

Chang deftly employs a writing style infused with individualism and achieves a high level in “Lust, Caution.”

Wang Chia-chih’s journey is one marked by the collision of personal emotions with the grand narrative of revolution—a clash that confounds the expectations of both patriarchy and revolution alike. A group of writers represented by Chang Xiguo could not understand the reason why Wang Chia-chih finally let Mr. Yee go. Eileen Chang’s masterstroke lies in portraying a female college student participate in the revolutionary mission out of personal emotions, and finally release her assassination target because of personal desires. In this intricate web of cause and effect, Wang Chia-chih’s various motivations and ultimate decisions defy the patriarchal and revolutionary norms that seek to dictate her actions. Patriarchy, with its discourse system, attempts to mold Wang Chia-chih into a “female revolutionary” aligned with familial and national values. However, this system fails to account for her individual autonomy and well-being, instead demanding her compliance with its predefined rules. Wang Chia-chih’s actions, driven by her own desires and agency, serve as a subversion of the patriarchal expectations placed upon her. In choosing to diverge from the prescribed path of the “female revolutionary,” Wang Chia-chih embodies a defiance that challenges the very foundations of patriarchal control. In this sense, she becomes a model of “women not cooperating” with the oppressive structures that seek to confine and define her.

The debate surrounding Wang Chia-chih’s conscious intention to subvert grand narratives in “Lust, Caution” remains contentious. Did Eileen Chang place this original intention on Wang Chia-chih? Did she really achieve self-awakening at the last moment and gain freedom?

The discussion above highlights one of the primary reasons behind Wang Chia-chih’s decision to spare Mr. Yee—her mistaken belief in his love for her. Eileen Chang herself pointed out in the article “The Wool” that another factor contributing to Wang Chia-chih’s choice “was greatly stimulated by the betrayal of her classmates, and even suspected that she had been deceived, and she couldn’t tell her the pain. A bit psychopathic.” Therefore, her ultimate wavering can be viewed as a form of retaliation against her classmates. Throughout the novel, Wang Chia-chih’s lingering resentment is palpable, especially in the tense final moments. While some scholars have interpreted her last word, “run,” as a defiant act symbolizing her newfound self-awareness and rebellion against societal norms, a closer examination of Wang Chia-chih’s motivations suggests otherwise. Despite her aversion to the betrayal and her desire for vengeance, Wang Chia-chih’s actions do not align with a deliberate defiance against society, patriarchal scrutiny, or the exploitation of her body by revolutionary forces. Her revenge itself is not earth-shattering. It is not like the traditional female revenge narrative that deliberately destroys everything and is willing to die with oppression. It is just a little girl’s grievance as well as her continuous pursuit of love and community. Just for a moment, she wanted to be loyal to her own value system and emotional judgment, temporarily forgot her mission, and believed that what she saw in front of her was the reality.

V. CONCLUSION

The complexity of Wang Chia-chih’s character defies simple categorization, and while the concept of “prostitution” offers insight into her experiences, it cannot fully encapsulate the intricacies of her being. Instead, we can utilize her “prostitution” as a lens through which to explore the myriad incongruities and ambiguities that define her existence. Indeed, Wang Chia-chih’s life is characterized by incongruity—she exists in discordance with the grand narrative, official discourse, and even with her own perceptions of sex and love. Perhaps it is within this framework of incongruity that Wang Chia-chih’s true essence emerges. Amidst the conflicting voices and noisy discussions, she represents a distinct force, one that is different from the obvious yet resonates loudly amidst the complexity and chaos.

At the conclusion of “Lust, Caution,” the ladies are playing mahjong as usual, while Mr. Yee “amid the raucous laughter, quietly slipped out.” Meanwhile, Wang Chia-chih finds herself unable to navigate the congested streets, symbolizing her entrapment within the confines of her circumstances. Yet, even as Wang Chia-chih remains physically confined within Eileen Chang’s silent text, her presence transcends its pages. She strides forth into the collective consciousness of millions of readers and onto the silver screen, sparking lively public discourse and debate. Despite the passage of fifty-five years since the novel’s publication, Wang Chia-chih remains a timeless figure. Like a “red, green, and white windmill” spinning relentlessly, Wang Chia-chih’s journey continues, heading towards the “Yü Garden Road” that could never be reached. Her enduring legacy serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring power of literature to capture the complexities of human experience and provoke contemplation long after the final pages have been turned

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