ABSTRACT

Zhang Ailing (Eileen Chang) (1920-1995) is one of the most outstanding female fiction-writers in modern China. The Legend (Chuanqi) is her most famous and accomplished collection of short stories. She wrote these short stories when she was only twenty-four. The purpose of this dissertation is to present an analysis of her fiction based on the text itself and her early life. It focuses on the image of the male and female characters in the writer's world of fiction.

The first chapter reviews Zhang's personal life and writing, trying to discover the influence of her actual experience in her works. The second chapter analyses the text of her fiction and points out four features of her short stories: the essence of desolation, the philosophy of incompleteness, her view on fate, and woman's world of triviality. Chapter three analyses Zhang Ailing's feminine world in terms of its background, types, and characteristics. Zhang's strong consciousness as a woman and sophisticated observation of women reflected in her fiction constitute her unique feminine perspective.

Chapter four deals with the image of the males in Zhang's fiction. Although they do not appear as distinctive ad memorable as her females, they are absolutely not just the characters of declining families and the fin-de-siecle society. In conclusion, Eileen Chang with her retrospective and sensitive point of view and beautiful style of writing occupies an extremely significant position in modern Chinese fiction.