

“Sealed Off “ by Zhang Ailing (Eileen Chang)

SUMMARY OF THE WORK

The story takes place in Shanghai during the Japanese occupation of the city during World War II. A tramcar stops when an air raid alarm bell sounds. The city comes to a standstill and the people on the tramcar wait. Two passengers, Lu Zongzhen, an accountant with wife and children, and Wu Cuiyuan, an English instructor and single, strike up a semi-flirtatious and serious conversation. After receiving Cuiyuan’s phone number, Zongzhen abruptly leaves when the tramcar continues its journey.

Author information: Eileen Chang (1921-1995)

- Zhang Ailing, born into a privileged family, was influenced by Chinese traditions and Western culture.
- She attended the University of Hong Kong and returned to Shanghai to begin her literary career during the Japanese occupation.
- Essays of the war period were published in *Gossip* (1945) and *Romances* (1944), a collection of stories capturing bourgeois life in Shanghai and Hong Kong.
- Her best known work, the novel *Rice-Sprout Spring* (1954) - considered a classic of Chinese fiction, captures the land reform movement of the early 1950’s and the impact of man-made and natural disasters on a southern Chinese village.

Resources:

The story, translated by Karen Kingsbury, can be found in *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature*, edited by Joseph S.M. Lau and Howard Goldblatt, 188-197. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.

A History of Modern Chinese Fiction by C. T. Hsia Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999 provides some thoughtful analysis of Eileen Chang’s 20th century contribution to literature. Chapter 15 on Eileen Chang, pages 389-431, is particularly helpful.

See the postscript page for excerpts from Hsia’s book.

ACTIVITIES

Pre-reading:

1. Read quotes from story. See page entitled “Author intrusions.” Write a paragraph response to one of the quotes: explain why you care for it, explain what it means, and make an attempt at predicting what the story may be about.
2. Observe two or more people in a public place and write a description of the people. Record any dialogue you may hear. What impressions are gathered from this captured moment?
3. Write a description or orally present a moment in your life when “time stood still.” Try to capture as many sensory details as possible. Present to class prior to reading the story.

Post-reading:

1. Reading check. See reading quiz.
2. After the class has read “Sealed Off”, read a selected passage aloud of 1-2 pages using the following guidelines as a way to explicate and lead to further discussion of the story.
 - a. Before reading the passage aloud to the class ask students to listen closely (they may read along on their own copy of the story) to the story and select one sentence or very short excerpt to respond to. After listening to the reading give students a few minutes to write down their reaction, explanation, or elaboration of the particular excerpt they selected.
 - b. When all students are done writing, reread the 1-2 page passage aloud, slowly. Instruct students to interrupt the oral reading after their particular quote has been read and to read aloud their written comments on the passage. Continue reading the passage aloud and allow for the student commentary readings. Avoid making comments on student writing and defer student discussion until all reading is completed. Sometimes a particular passage has more than one student responding.
 - c. After all the reading aloud is completed ask for other reactions, responses to other students, or the passage as a whole. What new insights into the story has the class offered? Other related questions can further stimulate discussion. This activity usually allows the class to understand a reading in greater depth, is especially helpful when there is a challenging reading, and allows students to develop and trust their own response to a literary work.

A suggested reading passage for this activity: Just after Lu Zongzhen sits next to Wu Cuiyuan the **paragraph starts**, “Cuiyuan turned and gave him a quick look. Oh no! the woman surely thought he was up to no good, changing seats for no reason like that.” **Stopping** at the end of the “real person” comment by Cuiyuan would be a decent place to stop: “Not too honest, not too bright, but a real person. Suddenly she felt flushed and happy; she turned away with a murmur. ‘Don’t talk like that.’” This passage is a little more than a page in length.

3. Writing evaluation:
 - a. Evaluate theme. Based on class discussion and responses to questions and topics noted below write a 2-3 page essay evaluating a major insight of the story. Use at least 4 quoted passages from the story and discuss how the theme is revealed through the passages. Other guidelines may be created by the teacher.

- b. Compare/contrast two short stories. Some key ideas in selecting a companion story to “Sealed Off” could be: a moment frozen in time, awkwardness in relationships, choices characters make, how people appear versus their inward state, war settings and how this affects human relationships, or alienation and isolation of humans in the 20th century. Six stories offering a moment in time and revealing complexity of character on some of these above ideas are:

Samrat Upadhyay’s “A Refuge” or “Chintamani’s Women” in *The Royal Ghosts* stories

Ambrose Bierce’s “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge”

Ernest Hemingway’s “A Cat in the Rain”

Katherine Mansfield’s “Miss Brill”

James Thurber’s “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty”

Eudora Welty’s “A Worn Path”

Yu Dafu “Sinking”

4. Write a brief sequel to this story in which Wu Cuiyuan and Lu Zongzhen meet again. Some guidelines may include: a) the sequel has to be believable and plausible, based on the existing story, b) there must be a continuity in terms of the values, personality, and behavior of the two main characters, c) the sequel may be written as a 1-2 page summary of their future meeting or it may be put in story form of 2-3 pages with dialogue and description. You could establish the future time or leave that up to student choice. The sequel may be evaluated on the above, a-c, or be based on any additional guidelines established by the teacher.
5. A follow-up to the pre-reading may be to have students revise or expand on any of their pre-reading activities. The descriptive writing on the topic “time stood still” could be expanded or revised into a poem. A reassessment of the “author intrusions” could be developed into a full essay assessing the author’s opinions and how these comments contribute to a theme of the story.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

1. What are some of the cultural characteristics of this story that make “Sealed Off” a Chinese story?

(This could lead to small group mini-research assignments for a couple larger topics*.)

Obviously, the Chinese names are a good starting point. Noting family name first and some practice at pronunciation would lead to greater familiarity. After that the passing reference to the influence of Chinese painting on the West could be a basis for further investigation. The reference to first and third class cars* points to class distinction, and though it may be difficult to find specific information on this passing reference, this is a good starting point for examining status or roles in Shanghai society. The major area for cultural investigation would be the concept of marriage in Chinese society: arranged marriages,* roles for females in society (Wu Cuiyuan’s family wants her smart but not too smart; they are pleased she has a fine teaching position, but would like her to find a husband), and of course the role of concubine* is noted in the story.

2. Does the time period of the war make a difference in how Cuiyuan and Zongzhen relate to each other?

At first glance it would appear that two strangers could meet anywhere, and sitting next to each other on a tramcar is as possible as any place, any time. However, the uncertainty of the war and the stopping of time and action due to the air raid alarm bell, allows Lu Zongzhen and Wu Cuiyuan to perhaps take greater risks in their exchange. In a practical way, the alarm bell and Zongzhen's avoidance of a potential son-in-law, throw the two people together. With the stopping of time, each is forced to think briefly but honestly about their family and relationships. Note how the author interjects comments about thinking, "They simply had to fill this terrifying emptiness – otherwise, their brains might start to work. Thinking is a painful business." Also, when two truckloads of Japanese soldiers rumble by, Zongzhen and Cuiyuan come close together when they stick their heads out to see the trucks. The war scene almost pushes them towards each other.

3. What point of view does the author use? How does this affect the story?

The story is told from the 3rd person limited point of view. We are able to see into both Cuiyuan and Zongzhen's thoughts and emotional states. In some ways the story seems between a 3rd person limited and an omniscient point of view because of seeing into the two characters thoughts and the authority of the author's comments or intrusions. Chang's comments are bold and though most of the story is presented in a straightforward reporting style her observations create a sympathetic view towards the two characters. The 3rd person objective reporting records the basic events but Chang's comments add a further questioning of and/or sympathy for the main characters. For instance, her summation, "They were in love." allows the reader to understand Zongzhen and Cuiyuan simultaneously. Chang's skillful use of 3rd person keeps some objectivity but it is clear that she fosters our sympathy towards both characters. An interesting question would be: towards whom does Chang develop the greatest reader sympathy, Zongzhen or Cuiyuan? With the ending of the story and Zongzhen's abrupt departure does our sympathy change? Students may take sides at this point and this could be a lively discussion. Does Chang's sympathy towards her two main characters change? Stay the same? An examination of point of view provokes further questions.

4. What is the significance of Cuiyuan giving an "A" to a poorly written paper?

This little event gives the reader insight into the English instructor. She responds to the paper in an emotional way, overlooking the stiff and choppy, ungrammatical prose. Cuiyuan questions her own grading of the paper and in embarrassment realizes that this student "was the only man who fearlessly and forthrightly said such things to her. . . . He treated her like an intelligent, sophisticated person; as if she were a man, someone who really understood." He treats his teacher with respect. Cuiyuan acknowledges that she is not respected by anyone else at school. Also, at home she feels abused by her parents. Added to this, Cuiyuan is reacting to the boredom of life, the routine of going through life without an emotional reaction. Her student's righteous anger as expressed in the paper is "real" and her reflection on her grading allows her to see her own unhappiness. This paper grading reveals Cuiyuan's vulnerability, and sets the stage for her to not only meet Zongzhen, but be receptive to his overtures.

5. Identify where the word “real” is used and how the word gives us clues into Wu Cuiyuan’s emotional life?

After Cuiyuan reflects on how she is a good daughter and a good student, she realizes “there are more good people than real people.” The author comments, “Cuiyuan wasn’t very happy.” At this early stage of the story Cuiyuan reacts to the small child laying on the lap of the nanny sitting next to her, “The sole of the of the child’s foot pushed against Cuiyuan’s leg. Little red shoes, decorated with tigers, on a soft but tough little foot . . . this at least was real.” This physical sensation is pleasing to Cuiyuan, more alive and tangible than her everyday life. Later, while Zongzhen has his arm stretched out behind her, “She looked at him again. . . . Stretching out from his sleeve, and resting on the newspaper, was a warm, tanned hand, one with feeling – a real person! Not too honest, not too bright, but a real person. Suddenly she felt flushed and happy. . . .” Cuiyuan’s desire to be woken up is evident in the use of this word. She longs for some spark, some emotional change, some vibrant opportunity, some respectful recognition of her. She wants to be more than “good” and please others. In fact, she longs to rebel and be real, to feel and experience life for herself. Cuiyuan’s favorable response to her student’s “real” paper, the pleasant sensation of the child’s foot, and Cuiyuan’s self-reflection sharpens her desire to experience life in a real, sensory manner. These events prepare her for Zongzhen’s encounter.

6. How does Lu Zongzhen’s attitude towards Wu Cuiyuan’s physical appearance change? Why is this important?

This part of the story reveals humor, changing perceptions, and the beauty of this story. Zongzhen’s choice to seat himself next to Cuiyuan is primarily motivated by his getting away from Dong Peizhi, his wife’s cousin’s son who Zongzhen detests. His first reaction to her appearance is not at all pleasing, “He didn’t care much for this woman sitting next to him. Her arms were fair all right, but were like squeezed-out toothpaste. Her whole body was like squeezed-out toothpaste, it had no shape.” Shortly after talking to Cuiyuan, Zongzhen begins to reassess his view of her, “When you took her features separately, looked at them one by one, you had to admit she had a certain charm.” Finally, after a serious conversation where Zongzhen reveals his own unhappiness with life’s daily routines his view of Cuiyuan is completely transformed when, to their surprise, their faces come close together, “Zongzhen and Cuiyuan suddenly felt they were seeing each other for the first time. To his eyes, her face was the spare, simple peony of a watercolor sketch, and the strands of hair fluttering at her temples were pistils ruffled by a breeze.” This view of Cuiyuan sharply contrasts with the squeezed-out toothpaste view. This change of attitude, much to Zongzhen’s amazement, captures the growing intimacy between the two strangers. Zongzhen’s seeing of Cuiyuan’s beauty and her resultant blush bring them closer together and he is pleased to be seen simply as a man. This change of attitude is also important because it is mirrored by Cuiyuan’s growing pleasure in Zongzhen. She accepts him and is attracted to him. However, Chang allows us to see Zongzhen’s change more than we see Cuiyuan’s evolving view of Zongzhen. His view of Cuiyuan is even taken to an idealized or romanticized attitude, “Zongzhen was sure that Cuiyuan was a lovely woman – pale, wispy, warm, like the breath your mouth exhales in winter. You don’t want her, and she quietly drifts away. Being part of you, she understands everything, forgives everything.” Zongzhen not only idealizes Cuiyuan, but this foreshadows his abrupt departure. She has gone through a miraculous transformation, and this angel-like, mystical woman evaporates when the tramcar continues.

Zongzhen, radically smitten by an idealized love, disappears. Zongzhen's attitude towards Cuiyuan's physical presence simultaneously reveals his emptiness and hope.

7. How is irony used in the story?

Irony serves to create humor and to establish a detached tone. When Zongzhen and Cuiyuan are getting more personally acquainted and start to talk of family, Cuiyuan anticipates Zongzhen's next line, " 'Here it comes,' thought Cuiyuan. 'His wife doesn't understand him. Every married man in the world seems desperately in need of another woman's understanding.' " When Zongzhen actually says "My wife – she doesn't understand me at all." Cuiyuan reacts with a sympathetic look instead of scoffing at his expected expression. Is she play acting? Is he play acting? The reader has to discern what is real in each person's behavior. There is further irony when Cuiyuan had a red pencil she could have loaned to Zongzhen for writing down her phone number; she felt he ought to remember it. She is emotionally connected to him, but detached at the same time. The ending of the story has the greatest degree of irony. Is this whole meeting of Zongzhen made up in her fantasy world? Or for that matter is the meeting of Cuiyuan made up in Zongzhen's fantasy world? They each have plenty of time to think on the stopped tramcar, and the story's revelation of their inner incomplete lives points to their need for a new world. The evidence in the story doesn't point to making up this exchange but it could be something that each could fantasize about. The irony at the end is when it first appears Zongzhen has abruptly left Cuiyuan to get off the tramcar when instead he simply returned to his old seat. She is shocked and realizes, "everything that had happened while the city was sealed was a non-occurrence. The whole of Shanghai had dozed off, had dreamed an unreasonable dream." Cuiyuan's quick acceptance of her "fantasy exchange" is ironic. She intellectually accepts the breaking of this relationship, but she emotionally yearns for the possibility of further exchange with Zongzhen. ("If he phoned her, she wouldn't be able to control her voice; it would be filled with emotion, for he was a man who had died, then returned to life.")

8. Do the "author intrusions" or author's comments add or detract from the story? See the list provided or locate one of your own. One example of the author intruding is when Chang states, "thinking is a painful business." Do you agree with Chang's view about thinking? This particular comment is an intriguing commentary. In the story, people read to avoid thinking. "People who were stuck without a single scrap of printed matter read shop signs along the street. They simply had to fill this terrifying emptiness – otherwise, their brains might start to work. Thinking is a painful business." This example shows how the context is important for Chang's comments. Is it the presence of Japanese soldier during the occupation that makes for the "terrifying emptiness," or is it the fact that people's routines are disrupted and are forced to do "nothing" that is terrifying. Learning to sit with yourself and think about your condition can be frightening. Zongzhen, in talking about his empty marriage and home life, refers to thinking as well, "Just keep going, keep getting by, without thinking – above all, don't start thinking!" Zongzhen's struggle and empty life are clearly shown by his aversion to thinking. Chang's

passing observations about thinking add a historical reflection and a personal note to the story. This adds to the story because it creates a more thoughtful, philosophical tone while helping the reader to understand the characters uncertainty.

9. What is the significance of the title “Sealed-Off”? What are various levels of meaning for this title?

The first and obvious interpretation is noted in the war background. Shanghai is “sealed off” temporarily due to the alarm bell. The particulars of how the city is “sealed off” is not given by the author, but it is evident that this is a fairly routine activity the inhabitants have resigned themselves to. They react in an accepting manner by readily finding a way to pass the time. The title has other meanings as well, mostly of a psychological nature. The two main characters are sealed off from the rest of the passengers as they pursue their conversation. A type of intimacy has isolated them from others. Also, we learn that Cuiyuan and Zongzhen are sealed off or distant from other people in their lives, both personally and professionally. On another level, though Cuiyuan and Zongzhen have revealed private parts of themselves, they continue to selectively disclose who they are and still hold on to much of their private selves. Chang brilliantly captures this private self. For example, Cuiyuan’s thinks about Zongzhen taking his glasses off, “Cuiyuan always felt that when nearsighted people took their glasses off in front of other people it was a little obscene; improper, somehow, like taking your clothes off in public.” This shows Cuiyuan’s response to his behavior; she is offended at his “exposure.” In a sense, we are all “sealed off” from other human beings, even those who are closest to us as we censor our responses and decide which parts of ourselves to reveal. Zongzhen’s abrupt departure also shows a sealed off or isolated human being and the universal trait that when we reveal a private part of ourselves we may feel a need to close down because we have made ourselves vulnerable in our own conscious or unconscious exposure. A passing note in how Zongzhen is sealed off or isolated is how he wishes to avoid Dong Peizhi. Many of us, for various reasons, have tried to avoid someone at some point in time. Zongzhen’s behavior is seen as normal in that he didn’t want to be bothered by someone who would be quite demanding on him.

Note: The story has also been translated as “Blockade.” Students and teacher could discuss if the translation makes much difference in arriving at the key insights the story offers. Does this change the implications and connotations of “sealed off”?

A COUPLE QUESTIONS

1. What purpose do the various minor characters serve for the story? The descriptions of other people primarily serves to frame the story and allows a narrowing focus towards Cuiyuan and Zongzhen. They also contrast the real world with the inward world of Zongzhen and Cuiyuan.

2. How are the real and fantasy world's of Zongzhen and Cuiyuan revealed in the story? What does this show us about their character?

The hopes and desires of each are shown in their fantasy world, Zongzhen possibly taking a concubine, and Cuiyuan "getting back" at her parents. Their desires point to their real world loneliness and entrapment in their life patterns.

AND MORE QUESTIONS

1. How is marriage portrayed in the story? Family?
2. Which character, Cuiyuan or Zongzhen, is most realistically and sympathetically portrayed? With which character do you empathize the most? Why?
3. How is education important to Cuiyuan and Zongzhen?
4. How is this a "modern" story? What makes it modern?
5. How is Zongzhen's and Cuiyuan's chance encounter one of life's pleasurable moments?
6. What social expectations are revealed in this story?
7. How is the story a critique of male attitudes?
8. How is the story playful?
9. How effective is the story's dialogue?
10. Does Cuiyuan get absorbed with a fantasy instead of a real interaction with Zongzhen?
11. Are there more good people than real people? Evaluate Cuiyuan's outlook on this topic.
12. How does this story depict intellectual, rational learning and experiential, sensory learning?
13. How does the story depict tradition and change?

THEMES AND SYMBOLS IN THE WORK

As alluded to in the above questions and discussion, some themes or central insights may be the following:

- A chance meeting of two strangers points to the emptiness of people's lives.
- Cuiyuan and Zongzhen point to how people struggle to create a better life, but are often caught in their routines.
- Twentieth century urban life is filled with alienation and desolation.
- The alienation and emptiness of daily life leads people to have unrealistic dreams.
- A memorable moment, an encounter with a stranger, can happen anywhere, and though it may not alter our daily habits, the encounter allows us to have an honest, playful, and self-revealing exchange.
- Uncertainty, ambivalence, and isolation are significant aspects of relationships.

Some potential symbols in the story:

- Newspaper print: empty of real life, non-thinking
- "A" paper: reflects the emotional emptiness of Cuiyuan's life
- glasses: Zongzhen's removal points to a laying bare of some inner thoughts, doubt; self-disclosure
- tramcar: the smorgasbord of life
- alarm bell: disruption of the routine motion in people's lives

PREREADING ACTIVITY : Some author “intrusions” from “Sealed Off”

These may be viewed as “folk wisdoms.” Some are direct and can be easily isolated from the story, while other comments are interwoven into the story’s characters and events.

“If there hadn’t been an air raid, if the city hadn’t been sealed, the tramcar would have gone on forever.”

“They simply had to fill this terrifying emptiness – otherwise, their brains might start to work. Thinking is a painful business.”

“Her hairstyle was utterly banal, so as not to attract attention.”

“Life was like the Bible, translated from Hebrew into Greek, from Greek into Latin, from Latin into English, from English into Chinese.”

“At close range anyone’s face is somewhat different, is tension-charged like a close-up on the movie screen.”

“Men in love have always liked to talk; women in love on the other hand, don’t want to talk, because they know, without even knowing that they know, that once a man really understands a woman he’ll stop loving her.”

“If a woman needs to turn to words to move a man’s heart, she is a sad case.”

For a **reading check**, option 1 and 2 may be used individually or together.

Option 1: Choose the multiple choice response that best completes the sentence.

“Sealed-Off” by Eileen Chang reading quiz

Part I. Directions: For the multiple choice topics place the letter that best completes the sentence in the space provided. (10 points)

1. _____ The setting for this story is best described as:
 - a. Beijing during the Tiannanmen Square protests in 1989.
 - b. Taipei, Taiwan during the Japanese occupation.
 - c. Rush hour in Canton during the Communist revolution.
 - d. Shanghai during WWII.

2. _____ Wu Cuiyuan, the English instructor, can best be described as:
 - a. satisfied with her life as it is.
 - b. desperately looking for a marriage mate.
 - c. quietly unhappy both in her professional and personal life.
 - d. flirtatious in a sophisticated manner.

3. _____ Lu Zongzhen, the accountant, can best be described as:
 - a. dissatisfied with life routines, but not able to change them.
 - b. rude and offensive towards his potential son-in-law.
 - c. distracted by the beauty of Wu Cuiyuan.
 - d. a contented businessman, happy with his work and family.

4. _____ The story is mainly about:
 - a. the glimpses into various people on a tramcar in Shanghai.
 - b. the meeting of two people and the conflicting tensions within each person.
 - c. difficulties of keeping public transportation going during war time.
 - d. the difficulties in male and female relationships.

5. _____ The tone of the story can be identified as:
 - a. disturbing and haunting.
 - b. lightly comical and probing.
 - c. intensely serious and sad.

d. puzzling and harsh.

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Answers:

1. d
2. c
3. a
4. b
5. b

Option 2: Put events in the correct order by numbering them 1-10 from the beginning of the story to the end of the story.

Part II. Put the events in the proper order as they occur in the story. Number the events 1-10 from the beginning to the end of the story. (10 points)

- a. _____ Lu Zongzhen tells Wu Caiyuan he is thinking of marrying again
- b. _____ The tramcar starts up again.
- c. _____ Wu Cuiyuan froze when seeing Zongzhen's arm stretched out behind her.
- d. _____ The wife of a middle-aged couple warns her husband not to get oily fish stains on his trousers.
- e. _____ The tramcar grounds to a halt.
- f. _____ Lu Zongzhen sees his wife's cousin's son, and quickly changes his seat, hoping to avoid him.
- g. _____ Wu Cuiyuan anticipates Lu Zongzhen's statement about his wife by thinking, "Here it comes. ... His wife doesn't understand him."
- h. _____ Lu Zongzhen reads the reverse writing of the newspaper print that rubbed off on his spinach dumplings.
- i. _____ Wu Cuiyuan realizes Lu Zongzhen is a "real" person sitting next to her.
- j. _____ Cuiyuan gives Zongzhen her phone number.

Answers (from top to bottom)

- a. 8
- b. 10
- c. 5
- d. 2
- e. 1
- f. 4
- g. 7
- h. 3
- i. 6
- j. 9

Postscript. Following are some excerpts from C.T. Hsia's book *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* that may be useful in interpreting, discussing, and analyzing "Sealed Off" and other Eileen Chang writings.

From the Introduction to Hsia's book by David Der-wei Wang:

"Hsia recognizes in her works a sophisticated inquiry into human frailties and an aesthetic and historical vision of 'desolation.'" xviii

[Hsia] "believes an idiosyncratic voice can more emphatically bring out the unspeakable political unconscious of a society." xxiv

"Eileen Chang's works are read side by side with those of Dostoevsky." xxv

"To Hsia, however, Eileen Chang captured more skillfully than all the propaganda writers, the pain and sorrow of living amid political chaos, precisely because she 'focused her attention on ordinary humanity as it struggles helplessly to maintain its loyalties and affections under the crushing weight of an alien system.'" xxix

From Chapter 15 by the author C.T. Hsia:

[Chang] "combines 'gusto for life' plus 'tragic awareness' of the human condition." 393

[she captures] "unflinching psychological realism." 407

[Chang] "evinces an infinite tolerance for foibles and pretenses." 414

“her uncynical detachment and comic brilliance are possible because of her serious and tragic view of life.” 415

[Chang’s satire is] not an exhortation to good conduct but an adjunct to tragic understanding. It thrives on the spectacle of human folly, but at the same time it tolerates and even honors the human impulse to achieve some measure of happiness, respectability, and success.” 415

“Her stories of modern as well as traditional Chinese life are civilized, profound, and often relentlessly tragic.” 500-501

“In many of Eileen Chang’s short stories we find a probing of passion that goes underneath the cloak of custom and habit.” 503

[Chang is] one of four modern Chinese writers who have created worlds stamped with distinctive personality and moral passion.” 506