native things barbaric. Those shows with just talk and no singing were very much the vogue just now but she had yet to see one. The Yaos never went, not just because of politics. The civilized actors, as they were called, including female impersonators who still took all the women’s parts, were notorious for the number of their affairs with singsong girls and concubines (Chang 74).

Eileen Chang writes in a realistically natural but ironic tone. From Eileen Chang’s point of view, People who live of the time don’t know what is good and what is bad. They just know how to catch up the trends that the governed political power brings them. Or rather, “The civilized actors” who play in the political stage brings them nothing except making them expose their deep rooted bad habits and abject behaviors to its full extent. Yindi, as the protagonist in the novel, is from a passionate and desirous struggling woman to one who “lost in the fashionable crowd” and lives in an extreme conservative way. Sometimes, her conservative behaviors make readers feel disgusted and revolted. In the novel, everyone has the same ending, and after the experience of new things, everyone prefers to live in their original way. However, Rimmon-Kenan suggests that “the chain of events does not display any obvious inversion or closed cycle: the state of affairs at the end is different from the initial one, but they are not symmetrically related” (Rimmon-Kenan 19). It seems that Eileen Chang is always devoted to present the evil consequences to remind people to change rather than show a typical example like Yindi living a spiral and conservative life. Only in this way can we be not as disgusting and villainous as Yindi be.

Moreover, Eileen Chang seemingly appeals that Chinese women at the same time should also know where their problems lie and how to solve the problems rather than to follow the ridiculous vogues. Instead of counting on others, perhaps Chang is more inclined to advocate that women should find the outlet of the problems by themselves. Smith says in terms of social norms, there is no “originality” in a person’s character or internal life but rather the performances of powerful rules in thought and deed” (Smith 110). Therefore, if Changes are to be made and improved step by step, it must be realized with much more efforts to overcome the so-called “originality” by innovations, which is indispensable and crucial to make social progress in both physical and spiritual life of women.

III.3.c Further Implications

According to Weir's understanding of Jacqueline Rose's opinion in terms of the relationship between identity and changes, it is the resistance to identity which is the basis of the possibility of social and political change—of resistance to the patriarchal order and to the feminine roles which support it. The identity and the resistance to identity may cause tensions in the forms of either inner contradictions or outer conflicts. Generally speaking, in the process of modernizing, Chinese people are always full of self-contradictions, because if they want to learn from the Western world, they have to change the long-standing traditions. But the most controversial but crucial point is to what extent should it be changed to balance the conventional norms and the psychic life? How to effect a transformation of female identity with the least suffering and the most satisfaction? If these questions are not solved, the society may possibly go to extremes of either being totally westernized or being conservative and self-complacent. In Bonnie G. Smith *Women's Studies: the basics*, she proposes an opinion in terms of postcolonial theory,

People remained subalterns long after colonization not only because their economic situation had not truly become free from colonial domination but because the individuals still lived in a colonial culture where Western values were seen as the only important ones and where they still resonated in people's mind. (Smith 111-112)

Actually, Western values resonate in Chinese people's mind almost during the whole 20th century. Some people are grateful for what colonists have done as if they have been rescued by their colonialism from feudalism. They don't see themselves as utter victims. On the contrary, they think post-colonial power is philanthropic. However, some people see it as an unending string of humiliations at the hands of Western countries and hold that it is just one of the forms of colonialists' invasion through language, education or religion to enhance their own position. Meanwhile, they bring in a lot of new ideology or technology which promote the national development to a certain degree. Anyway, it is essential that any nation as a whole should be critical towards new things before adopting it. People should see both the good sides and the seamy sides by neither following suit blindly nor being self-conceited, ignorant and conservative. After all, the openness to "non-identity", difference and criticism are fundamental elements in promoting social and political change.

Therefore, from the above analysis, we can see that both Buck and Chang convey the long-standing, typical issue of female oppression. However, to a certain degree, both of them take a neutral stance rather than a resolute one by a thought-provoking way. The representation of two protagonists makes it possible for readers to have a much more concrete

form in self-reflecting and self-consciousness. Meanwhile, the vivid and incisive writings of the miserable female world enable the traditional ideology of confinement to surface out easily. Additionally, they remind readers that the critical ideas should not just be pointed and restricted to male, but also the female themselves in terms of their psyche and mentality.

Conclusion

By studying the poetics of gender, mainly in terms of symbolism, narrative techniques and social values as well as the performative repetition of gender roles and the social and psychological changes of different gender roles from the perspectives of the two protagonists in Pearl Buck's *Pavilion of Women* and Eileen Chang's *The Rouge of the North*, both Buck and Chang prove to have contributed to female consciousness-raising. At the same time, both of them developed further the theory of gender and body politics, and poetics of gender in various ways. The limited and constrained by religions and social norms, women have to find their own new way to establish equilibrium between their identity and society; otherwise they may face a dead end of life.

The process of consciousness-raising of two novels is accomplished by writers gradually with the development of the text. The process of reading the text is also a process of interpreting the story. The initial impressions of the characters can be constantly reinforced and modified with the help of the text, and then the original conjectures are likely to be modified and replaced little by little in the line of narration. In the light of the two writers realistic contributions, we can get a brief conclusion that a woman's nature generally has two types: a selfless and devoted creature full of love, nourishment and loyalty, or a sexual and reproductive power full of attributes of menace, brutality just like animals. Thus, Buck's heroine represents the first one, and Chang's heroine represents the second one.

In general, the raised consciousness in Buck's protagonist Madame Wu is mainly divided into aspects: one is for others; the other is for herself. For instance, at the very beginning of the story, Madame Wu is opposed to send children to go to foreign school and she criticizes her best friend Madame Kang for sending Linyi to study in a foreign school, "You should never have let her go to a foreign school...I told you at the time" (Buck 99). However, later, she realizes that neither of the family member would be happy to be just confined in such a house without love and happiness, and then she says to two of her sons, "Go free" (Buck 169) and she comes to understand her sons should not necessarily only "to be a link in the chain of the generations" (Buck 150). As for herself, due to the illumination of the spirits of Christianity: "A good man, named Joseph, who worshiped them both and asked nothing for himself" (Buck 245), she is aware that the real freedom and love ability can never be obtained by her own arrangement. Instead, she has to share her freedom and love with others by her

generosity and kindness. Besides, she is finally conscious that actually death is not the destination for loving someone. It is the soul that makes death be eternal. "It is unchanging and unchangeable; It can be comprehended also the brain and its functions," through which she learns to dialogue with André (Buck 250). She is not lonely anymore. What Buck brings us most is the fresh air, the brightness and the spiritual consolation.

Unlike Buck, Chang primarily stresses the transformation of a woman named Yindi from her frustrated youthful days to the moment when she has become a miserly widow and vampirish mother, from a lustful woman to a perverse mother who castrates her son step by step, and from an obedient and pious daughter-in-law to a cruel mother-law who lead to the death of her daughter-in-law one by one. All her evilness is invisible but really violent and brutal. The social progress and changes make no difference to her at all. The room is her whole world; the whole world is her room. By contrast, men are neither powerful nor meaningful.

What she impresses readers later is that instead of advancing, female is degrading and depraving, by which Chang tries to enlighten us to think what the problem is? Why it goes in this way? and which way should women to take so as to identify themselves rightly in society and have a further advancement rather than regression? As for Rose's idea of female identity, Weir gives her understanding of it:

Rose's assumption that a paradoxical tension must be preserved between the acceptance and rejection of identity leaves her oscillating between abstract negation and stoical acceptance of a form of identity which is understood to be repressive but necessary, and inescapable (Weir 144).

Sometimes, it is true that the reversals of the normative value and strange female assertions are special strategies for feminist's literary writings.

When the general oppression spread over Chinese people due to the foreign invasions and internal collapse and corruption of the Monarchy and government, women are definitively not the survivors. Or rather, women share the same life oppression home and abroad. They are deeply discriminated and considered a marginalized group in troublous times. In this sense, while men are struggling for human rights and independent causes against repression and domination, women are possibly fighting so that they can be equally oppressed with men. They wish to succeed at least in being appreciated by the society for their advantages, talents

and virtues in the same way than men have been valued. Over centuries, women struggle for life with great mental fortitude and tolerant spirits. They are almost silent and always being oppressed. Year after year, the oppression becomes an essential agent to the development of society and gender politics.

In the past, women are dependent on men for livelihood. This is possibly one of the primary sources for oppression. So, if women want to be independent, first of all, they have to know how to live by themselves. This point has been shown in the text about the later life of the two female protagonists that they can live much better without their husbands who actually can only bring about troubles or even cause encumbrances for their normal life. Another example is that, nowadays, the homosexual marriage has been universally acknowledged and accepted by both laws and psychology. Thus, to a certain degree, contemporary lesbians can also be considered a good example for proving that a woman could live with another one of the same sex harmoniously and happily without men, which is, to an extent, a form of resistance for male-dominated society, which enormously enriches the study of gender politics.

The repression and exclusion from male who belong to the other dominated group are the essential agents for women's pursuit of individualism and universalism. However, promoting the awakening of female consciousness and struggling for more and more gender equality and rights is not only a cause of female as a whole but also a lofty cause benefiting all human beings, for it is also a symbol of the civilizing progress of all mankind. Nowadays, instead of a rich mentality more and more post-feminists concentrate on "sexual satisfaction, owing material goods with designer labels and a higher social position" (Smith 156), and thereby their life may start from the wrong social values as Yindi who is cheated and trapped in a moribund-like marriage with the price of all her youth for waiting for money of inheritance. As a matter of fact, followers should thank to the forerunners since any struggle for the new transformation must experience a period of treacherous and thorny struggle and sometimes even pay a heavy price for what they insist and believe. Thus, followers should cherish and continue the innovative way that forerunners paved rather than fall back to the ages of confinement. In Buck's words in the *Pavilion of Women*, "But something new was here now. The order of the old life was broken" (Buck 234), we need a set of brand-new life attitudes for a new, positive lifestyle.

The awakening of Female consciousness in the first half of the 1900s in China has been represented by Pearl Buck's *Pavilion of Women* and Eileen Chang's *The Rouge of the North* through various ways, such as cultural conflicts and integrations, the deliberate absence of men in the narration of novel, and indispensable different female roles etc, which simultaneously and immensely progress the development of the awakening of female consciousness at the time when it was indeed a period of transition of mixed culture. Each has its own uniqueness and strong points. Nonetheless, in and after this period, how women find an outlet of rightly identifying themselves in the process of solving cultural conflicts is also an interesting issue to be settled. Or did the Western culture really serve as a savior for enlightening "The Third World women" or just want to intensify their colonialism in the guise of feminism or the Western "civilizing mission"? How can a nation balance or control the relationship between a new culture force and the possible social changes it may bring about?

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Abstract

Pearl Sydenstricker Buck was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1932. She was praised highly "for her rich and truly epic descriptions of peasant life in China and for her biographical masterpieces". Born in a family of Presbyterian missionaries in 1857, she was taken to China by her parents as an infant before 1900s, grew up and passed more than half of her life-time there. Compared with Pearl S. Buck, Eileen Chang, who was born to a prestigious family of gentlefolk in Shanghai, China in 1920, has a quite different background. However, they have similar point of views regarding the norms and rituals of traditional Chinese society which are represented in their works. The present thesis sets out to examine the representation of the awakening of female consciousness in Pearl Buck's *Pavilion of Women* (1948), and Eileen Chang's *The Rouge of the North* (1955). Two novels of the mid-twentieth century were written respectively by an American and a Chinese writer concerned both with the place of women in Chinese society, but the protagonists' consciousness is viewed through quite different prisms.

In the first half of 20th century in China, along with cultural conflicts, the gradually aroused female consciousness saw a series of dramatic changes in physical life, cultural and intellectual life. To a certain degree, conflicts can be seen as a crucial agent of female consciousness. These conflicts and changes are also mirrored in Pearl S. Buck's *Pavilion of Women* and Eileen Chang's *The Rouge of the North*. Thus, the present thesis will be devoted to a comparative study between the two representations of the awakening of the protagonists' consciousness in the above two novels disclosed by the handling of the thematic, narrative and other poetic items, so as to highlight the poetics of each work in the light of the above cultural conflicts, and social and individual changes.

Key Words: Pearl S. Buck; Eileen Chang; Female Consciousness; Cultural Conflicts; Changes; Traditions; Comparison