

# Different Dimensions Of Life Under The Framework Of Childhood Consciousness: A Comparison Of Writings By Haiyin Lin And Zhen Jian

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## Abstract

*Childhood consciousness in literary creation carries writers' reflections on individual memory, cultural roots, and the meaning of life. Taking the childhood writings of Haiyin Lin and Zhen Jian as research objects, this paper analyzes the life dimensions reflected in their works from the perspectives of generative environment and aesthetic expression. The study finds that Lin's childhood consciousness is rooted in the stable environment of Peking, adopting nostalgic images, convergent narratives, and plain language, pointing to the life dimension of cultural root-seeking and emotional settlement. In contrast, Jian's childhood writings originate from the natural environment of Yilan County, using dynamic images, scattered narratives, and poetic language, focusing on the life dimension of existential inquiry and self-creation. Their childhood writings not only show the profound connection between individual growth and the environments but also reflect the evolutionary context of Taiwanese literature from "seeking roots" to "seeking oneself", jointly responding to the existential predicament under the complex historical background.*

**Keywords:** Haiyin Lin; Zhen Jian; Childhood Consciousness; the Dimension of Life

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## I. Introduction

Childhood is the starting point of life, an unforgettable foundation of life, and a spiritual cradle for forming psychological structures, personality traits, and value orientations. Childhood writing is not only a review of writers' self-growth process but also reflects the complex interweaving of specific historical backgrounds, regional cultures, and gender identities. Lin, a pioneer of Taiwanese women's literature, holds a dual identity as a writer from both the mainland and Taiwan. In *Memories of Peking: South Side Stories*, with Peking in the early Republic of China as the background, she outlines a warm and stable literary space through the growth narrative of Yingzi, carrying deep affection for her spiritual hometown. Jian is a powerful female writer in Taiwan's modern literary circle, breaking new ground in prose themes. In *Moonlight Shines on the Bed*, she used poetic language to show the beautiful pastoral life in rural Yilan County, searching for the meaning of existence in her hometown.

Although both focus on childhood themes, the two writers present distinct life dimensions and spiritual orientations due to differences in their growth experiences. This papers firstly analyzed the generative

environment of their childhood consciousness from three aspects: regional culture, family atmosphere, and historical background. Then, it systematically explained the aesthetic expression of their childhood consciousness from three levels: narrative structure, image selection, and linguistic style. Finally, it explored the different life dimensions pointed to by their childhood writings. Centering on the research method of close reading, this paper provides a new perspective for the study of Lin and Jian's childhood writings through comparative analysis, which has certain academic significance.

## **II. The Generative Environment Of Childhood Consciousness**

Sigmund Freud, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, regards childhood experiences as the source of dreams and literary creation as writers' daydreams. There is an inseparable connection between writers' creation and their childhood experiences. The formation of childhood consciousness is the result of the interaction between writers' individual experiences and the external environment, deeply influenced by geographical environment, humanistic atmosphere, and historical background. The reason why Lin and Jian's childhood writings show differences in life dimensions lies in their distinct generative contexts.

### **The Call of Warm Hometown**

Lin was born in Taiwan and moved to Peking with her parents at the age of five. "During the twenty-six years in Peking, from five to thirty-one, I only lived on two main streets: Hufangqiao Street and Nanchang Street. My life in Peking throughout the four seasons was spent wandering through the hutongs." The closed courtyards of Peking and the concentric circle structure of Peking's hutong—home—street formed a stable and centripetal space, providing a sense of closed security for Lin's childhood consciousness. As an ancient cultural capital, Peking had a rich historical heritage, which strengthened Lin's identification with traditional culture. Meanwhile, Peiking's inclusive spirit endowed her with a gentle and strong tolerance, jointly shaping the nostalgic and guardianship background of her childhood consciousness.

Lin grew up in a gentry family of the Republic of China, deeply influenced by Confucian culture, with gentle authority and sufficient emotional support as the core. Her parents actively participated in her childhood: her father was a guide for her growth, while her mother and Nanny Song, who took care of her since childhood, were caregivers of her life. In *Memories of Peking: South Side Stories*, when Yingzi performed on stage, her parents would buy fruits and bread, watching her sing with pride; when Yingzi was ill with a fever, her mother and Nanny Song took care of her closely, and her father paid careful attention to her emotional changes; when Yingzi was afraid to speak as a representative, her parents would encourage her patiently, and even when her father was absent due to illness, he would ask someone to put a oleander on her as a companion. The warm family provided her with sufficient emotional shelter. However, when Lin was 13 years old, her father passed away, which made her miss the complete and warm family life of her childhood even more.

Lin lived in the early Republic of China, a transitional era where the "old" was collapsing and the "new" had not yet been fully established. In her prose, she not only recalled her childhood but also mourned a disappearing cultural paradigm and traditional ethics, singing a gentle elegy for that era and city. Meanwhile, she was the first generation of writers and editors raised under the influence of the May Fourth New Culture Movement. Rationality, humanism, and concern for individual fate deeply permeated her soul, generating the restrained lyricism and sober compassion in her childhood consciousness. She wrote about suffering without exaggeration and parting with restraint. This was a rational examination and tender recollection of childhood under the illumination of enlightenment spirit. Moreover, her contradictory identity as neither a mainland person nor a Taiwanese after moving to Taiwan further strengthened this need. As Lin wrote in her autobiography: "I write about Peking casually because I miss her so much. Writing down my feelings for that

place can ease my anxious mood."Childhood in Peking eventually became an eternal symbol beyond time.

### **The Completion of the Pursuit Ritual**

Jian was born in Yilan County, Taiwan, and spent her entire childhood in rural Yilan. Her family had been farmers for generations, with scarce material conditions. The simple life allowed her more time and space to contact nature, observe it carefully, and deepen her connection with it. The Yilan Plain breathed and pulsed with Jian; birds, beasts, fish, and insects were companions with whom she could communicate in daily life; clouds, light, water, and stones were sources that nourished the geology of life; flowers, trees, vines, and ferns inevitably became objects of boundless imagination.[1]It was the power generated by nature that quietly nurtured the author's young mind, bringing her aesthetic enlightenment and making her perceive the delicacy and beauty of all things. Through the careful capture of nature by her senses, it also broadened her thinking dimension, making her explore the essence of life at an early age. It was nature that enlightened me, as well as knowledge, real life, and setbacks in life... Enlightenment made me develop the habit of thinking carefully anytime and anywhere. This habit of dynamic thinking following the flow of nature cultivated a fluid sense of life.

Jian grew up in a rural family where survival needs were prioritized, and family interactions revolved around livelihood cooperation. The busy life made it inevitable for family members to neglect Jian's growth. Her father had a serious patriarchal mindset and felt very disappointed when Jian was born. He not only ignored his daughter's growth but also often acted chaotically, filling Jian, who longed for fatherly love, with contradictions. Hence, she would say, What do I need such a father for? The sudden death of her father when she was 13 years old transformed this contradictory fatherly love into an unfinished emotional connection, leaving her with a constant search for the missing relationship in her sense of life. Her mother and grandmother were busy with farm work. As the eldest daughter in the family, Jian took on the responsibility of taking care of her younger siblings and the family's livestock at an early age. In her childhood, Jian felt lonely because the elders were busy with work and lacked focused emotional care for her. As she grew older, she gradually understood the women in her family, praised their dedication, and extended this sense of responsibility to care for a wider range of living beings.

The childhood depicted by Jian was on the eve of Taiwan's transformation from a traditional agricultural society to a modern industrial society, and the wave of modernization had already exerted a certain impact on the rural agricultural civilization. Peiking's I am capturing a vanished life space that I brushed past during my childhood. Peiking's She detected early on that the rural space of her childhood was disappearing with the era's transformation, and this sense of loss kept her childhood consciousness in a dynamic state of recording and recalling. Her experience of studying alone in Taipei during high school further promoted the flow of this consciousness—the sharp contrast between the fast-paced life of the metropolis and the slow rural life prompted her to extend her perception of the disappearance of the countryside to the experience of individual wandering in a rapidly changing society and the exploration of self-positioning, allowing her childhood consciousness to continuously expand and deepen in the context of the era's transformation.

Different growth experiences enabled Lin and Jian to obtain unique growth experiences and emotional accumulations on the one hand, and on the other hand, the influence of the environment left distinct marks on their lives. It was the influence of these diverse environments that prompted them in their literary creation to either tenderly look back on their childhood and mourn the passing cultural ethics, or explore the essence of life and the positioning of individuals in social changes, constructing a literary world full of personal characteristics and depth.

### III. The Aesthetic Expression Of Childhood Consciousness

Qingbing Tong believed that the object of writers' creation is a special kind of social life. The social life experienced by writers shapes their artistic personality and influences their aesthetic expression. Writers have various ways of understanding the world, and the most fundamental way comes from their early life experiences. Therefore, writers show traces of childhood experiences in aspects such as aesthetic expression. The generative environment of childhood consciousness is the soil for the framework of childhood consciousness, and aesthetic expression is the bridge that transforms the childhood experiences growing in this soil into perceptible literary forms. Whether Lin's childhood rooted in Peiking's hutongs or Jian's childhood nurtured in Yilan's countryside, both are ultimately reflected in their specific narrative logic, image selection, and linguistic style.

#### Narrative Structure

Lin's *Memories of Peking: South Side Stories* takes growth as the core, connecting the cause and effect of linearly flowing events to form a convergent memory form. Although the book is composed of five relatively independent stories, it strictly follows a chronological order. Each story corresponds to a stage of the protagonist Yingzi's growth, marking a deepening of her understanding of the world and completely outlining the transformation path from a child to an adult. *Huian Guan* focuses on Yingzi's early childhood, with the story revolving around interweaving real and imaginary past events, reflecting both the child's ignorant perspective and the initial experience of distant and fleeting past events. *We Are Going to See the Sea* corresponds to Yingzi's childhood, promoting her to break through the black-and-white opposing values of good and bad people through the plot, completing the initial understanding of the complexity of human nature. *Aunty Lan* enters Yingzi's early adolescence, taking Aunty Lan's experiences as the carrier, allowing Yingzi to come into contact with and understand the issue of gender relations in the adult world for the first time. *Donkey Rolling* is in Yingzi's late adolescence, with the story scene breaking out of the limitations of her own home in the southern city, expanding the perspective of care to the rural society, marking the extension of her cognitive boundary from personal life to a broader social level. Finally, *Daddy's Flowers Have Fallen* is a key node in Yingzi's journey into adulthood. The responsibility entrusted by her father on his deathbed made her face death and learn to be mature and independent, echoing the theme of loss and reflecting the meaning of life passed down from generation to generation in the cycle of withering and thriving.

In contrast, the childhood narrative presented by Jian in *Moonlight Shines on the Bed* takes the flow of emotions and feelings as the clue, occasionally interspersed with philosophical thoughts and insights, forming a scattered memory form. The book is divided into seven units. *Miscellany of Bowl Flowers* depicts the natural scenery and life interests of rural Yilan, expressing nostalgia and love for the playful life of childhood. *Miscellany of Stoves* explores the inseparable life connection between objects through emotional observation. *Miscellany of Rice Waves* extends to land ethics and agricultural civilization, conveying the values of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. *Miscellany of Great Floods* touches on natural violence and survival predicament, revealing the fragility and rebirth of life through flood memories. *Miscellany of Flying Butterflies* portrays five female images with distinct personalities, focusing on the fate of women. *Miscellany of Grave Seekers* faces the pain brought by death and re-examines death and fate. The final *Miscellany of Moon Goddess* reflects on the impermanence of life through the waxing and waning of the moon, converging all scattered memories into an ultimate inquiry into the essence of life in the exploration of self-existence.

Lin adopts a dual perspective combining the child's perspective and adult recollection in her narrative. Each story unfolds from Yingzi's child's perspective, connected by the main line of growth. Every encounter and parting is a lesson for her to understand the world and move towards maturity. However, behind Yingzi's

description of Xiuzhen and Niuer being hit by a train from a child's perspective, there is the adult perspective's sigh at the impermanence of parting. When she writes, Peiking's Daddy's flowers have fallen, and I am no longer a child, Peiking's the child's perspective is the intuitive cognition of growing up, while the adult perspective superimposes the profound thought that growth is not only the increase in age but also the acceptance of family responsibilities. This implicit integration makes the childhood events under the convergent growth structure no longer simple stories but endows them with the in-depth value of how growth shapes individual emotions and cultural cognition.

Jian's fluid and variable narrative perspective is more flexible, focusing on the flow of moods. Her childhood works often switch between the first person and the third person, and even integrate the omniscient perspective, reflecting the vagueness and subjectivity of childhood memories. The narrator may be both herself in childhood and an adult observer. The leap of perspective makes the narrative more dreamlike, with surreal or poetic images, strengthening subjective feelings.

### **Image Selection**

Lin's childhood images are realistic and static nostalgic symbols. These images carry her deep emotional obsession with her hometown, her desire to reconstruct memories, and her conscious awareness of cultural guardianship. Courtyard houses and hutongs are the core images repeatedly appearing in *Memories of Peking: South Side Stories*.

The enclosed courtyard house symbolizes the aggregation and sense of belonging of the family. Yingzi's family lived in a traditional courtyard house in Peking, shuttling through the courtyard well every day, interpreting their respective life roles. Yingzi would take her younger sister to learn to walk in the courtyard, smiling and acting coquettishly at her mother through the glass window. On snowy winter nights, the whole family would huddle by the window to watch the falling snow in the courtyard. The harmonious and happy life in the courtyard house provided sufficient security for the childhood Yingzi and deepened the author's nostalgia for her hometown in adulthood.

The linearly arranged hutongs connect the courtyard houses on both sides, forming a network where every household is connected, symbolizing the close and harmonious neighborhood relations. *Wojingzi* refers to the wells in the hutongs, which were places where Peking residents fetched water daily and where Yingzi often waited for Nanny Song to buy vegetables. There were squeaking water carts and coming-and-going pedestrians in *Wojingzi*, which was very lively. In such a bustling environment, Nanny Song could safely entrust Yingzi to *Wojingzi*. This trust not only reflects the simple nature of Peking residents but also highlights the harmonious emotional connection between neighbors.[2] Hutongs were also places where Yingzi and Niuer often met. When she couldn't wait for Niuer, Yingzi would take out Peiking's fossils Peiking's and draw freely on other people's walls. Hutongs were a happy paradise for Yingzi to release her nature. Yingzi's hutongs not only brought her happy memories but also unforgettable images and flavors. Yingzi saw returning donkeys at the entrance of the hutong but also watched Nanny Song, who was like a family member, leaving the hutong on a donkey. This circulation of people and events of gathering and parting also endows the ancient hutongs with eternal and precious local customs and humanistic values.

Courtyard houses and hutongs, one inside and one outside, jointly constructed Yingzi's childhood field, transforming Peking from a geographical space into a spiritual home, allowing personal memories and regional culture to be preserved and continued in the text.

Jian's childhood images are poetic and dynamic natural symbols. These natural images all serve the purpose of expressing emotions and discussing principles, reflecting her fluid thoughts and rich inner world. The image repeatedly mentioned in Jian's childhood memories is water.

In Jian's childhood memories, "water is the softest, yet also the most stubborn and unreasonable." In *The Well When It Rains*, water was gentle. She selflessly supported the operation of Jian's family life, symbolizing the indispensable nurturing power in life. She witnessed Jian's growth and changes, symbolizing the preservation of time and memories. In *The Great Flood*, she was extremely ferocious. With lightning and violent winds, she "like a dark group of fierce ghosts," viciously destroying villages and threatening lives. At this time, rain symbolized the violent natural destructive power and survival predicament, testing people's will and tenacity. The surging water turns into waves. In *Drunk in the Rice Waves*, Jian regarded the green rice fields as waves and herself as "an undiminishing wave." From the vigorous waves, she received hints of vitality, making her feel that "life itself is an eternal moving miracle," rekindling her "longing and persistence" for life. Gathered waterways form rivers. In *Lihua, There's a Letter for You*, the interaction between Jian and Lihua often took place by the riverbank. Lihua was sent to be an adopted daughter at birth, unable to control her own fate, and could only be confined to endless labor and childbirth. Through Lihua's story, Jian implied that the custom of child brides was undoubtedly poisonous water infiltrating women's consciousness, expressing criticism of feudal culture and sympathy for traditional women. Water erosion forms rivers.[3] In *Smiling Flowers*, Jian went to pick smiling flowers by her grandmother-in-law's thatched cottage by the river. Standing on the bamboo bridge, watching the turbulent river water, she felt extremely frightened and confused. The river is the separation between the shore and the other shore. This shore is the frolicking of childhood and the fragrance of smiling flowers; the other shore is the unknown growth and the end of death. The river water triggered the author's thinking about the inevitable disappearance of individual life and the transience of youth and beautiful things.

From the tenderness of the well, the violence of the rain, the vitality of the waves, the compassion of the river to the profound thoughts of the river, every transformation of water is a projection and exploration of Jian's inner world. Through the image of water, she records the passage of childhood time, expresses poetic inquiries about life, time, fate, and even death, and ultimately integrates personal subtle feelings into the cycle of eternal thinking about the essence of existence.

### **Linguistic Style**

Lin's language is plain and delicate, favoring colloquial sketches with a slow narrative rhythm. "The sun shone through the large glass window, onto the wall pasted with white paper, onto the three-drawer desk, and onto my small bed. I woke up, still lying in bed, watching the many tiny, tiny dust particles dancing in the sunlight." The beginning of the story uses sketching techniques. The author uses simple nouns such as "glass window", "wall pasted with white paper", and "three-drawer desk" to accurately outline the typical indoor scene of a Peking citizen's family in the last century, bringing readers into that time and space full of daily life. Verbs such as "shone through", "onto", and "dancing" clearly depict the path of the sun's movement, mobilizing vision and touch, making childhood memories tangible. Behind the quiet and warm atmosphere, there is the author's deep nostalgia for childhood time, laying a nostalgic tone.

Jian's language is full of poetry, using rhetoric to infuse emotions into the text, with a musical rhythmic beauty. "I felt that the sun was originally considerate. I felt that the five-line melody on the telephone poles was actually not difficult to understand. I felt that the sky was so lively; so clear and cloudless; the rice fields were so vivid, so endless." Even when writing daily scenes, the sun and heaven and earth in her writing radiate a different kind of vitality. She uses personification to endow the sun with emotions, compares electric wires to staff notation, and turns ordinary street scenes into vivid musical notes. The repetition of "so" and "such", and the image antithesis of "lively/cloudless" and "vivid/endless" are just like the internal repetition and antithesis in poetry, making the presentation of colors full of vivid rhythmic tension. This rhythm is never confined to a fixed

pattern; it jumps freely with the fragments of childhood memories and slows down or speeds up with the inner perception of nature, ultimately becoming a vivid carrier for recording childhood emotions.

Lin vividly restores the customs of old Peking and deeply expresses her nostalgia for her hometown through convergent narrative structure, static nostalgic image system, and plain and delicate linguistic style. Jian, on the other hand, preserves the style of rural Yilan and contains the meaning of self-seeking through scattered narrative structure, dynamic poetic image system, and elegant and profound linguistic style. These all reflect the profound influence of the childhood environment and provide concrete presentation for the ultimately pointed life dimensions.

#### **IV. The Life Dimensions Pointed To By Childhood Consciousness**

The things experienced by writers in their childhood will surely leave soul-stirring memories in their young hearts, and these unforgettable memories will also form a certain emotional accumulation in the depths of writers' hearts.[4] These deep inner experiences ultimately point to different life dimensions and respond to different existential issues. Lin's childhood writing centers on cultural root-seeking and emotional settlement, focusing on belonging and continuity, while Jian's childhood writing aims at existential inquiry and self-creation, pointing to exploration and reconstruction. The two life dimensions are not oppositional but complementary, jointly responding to the complex propositions intertwined with individuals and the times.

##### **Cultural Root-Seeking and Emotional Settlement**

Represented by *Memories of Peking: South Side Stories*, Lin's childhood writing takes Peking's hutongs as the spatial carrier, outlining a warm and stable cultural universe. In her works, childhood is not only a container for personal memories but also a coordinate for cultural identity, providing a spiritual path of retrospection for the post-war immigrant generation amid the anxiety of cultural rupture.

Lin's childhood writing carries deep affection for Chinese culture. Lin traveled to many places in her life, and Beijing was her unattainable spiritual hometown. Through Yingzi's perspective, *Memories of Peking: South Side Stories* vividly presents multiple pictures of old Peiking's food, clothing, housing, transportation, urban architecture, folk customs, and human conditions. Whether the frequent use of Peking dialect, the ingenious selection of specific cultural landscapes such as courtyard houses, hutongs, and Tianqiao, or the delicate sketches of folk customs such as bird walking, cricket fighting, and Peking Opera performances, all highlight the regional characteristics of Peking.[5] These elements not only reproduce the childhood living scenes but also convey deep identification with Chinese culture, representing the continuation of Chinese culture among immigrants. In the context of post-war immigration, the rupture of cultural identity was a common predicament for many people. Through childhood narrative, Lin reconstructed a cultural space of belonging, allowing readers to feel the continuity of history and culture in the streets and alleys of hutongs. This process of root-seeking is not only the confirmation of personal identity but also the reconstruction of the collective memory of a generation.

Lin also regards childhood writing as emotional healing. In *Memories of Peking: South Side Stories*, Yingzi's childhood world is filled with a warm and lost emotional tone. The maternal love of her mother, the care of her father, the fraternal affection between brothers and sisters, and the deep friendship from others all make her feel warm when recalled.[6] At the same time, through the theme of growth, she expresses melancholy for the passing time and sadness for the disappearance of life. This kind of emotional writing provides gentle comfort for individuals in the turbulent era. Childhood has become a stable lost paradise, and historical traumas are healed in the warmth of memories. Yingzi's sadness at Nanny Song's departure and her grief at her father's death are transformed into a gentle emotional power in the narrative. This power is not only a personal

emotional sustenance but also a collective response to the pain of the times. Therefore, Lin's life dimension has an inward cohesion, providing an eternal home for individuals and groups to place their emotions through childhood memories.

### **Existential Inquiry and Self Creation**

Jian's childhood writing, centered on *Moonlight Shines on the Bed*, conducts philosophical reflections on individual existence, gender identity, and the relationship between humans and nature through childhood memories. Jian's childhood is not a harbor to return to but a dynamic starting point of thought, prompting her to constantly disassemble and reconstruct herself.

Jian's childhood writing takes profound philosophical inquiry as the core, exploring the position and meaning of individuals in the universe. In *Moonlight Shines on the Bed*, the death of children and the early passing of A Meizi arouse her inquiry into how to place the emotions of perishable life; the aging of wells and water prompts her to think about how time shapes life and how memories are preserved; the escape on Mid-Autumn night stimulates her exploration of the balance between the order of self-existence and the tension of freedom; the conflict between her grandmother's ideas and her own evokes her reflection on how individuals can exist in the context of the era's transformation; the struggle between leaving and returning to her hometown triggers her confusion about how individuals can confirm their spiritual home in wandering. All these ultimately point to the pursuit of the meaning of life and the in-depth exploration of how individuals can establish their existential value. Jian's childhood narrative does not stop at recalling the rural life of her childhood but combines the retrospective perspective of adulthood to explore the uncertainty and possibility of existence. Therefore, her life dimension has an outward tension, pointing to the exploration of the unknown and the redefinition of self.

Jian's childhood writing also reflects a sense of life of self-creation. Regarding the significance of *Moonlight Shines on the Bed*, Jian said: "For me at the age of twenty-six, to re-experience the life activities of my childhood is a 'ritual'. Only through the completion of consciousness can I break off the three thousand umbilical cords connected to the world of birth, old age, illness, and death, and become a beggar wandering the streets in the country of literature." Jian defines the experience of "childhood life activities" as a "ritual", completing the exploration of the source of her own life through the reproduction of childhood life. The "three thousand umbilical cord" metaphor the fetters of the mundane world. Jian attempts to cut off the connection with these fetters through childhood writing, seek spiritual purification in the literary world, and allow herself to obtain a new form of existence in the realm of literature. She faces the passage of time and life with the calmness of "Birth and youth are just people's outer clothes. If someone comes to steal them where they can be obtained or not, it's better to smile"; she views the conflict between individuals and intergenerational changes with the clarity of "Let grandmother comb her hair in her era, and I let my hair flow freely in mine. We only share a ray of morning light"; she completes the reconciliation with her father and assumes the responsibility of running the family with the life commitment of "Red bricks build the solidity of home, and I will repaint the warmth of home with the most enthusiastic color, just like my father". Jian's childhood narrative is like a surging river, carrying the constant reconstruction and transcendence of self. This creative process is not only individual but also responds to the universal anxiety of individuals seeking self-positioning in a rapidly changing society during Taiwan's modernization process. Therefore, her life dimension has a dynamic openness, encouraging individuals to find new possibilities in the flow.

### **From Seeking Roots to Seeking OneSelf**

The two life dimensions represented by Lin and Jian are not simply binary opposites in the history of



literature but complementary with profound historical significance and philosophical connotations, jointly presenting the spiritual appearance and ideological development track of Taiwan's modern literature and even the entire Chinese world in a specific historical period.

Lin's rooted dimension responds to the collective spiritual trauma caused by political upheaval and large-scale immigration in the mid-twentieth century. The core question of her cultural root-seeking is "Who am I, and where do I come from?" This inquiry points to a stable and traceable collective identity, aiming to rebuild a spiritual community for the wandering group. By carrying emotions and cultural memories through childhood writing, Lin continues the tradition of homesickness writing, infusing deep and restrained modern emotions under new historical conditions, repairing the historical continuity of the rootless group, and building a bridge at the broken place of memory.

Jian's fluid dimension expresses the universal modern anxiety felt by individuals in Taiwan's society with the deepening of modernization and urbanization after the 1970s and 1980s. The core question she asks is "Who am I, and where am I going?" This inquiry is no longer limited to the belonging of collective identity but sharply focuses on the exploration of individual existential value and the meaning of life. She represents the persistent pursuit of inner authenticity by individuals in an increasingly complex and decentralized world, as well as the reflection and transcendence of rigid labels such as gender, tradition, and roles.

From the perspective of the literary history context, the two clearly show the evolution of Taiwanese literature from the "seeking roots" stage emphasizing collective belonging, historical bearing, and cultural inheritance to the "seeking oneself" stage focusing on the individual inner world, existential value, and self-construction. Lin has become an important representative of "seeking roots" literature, guarding cultural roots and collective memories; Jian, as an outstanding representative of "seeking oneself" writing, promotes the exploration of the inner world and individual existence. This evolution is not a linear replacement of the latter by the former but a dialectical complementarity and co-construction. The stability of the "root" can provide a foundation and background for the exploration of the "oneself"; the manifestation and confusion of the "oneself" also make the connotation of the "root" more complex and multi-dimensional. Lin's writing on the placement of individuals and Jian's existential inquiry jointly constitute a complete spiritual picture of humans facing time, history, and self. People need to look back at the past to confirm their identity and look forward to the future to expand their lives. The tension and dialogue between the two life dimensions continuously highlight the philosophical depth and artistic value of childhood writing.

## **V. Conclusions**

Through the holistic investigation of the generative environment, aesthetic expression, and life dimensions of childhood consciousness, we can clearly see the profound opposition and complementarity contained in the two writing paradigms of belonging and continuity, and exploration and flow depicted by Lin and Jian. These two types of writing not only present the differences in writers' individual experiences and literary styles but also reflect the cultural identity and modernity predicament faced by Taiwanese literature during the historical transition period. Their creations show that the literary reconstruction of childhood memories is not only a retrospective of personal experiences but also a deep response to the era's propositions.

The literary practices of Lin and Jian have jointly constructed a dialogue space about memory and existence, belonging and freedom. In an increasingly fluid modern society, Lin's writing on belonging and continuity reminds us of the importance of emotional settlement and cultural inheritance, while Jian's fluid exploration shows the courage of self-reconstruction in the face of changes. Their creations inspire us that the significance of childhood writing lies not only in preserving the past but also in providing a spiritual foothold for modern people. This cross-era literary dialogue is precisely the value of the comparative study of Lin and

Jian, and also provides a precious literary reference for understanding the complex relationship between individuals and history, tradition and modernity.

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