

Narrative Ethics in Celeste Ng's *Little Fires Everywhere**

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Abstract—Celeste Ng's *Little Fires Everywhere* tells a story about social problems such as class, race, privilege, and lifestyle and so on. This thesis analyzes the narrative ethics of the novel from the story level, discourse level and reading level. On the story level, the author expounds the conflicts between freedom and responsibility, motherhood and ambition, adolescence and adulthood, which explain the author's pluralistic and profound view of artistic creation. Secondly, the discourse level reveals the way in which the discourse is organized by the examples of the third person omniscient narration and intertextuality. Finally, the reading level examines people's free identity from the reader's point of view in the aspects of interpretative judgments and aesthetics, etc. The analysis of the narrative ethics in Celeste Ng's *Little Fires Everywhere* tends to further dilate on the serious theme of tolerance and understanding among ethnic groups of different occupations and complexions.

Keywords—Celeste Ng; *Little Fires Everywhere*; narrative ethics

I. INTRODUCTION

The novel *Little Fires Everywhere* is Celeste Ng's most important new work in 2017, and as soon as it is published, it has won the title of 2017 American Books and E-commerce Annual novel of the year. The New York Times Books Review praised the book as follows: "extreme, violent, hot, heartbreaking, better than *Everything I Never Told You*" (Tobar, 2017: 1C).

A. Celeste Ng and "Little Fires Everything"

Celeste Ng grew up in Pennsylvania and Ohio and graduated from Harvard University. Born in a family with thick atmosphere of science and engineering, her father was a physics scholar of the US Space Agency and her mother was a chemist. His parents emigrated from Hong Kong to the United States in the 1960s. At a young age, she didn't think of being a writer, but when she was ten years old, she published her first work on the children's magazine. The \$2 and two contributions received that year had not been spent, and she has cherished them till now. When she majored in English at Harvard University, she thought of working as a writer or editor, with the encouragement of a mentor, she

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studies in Michigan University and obtained a position in the creation of writing Art. After that, she took the course of teaching writing as her career, and she was also involved in editing the words. In 2012, her short story, *Girls at Play*, won the recognition of the US National Prize for handcart Awards (Pushcart Prize), and many of her short works were also noted by the international media. She spent six years writing the first long story. As an author, she believes that whether it is at present or in the future, a book or an e-book, reading novel is an activity that conforms to human nature; while each form of writing is empathic, the writer tries to imagine himself or herself in another person's mind and skin. *Little Fires Everywhere* is her second story.

The novel *Little Fires Everywhere* is celeste Ng's most important newly published work in 2017, and as soon as it is published, it has won title of 2017 American Books and E-commerce Annual novel of the year. Senior editor of amazon bookstore Chris Schlupe commented on it as follows *Little Fires Everywhere* will bring great satisfaction to fans and attract more readers. The main characters, The Richardsons, lived in the earthquake of Ohio, a community that was rich, comfortable, and stable, especially the people who live there. However, when the single mom, Mia, came here to rent a house with her 15-year-old daughter pearl, her life was very different from the Richardson family, and the family's elaborate framework began to distort. Like Celeste Ng's work, the book is almost perfect in terms of mood and pace, and the characters are authentic and credible. Celeste Ng is a master in describing the family and the society. She is good at moving away from most of the people's views, and focus on the secret that people most want to protect, despite her continuing expansion as a field of observation. But the reader who likes her previous work can still see her unique style in this book. The author of *The Fortunes*, Peter Ho Davies describes the novel like this *Little Fires Everywhere* is a work with many wonderful qualities. It can be said to be a comedy in many ways but at the same time it has the price of a social story, and it feels like a thriller to read. Sometimes black humor, sometimes moving, sometimes insightful, once again affirmed that Ng has the talent of literary creation." The author of "The Sleeowalke's Guideto Dancing", Mira Jacob also thinks highly of this book, "I opened this book in the morning, and then I didn't move until I had to open it. What a pleasant experience. I can't wait to finish reading this book, indulge in it thoroughly, forget about business, time, and even forgot to breathe. Wu once again proved that she is

so excellent. *Little Fires Everywhere* is an ingenious teacher-level work that holds one's breath" (Su, 2017: 1C).

B. Narrative Ethics

"As an applied ethics, literary narrative ethics is a new method to study the value of literary narrative, which at least related to ethics, narrative, literary criticism, comparative literature, philosophy, culture science and other disciplines" (Wu, 2011: 3). Therefore, it is an interdisciplinary research. Literary narrative ethics studies moral theme, content, era ethical sound. Particularly important, in the context of modernity, it research situation ethics produced by the narrative process and makes interpretation of the results and summary of the study. It is essential purpose to explore the possibilities of ethics in narrative fiction and imagination. Compared with the reality of rational ethics, literary narrative ethics is a fiction ethics, which has its own order and rules, so its boundaries cannot be confused.

In the late 20th century, the ethical turn of narrative research and the narrative turn of ethics occurred almost at the same time and responded to each other. The interdisciplinary integration of humanities and social sciences promoted the rapid development of the study of literary narrative ethics. The study of narrative ethics in Europe and the United States originated from the reality of humanistic events. Levinas and Derrida's ethical philosophy re-recognized the relationship between themselves and others and the significance of feminist ethics to individual experience, leading to the study of western ethical philosophy into the study of literary narrative ethics; In addition, the rhetoric narrative study represented by Booth also enlightens the narrative ethics research of philosophy and literature. The narrative research path in the field of ethical philosophy interweaves with the narrative ethical research path starting from literary rhetoric. The core is to construct the ethical meaning by narrative, deconstructing the certainty of ethical significance, and has a strong philosophical thinking. The study of Chinese narrative ethics is characterized by the inheritance of ancient and modern times and the combination of Chinese and western culture. It has had a wide influence in many fields of literary research, and its core function is to reflect or carry the ethical significance by narrative, which shows the profound imprint of Chinese traditional criticism. The study of Chinese and western narrative ethics has their own characteristics and should draw on each other's strengths to complement each other's weaknesses.

II. ETHICS OF STORY

A. Freedom vs. Responsibility

The heroine Mia, as a photographic artist, has been trekking for the life she wants, never stopping. Ever since she was 11 years old, she has been obsessed with photography, trying to concentrate on photography study and practice to minimize the external desire and demand for materiality. Even her emotional world was empty, from childhood to adulthood, she "did not experience the touch of people like that kind of electrocution, the only thing that

makes her love is art" (92). Her talents and interests are not recognized by her parents, and even less support are given to photograph. They think of it as a dereliction of business; for in the eyes of pragmatic parents, art is "a game that the rich and the idle can afford, but a luxury pastime" (82). But depending on her tenacious will and personal efforts, under the guidance of her neighbor and photographer, Mr. Wilkinson, her "excellent vision and excellent intuition" have been well developed and promoted. After Mr. Wilkin's death, she went on her own in pursuit of art. After applying for the New York Academy of Fine Arts, Mia's college path was tough because her parents refused to pay tuition. But the economic threat did not scare her. Mia survived her first year at college by doing three jobs and scholarships. Later, for financial reasons, Mia had to quit school and earn money from surrogacy in order to complete her studies. Although she didn't get what she wanted, she followed the advice of her most admired and respected mentor, Pauline, "do what you can", "expect you to do something you can't afford" (112). She never gives up on artistic creation, no matter how hard it is. Even her young daughter, Pearl, believed that Mia, her mother, would one day become famous and become one of the greatest artists, and that her talent would be appreciated. Mia's persistence and adherence to art is also an exploration and pursuit of herself. As a child, she had a clear sense of herself knowing who she was, how she felt about things and the world, how she existed, what she really wanted, and so on. Her parents wondered why she had "been fascinated by things that no one else would have noticed" since childhood, and how she had spontaneously explored the true meaning of art "everything has the potential to transform." (65) At the same time is also exploring the true meaning of being an individual. All the way to forty-six towns, without stopping the pace of exploration, not to mention the end. She drove until she thought "the right place to stop" (124), Rent was best paid monthly when renting, because she "does not like to be bound", as long as she has completed a stage of art, completed self-expression, then went to the next stop; Creation is also "according to their own will and the way they choose to display the characters in the work" (189). She fully pursues the way of self-existence and fully shows the course of "life and freedom" to explore for herself. Not only that, but she passed on her spirit of free and independent pursuit; under her influence, the children of the landlord, the Richards, were gradually changing, and in particular the youngest daughter, Izzy, was the next Mia. She regarded Mia as the object of her own imitation. "Everything Mia said was the norm, and everything was bound to ask her advice" (121). Through Mia's spirit and words and deeds, Izzy has changed, become "wonderful, friendly, and cheerful" (165), quite differently from the "willful, wild, violent, stubborn" girl who used to be, getting rid of the "never happy" days of the past. More importantly, her self-awareness became clearer, and after Mia and her daughter's leaving, she embarked on a journey of independent self-pursuit. Shaker Heights, residents with a high sense of rule and superiority, public order, highlighted in the details of the streets, the geographical characteristics of the same as Richardson-like residents.

Mia, with pearl, wanted to end her years of vagrancy and give her daughter a stable life. Although Mia loves freedom, she knows that it's her responsibility to take good care of and protect her child, although she did not provide her with good material conditions, she does give her tenderness and trust, and cultivate her as a polite, lovely and clever girl.

B. Motherhood vs. Ambition

Mrs. McCarroll, in the novel of *Little Fires Everywhere*, pregnant seven times; but for physical reasons, she had to end her baby's life painfully aware that the little life in her womb was like a fragile little flame, and when it started, she could not escape the fate of extinction" (144). "Little fire, unquestionably the flame of life's origin, gave Mrs. McCarroll hope over and over again. These little fires were precious in the heart of a mother who longed for life and feared the origin of life. But every time the little flame went out for no reason; she was disappointed and desperate about the origin of life" (Bachelard, 2005: 32). After repeating the torment of "little life", she changed from a potential "mother" of pain, guilt, to a woman who mischievously or even intentionally hurt other pregnant woman. In those moments when "evil" appeared, the woman in front of her husband "seemed to become very strange. She was so ruthless and different from the woman in his mind who was full of maternal love" (Ng, 2018: 221). It was not until the adopted children, Mirabel, came to them that Mrs. McCarroll returned to loving, kind-hearted man of the past, and devoted all her love to the baby. The desire and satisfaction for life has been greatly released and demonstrated here in Milabel. The extinguishment of the fire of life turns the angel into an evil spirit, and the hope of the fire of life reverts the devil to an angel. The tiny flame, which seems small and insignificant, prompts a woman to complete her quest for the origin of life.

Babe is a young, poor English Chinese, but also a single mother. Under the circumstances of necessity, she gave up her child. But later, with Mia's encouragement, she dared to go to court to try to regain her daughter's custody. Despite her defeat, Babe, a member of the lowest minority, has awakened her sense of self-resistance and strengthened and highlighted her self-drive. Without Mia, Babe could not have had such courage and behavior, not to mention the awakening of self-consciousness, without a clear direction of life. On Babe's path of self-growth, Mia, with a spirit of great love, plays a key role. In the process of raising her daughter pearl, Mia did not provide her with good material conditions, but gave her tenderness and trust, and cultivated her as a polite, lovely and clever girl. When pearl met the Richards, she was attracted by their middle-class life and was a little lost. Mia, anxious as she was, did not specify, but took Mrs. Richardson's advice to work for her. Because Mia can use the opportunity to work at the Richards to observe and protect her daughter and to re-establish a sense of presence in pearl's life. Mia, aware of the important of self-existence, has been sparing no effort to safeguard woman's self-awareness. As a result, pearl always felt like her mother was around. Since Odysseus opened the pursuit model, the subject of pursuit has been indispensable in literary history. Fred and

Campbell structurally divided the archetypes of pursuit into three parts: adventures, hard battles, and final victories. Throughout *Little Fires Everywhere*, Mia's quest was both archetypal and varied. She is always on the road, the unknown ahead gives her "vagrant" certain adventurous, at the same time to taste the hardships of life; but she is always optimistic. Uncertainty is one of the most obvious features of post-modern fiction.

What covers most pages of the novel is the presence of mothers in the book "how to define mother", there are so many mothers in this novel: Mrs. Richardson, who offers excellent material conditions but does not understand the spiritual world of her daughter. Linda, she is rich but culturally different from her adopted Chinese child. Babe, a poor Chinese mother and once abandoned her child. Mia, a former surrogate mother but very love her child, the problem can be abstracted into material conditions, understand or love children, which one is more important? In fact, the author gives her own answer: It is more important to truly understand and love children than material. Maybe it's difficult to choose from being a qualified mother or pursuing what her want. Mia did well in this dilemma; she not only understood and loved her child but did not give up what she wanted. Mia's performance undoubtedly involves ethics. She chooses to pursue what she want rather than give up photography, but it does bring bad living conditions to her daughter. Her daughter drifted with her and had no stationary house to live in. Although Mia can't give her daughter a satisfying life in terms of material, there is not a shadow of doubt that Mia is a good mother. She cares about her daughter's inner thoughts and her inner world. Mia's pursuit of what she want let her daughter suffer with her is a typical feature of ethical problems, which is the difference between ethics and morality, ethics is a contradiction and dilemma, it has no absolute right or wrong. It's not well-grounded to say that Mia is wrong to pursue what she loves, but what she did brought terrible living conditions to her daughter, so we can't say that she did exactly the right thing.

C. Adolescence vs. Adulthood

Izzy was a freak of the Richards, an alien and completely out of line with Sickl's "plan", and was often taunted, scolded and even punished by others, and was extremely harsh on her. When it was not clear whether Izzy had set off the fire that destroyed their family, everyone was certain that she was the arsonist. Her "difference" forced her to resist the oppression of her students at school, deviated from the school's rules, and was finally grounded at home. Mia's problem "what are you going to do" made Izzy, who was used to being ridiculed, reprimanded, and despised, begin to think carefully. Izzy had never met anyone who understood her so well, thus had a little flame in her eyes; but when she heard her sister's sarcasm, "be comfortable at home during the holiday" (96), she had just the little flame burning in her eyes dimmed for a moment. Izzy, who pursues independence, has always been searching for the real, and her family has been domesticated by Sickl Heights, the most standardized community in the country, and it is normal for her to be difficult to understand or even hit. Izzy was lucky to meet Mia, who had spent her

whole life pursuing the life she really wanted. Mia lighted Izzy's fire and broke all the restraints on her, thus enabling her to break through the taboos of utopia and to see things around her in her true state of being. When the family argued about the ownership of Babe's daughter, Izzy supported the true mother, Babe, she commented, "she is a mother, they're not" (85). The family emphasized how much the McCarlow family loved the child with the best material conditions, but Izzy revealed that the most basic and precious human relationship in the world was the nature of the mother and the child. The conditions cannot be used to materialize the love between mother and daughter, from this point we can see how different Izzy and her family. And "this case seems to ignite a small flame in her heart," and once the little flame of self-discovery is lit, it will McCarlow ption and purification of life, small flames are essential, and finally complete a person's pilgrimage: become yourself, live the life you really want. Adolescence is also always full of contradictions; children are eager to grow, get rid of the bondage of their parents, control their own life and get more initiative. But the rebellious puberty has left them with problems such as estrangement from their parents. As a result, youth is a stage full of contradictions, and Izzy in the novel encounters such ethical dilemmas.

III. ETHICS OF DISCOURSE

A. The Third-person Omniscient Narration

The third person narrative is also called omniscient narrative viewpoint, by means of which the author does not enter the narrative process as a character, but stands in the "third party", as "he" (or "they") to describe the event from the side, depict the character, describe the environment, and expand the plot. Its characteristic is that throughout the narrative process, the author is an outsider, not showing up, but acting as an all-knowing, always-present "all-powerful role", narrative is not subject to time, space, and character physiology. The limitation of psychology expresses the object of narration flexibly, it is suitable to depict many characters, describe the events of complex content, numerous clues, quietly, in order to show the wide and changeable social life and rich and colorful objective things. It is characterized by objective color and lack of the advantages of first-person narration. The author often makes up for the deficiency by vehical of dialogue of characters, inner monologue, flow of consciousness, flash of memory, etc. In order to enhance the sense of truth and intimacy of the article, expressing all the information you have to say. When using the omniscient third person, there is no strict restriction on narrative, and any character's inner activities and thoughts can be written out at any time. In a sense, a writer who tells a story from an omniscient perspective is like God in the story. The author knows that the psychological activity of any character at any time can go deep into the heart of any character at any time. With the development of inner activity, the author can tell the development or background of the story through the third person of omniscient perspective. Learn to take and play freely. The author can describe any information he wants to provide, but the effect of step-by-

step cocoon stripping may be better. For example, if the character setup has some mysterious behavior, it is not necessary to describe his inner true activity before explaining his true motivation. Switch concerns between different roles. When an omniscient third person is used to describe things, things jump from one character to another, not according to the thought, action and language of the same character. In this article, the author uses the third-person omniscient narrative, all the characters' images are under control and the relationship between the characters in the story is very clear. Celeste Ng used the third person from the omniscience angle of view to write out the inner activities and thoughts of any character without restriction in the process of narration, and to express what she wanted to express at will. The author focus on switching between several protagonists, the plot will suddenly jump to Mia, describe Mia's story and growing experience, from the perspective of God to show people Mia's personality characteristics. Or the plot turns to Mrs. Richardson and the author reveals Mrs. Richardson's character from the perspective of the author's third-person omniscient narration. It is not described along the lines of the same character.

B. Intertextuality

"American Chinese writer Celeste Ng's 2017 masterpiece *Little Fires Everywhere* is rich in meaning, vivid in characters, diverse in themes, and intertextual with many classical literary works" (Li, 2018: 179). Intertextuality, is a French semiotics and feminist critic Julia Cristiva, who first proposed in 1966: "the text of any work is made up of inlays in many lines. Any text is the absorption and conversion of other texts" (Zhu, 2013: 5). Later, Bart, Genette and others explained and added that "text intertextuality is not only a theoretical term, it has been developed into a large system, rich in connotation of the theoretical system, there are broad and narrow senses"(Cheng, 1996: 74) In a narrow sense, intertext refers to the argumentative interrelation between one literary text and other literary texts. In the text of *Little Fires Everywhere*, the elements of other literary texts appear many times: "the way of life of female artist Mia wandering is consistent with that of Keluyak's *On the Road*" (Xiao, 2010: 1); characters and even names come from *The Scarlet Letter*; the image and function of Fire are linked to *Jane Eyre* of the Bible; even "the plot of the second Maternity refers to Solomon's story in the Old Testament" (Zhu, 1993: 947). There is an important image repeated more than ten times in the text of *Little Fires Everywhere*, that is, "Fire". It begins with a blaze that burned the Richards, the representative of the rational and secure life of Sickl Heights. Afterwards, the words "flame" and "flame" appeared repeatedly in the work, emphasizing the image of "fire" again and again. However, these words about "fire" do not refer to actual fire, but take its abstract meaning and symbolize it. Mia, Mrs. McCarroll, Lexi and so on became pregnant and regarded their pregnant lives as small flares. Mrs. McCarroll was pregnant with seven children; all of them had misfortune, so painful that she felt, "the little life in her womb is like a fragile fire, and when it burns, she cannot escape from the extinction of her fate" (56). Fire removes symbolic vitality, but also symbolizes punishment and redemption. Izzy, the youngest

daughter, was extremely disappointed when she learned what her family was doing, especially her mother, at the root of all the problems. She remembered what Mia had said: "start over on the waste land, like a fire of stars on the prairie, and burn the old ones clean, and new things grow" (46), so she lit the little flame, first from her sister's bed, because her selfishness was the direct cause of Mia and her daughter being driven away. The fire burned down the house and punished everyone in the house. The fire destroyed everything, and the family was washed up so that they could start all over again. Mrs. Richardson in particular, for the fire was particularly important for her baptism. At the end of the novel, she would look for her runaway daughter, Izzy, and look through the crowd for the long-lost little flame on people's faces. Through the fire, she realized that her lost self-pursuit had been inherited and practiced by her younger daughter, and even more aware of the narrow and harsh nature of her past, thus awakening and moving. Gaston Bashra (Gaston Bachelard), the French philosopher, argues that fire marks sin and evil as well as purity. The image of fire, which appears many times in the Bible, basically embodies the two functions of punishment and redemption. From the perspective of the image of fire, there is a textual intertextuality between the *Little Fires Everywhere* and the Bible. Izzy was thought to be an alien, madman, just because she was different from the people under the shackles of the rules around her. The neighbors thought she was "a little crazy at first" (92). At the scene of the fire, the elder brothers and sisters agreed that it was Izzy. In their minds, Izzy was the "black sheep", the Richards' outliers, his brother bluntly "she's such a lunatic", "she's been out of her mind," "put her in a mental hospital for a lifetime" (26), "The madman in everyone's eyes finally set fire to his house, broke free, ran away from home, and went in pursuit of Mia. The fire also awakened the family, especially the mother, from the bondage. This is better than the crazy woman in the attic in *Jane Eyre*, quarantined, aphasia, and then burned down all over Thornfield" (Brontë 1987: 221).

C. Spatial Narrative

The structure of *Little Fires Everywhere* is the same as that of "Every Thing I Never Told You". It starts with suspense, arouses readers' interest in reading, and then introduces the cause and development of things in detail by recounting. "*Everything I Never Told You*" begins with the words "Lydia is dead, but they don't know yet" (Ng, 2014: 1). And then intersperses the present and the past to create, in addition to understanding the status quo of Lydia's death and its subsequent developments, they can also learn from their family's past life of their respective experiences, so as to see where the family's illness lies. The *Little Fires Everywhere* begins with "Richardson's youngest daughter Izzy finally collapsed and a fire burns down her house" (1), and then pulls the time back to June last year to tell the story of what happened during it to let the reader know why Izzy burned down the house. The book begins with a flashback, and this is the way the author used it in her previous book, which is a good way to catch the reader's attention, and if the plot is written in sequence, it can be disheartening. The book begins with Izzy's burning down her house and the Mia family

fleeing Sickl Heights. It describes the collision between two different families. The rich but obedient Richardson family, and the poor but free Mia family. Two families meet, and two ways of life meet. The author has no obvious subjective bias towards the way of life in the book. Neither life is wrong, but the wrong thing is that it cannot be forced to change other people's preferences.

IV. ETHICS OF READING

A. Interpretive Judgments

Of all Mia's photography, the finest and most glaring feature of Mia's work is the photo gift she gave to everyone in Richardson's family at the end of the novel. These works of art "carry unbearable privacy, as embarrassing as a glimpse of their nudity in a mirror" (35), Mia observed the weakness of everyone in the landlord's house with the sharpness and wisdom of the artist; And then with the photographer's ideas and ingenuity, we can conceive, process and create the discarded objects, and finally transform them into photographic works of art. The essence of them is to reflect the self that everyone inadvertently lost. Lexi went to abortion in the name of Mia's pure Pearl, whose selfishness and harm to Mia and her daughter were seen in Mia's eyes, but Mia did not point it out directly, let alone rebuke it. Instead, Lexi's shredded abortion certificate was turned into a work of art; reminiscent of Lexi's abandonment of her new life and the burden she should bear, as a way to reclaim her responsibility to herself. The next art photo is a show of fragility and encouragement to Tripp, a positive view of Moody and hope for his future, an indication of Mr. Richardson's direction in life. Mrs. Richardson was given a special gift, a birdcage cut out of a newspaper that had published her own articles, and there was a crack in the cage. Despite her disapproval of Mia's self-pursuit and even the expulsion of Mia and her daughter, the gift expressed Mia's understanding and guidance, and even her blessing, which could reflect the magnanimity and wisdom in Mia's spiritual realm. Izzy is like a black rose in the picture, falling on a broken road, hinting at the restraint of her environment. Clearly, every piece of Mia's photography is her reflection and presentation of the world, others, herself and existence. Through these works of art, Mia is a more profound, true to life, plump image, and at the same time her exploration of the world, the implications for others and guidance for the use of a glance. Different characters have different views on art, and these views well reflect some characteristics of character images. In her eyes, photography is nothing more than a tool, and its essence is record. Therefore, she does not regard herself as a photographer, let alone as an artist. In Mia's view, her photography was only a part of her life by observing, thinking about it. But in her daughter Pearl's knowledge, it was completely different. She has always been proud of her mother. When Moody's asked Pearl why Mia didn't get a real job, Pearl didn't hesitate to answer, "She's an artist." She worships and supports her mother's artistic creation, believing that her mother will one day join the ranks of famous artists and that one day "everyone will see her mother's talent". As a result of her obsession with art and her unconditional love for her mother, she was willing to

follow her mother from a young age and lead a life of extreme hardship. For ordinary people, especially the rational people of Sickl Heights, a life of art like Mia is simply not life; it is beyond their imagination. Even Moody's, attracted by "art", was somewhat confused. For him, Mia and Pearl's "mother and daughter" broke through the way they existed.

B. Ethical and Aesthetic Judgments

Van Gogh wrote a passage, there is a fire in the soul, but no one goes there to keep warm. The passers-by can only see the faint smoke on the chimney, and then continue to drive their way. *Little Fires Everywhere* focuses on family ethics, family love, and reveals what is most important in the interpersonal relationship, especially parents and children, through the different life patterns and attitudes of Mrs. Richard and Mia. As rational parents, we have crossed the simple and rough way of education of grandfathers, and the quality-oriented education that we have always advocated seems to be an open education of sunny type. However, when it comes to education, it often refers to payment, parents to their children's norms of conduct and ideological guidance. But it represents only one aspect of the pattern of coexistence among family members. More often, communication between families is about exploring an interactive lifestyle, rather than simply educating and being educated. Is selfless and dedicated love really good? Are the rules that parents regard as good for their children really good for their children's life? *Little Fires Everywhere* explores such a question of what true love in family relationship. "In addition to interpretive and ethical judgments, Phelan also explores the aesthetic judgments in his rhetorical theory of narrative" (Shang, 2009: 3). He says that "just as rhetorical ethics proceeds from the inside out, so too does rhetorical aesthetics. And just as rhetorical ethics involves a two-step process of reconstruction and evaluation, so too does rhetorical aesthetics" (Phelan, 1957: 13).

V. CONCLUSION

Whether Mia's pursuit of self or Mrs. Richardson's pursuit of the rules is a representation, its deep implication being a probe into the way of human existence and the meaning of life; it is also an action that individuals and even human beings never give up, that is, the pursuit of the ultimate meaning of human beings and life. In literature, this is an everlasting theme. Celeste Ng's novel explores this theme thoroughly, which is not only the inheritance of the literary tradition, but also the innovation of it in the new era: the self and the rules are both wanted by people; there will be contradictions and connections between them. But it should not be the two poles between water and fire; There is some tolerance between the two, so that the world formed in this way is the true "city on the top of the mountain", only then will it be more abundant, diverse and meaningful. Ethics refers to the principles and norms that should be followed in dealing with the relationship between people and society. It refers to a series of concepts that guide behavior, and it is a philosophical thinking on moral phenomena from the conceptual point of view. It does not only contain the code of

conduct in the relationship between man and man, man and society and man and nature, but also contains the profound truth of standardizing behavior according to certain principles. It refers to the truth of being a person, including human emotion, will, outlook on life and values and so on. It refers to a code of conduct that conforms to a certain moral standard between people. The difference between ethics and morality is that ethics is a contradiction and dilemma; it does not have absolute right or wrong markings, just as Mia's pursuit of freedom. It's not thoroughly instifiable to maintain that Mia is wrong to pursue what she loves, but what she did brought terrible living conditions to her daughter, so we can't draw the conclusion that she did exactly the right thing. Another example is Mrs. Richardson, who believes that to follow the rules, everything has to be planned. According to the plan, she provides her children with the perfect material conditions, but she ignores the inner world of the children. According to her own plan, she tries her best to provide a superior material life to the children. It's not well-grounded to say that what she did was wrong, but only to provide the children with material conditions and ignore Izzy's inner world, and to ignore what Izzy really wants really had a bad effect on Izzy's development. The meaning of this passage is to further dilate on the serious theme of tolerance and understanding among ethnic groups of different occupations and complexions.

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