

Sparks Spreading from The Past

-- A Study of Analepsis in Celeste Ng's *Little Fires Everywhere*

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Abstract: As the newly published book of Celeste Ng, a Chinese-American female writer, *Little Fires Everywhere* tells a story set in the 1990s which begins with a bizarre fire of a house in Shaker Heights, Ohio, and analepsis is deftly applied by Celeste Ng to explain the truth behind the fire. As the title hits, fire acts as a significant image in this novel which appears several times in the text. Employing Genette's concepts of analepsis, Hu Yamin's definition of the function of analepsis and some different interpretations of the image fire in Western civilization, this paper tends to analyze how the author conveys the themes of the search for self, destruction and rebirth, and the relationship between mother and daughter through the arrangement of the analepsis time structure.

Keywords: *Little Fires Everywhere*, Analepsis, Imagery of fire, Thematic study.

1. Introduction

Little Fires Everywhere, the second book by Chinese-American writer Celeste Ng, was the winner of a best book of the year by NPR upon its publication, and subsequently won 27 awards of Book of the Year. *Little Fires Everywhere* has not been available for long as a new work published in 2017, thus on this book does little research have been conducted by scholars at home and abroad. Scholars have either analyzed the relationship between the social environment and the characters from a dichotomous perspective to reveal the novel's multiple themes (Zhang Jia, 219) or explored the ethical choices of the protagonist, Izzy, from the perspective of ethical narratives (Yuan Shen, 539), while others have attempted to focus on two issues of commodification and alienation that are proposed by Karl Marx as seen through two female protagonists which are Mia Warren and Bebe Chow (Dwi Mayang Sagita, Delvi Wahyuni, 2020), and Dian Novita investigates moral values in the novel and concludes that the findings suggest that some moral values can be learned in it. (Dian Novita, 2019). In a word, few scholars have noted that the themes in this novel have been well-presented through the arrangement of the analepsis time structure. As a matter of fact, a close reading of the text will reveal that it is through the application of analepsis time structure that the themes of self-seeking, destruction and rebirth, and the relationship between mother and daughter are explored in such depth.

Entertainment Weekly gave an A- to *Everything I Never Told You*, Celeste Ng's debut novel, and commented on its narrative style: 'in this novel, Ng skillfully gathers each thread of the tragedy, uncovering secrets and revealing poignant answers.' [14] And *Little Fires Everywhere*, which received the same high score from Entertainment Weekly, remains consistent with her first novel in terms of narrative style. Celeste sets the story in her native Ohio. The whole story consists of one main line -- Izzy set fire to the house, and two secondary lines - Mia and her daughter Pearl's arrival in Shaker Heights and the battle over the abandoned child, and three lines are interwoven. The whole novel is constituted by analepsis time structure with the first chapter telling the ends

of the three lines---- the house on fire, Mia's family leaving Shaker Heights and people talking about the abandoned child, while in the penultimate chapter, the novel returns to the night before the aforementioned events. From the beginning to the end, the novel, interspersed with each character's recollections of his or her own past, reveals the final causes of the fire collected from the past step by step. As a result, it is reasonable to say that the sparks that cause the uncontrollable fire at the end of the story are like those tiny threads commented by Entertainment Weekly. Following these threads, readers can draw out the memories and secrets in the hearts of each character in the novel.

Analepsis is an important term in the discussion of narrative time introduced by Genette. In his definition of anachrony, Genette proposes a reference object--the first narrative, which refers to the sequential level of time in narrative discourse. Genette distinguishes two types by comparison: Analepsis and prolepsis. The term analepsis refers to 'any evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at any given moment.' (Genette, 48) And with the purpose of analyzing narrative time in depth, Genette proposes two concepts: reach and extent. He defined reach as 'An anachrony can reach into the past or the future, either more or less far from the "present" moment, this temporal distance we will name the anachrony's reach.' and named 'a duration of story covered by the anachrony' as its extent. (Genette, 49) With these two terms, the types of narrative time can be discussed in detail.

The imagery of fire has always occupied a place in the western civilization. There exists the legend of Phoenix Nirvana in Western mythology, in which fire represents rebirth. In Greek mythology, Prometheus, who stole fire from Olympus for mankind, is regarded as a hero who brings light and hope to the world, and in some societies, fire itself was a god. "in most of human history, fire has been a pervasive presence in human life, and so also in human thought. Fire was the ultimate dialectical tool, capable equally of deconstructing the text of the world into its constituent parts and of fusing them into a new synthesis." (Stephen J. Pyne, 371) As the name of the novel implies, the image of fire has been repeated many times in this novel. The fire of resistance of Izzy, the

fire of rekindling of Elena, and the fire of perseverance of Mia constitute the eternal themes of pursuing, discovering, and persevering in the novel. Meanwhile, the disintegration of the perfect image of Shaker Heights and the changes that occur in the protagonists simultaneously embody the themes of destruction and rebirth. In addition, people's arguments about who should be Mei Ling's mother between Mrs. McCullough and Bebe, Elena's change of attitude towards Izzy, and Izzy's dependence on Mia echo the theme of mother-daughter relationship. In this paper, the definition of analepsis in Genette's *Narrative Discourse* and Hu Yamin's definition of the function of analepsis are employed for analyzing the fires of rebellion in Izzy's search for self, the fires of rekindling in Elena's discovery of self, and the fires of Mia's perseverance in self, so as to explore how the narrative technique of analepsis can reveal the profound influence of the past on the present and highlight the themes of search for self, the themes of destruction and rebirth as well as the themes of the relationship between mother and daughter.

2. Complete and Partial Analepses: The Fire of Search for Self

2.1. Complete Analepses:

Depending on the extent of the narrative time, analepses can be divided into partial analepses and complete analepses. The complete analepsis, which joins the first narrative without any gap between the two sections of the story, completes the events before the first narrative. (Genette, 63).

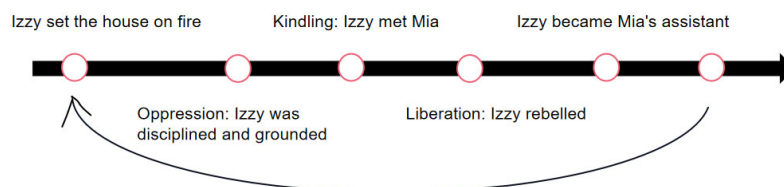
2.1.1. The Fire of Rebellion: Izzy

The novel *Little Fires Everywhere* consists of 20 chapters, the first part of which begins with the fire at the Richardson house, while the story returns to the night before the fire in chapter 19, the final chapter tells what happened in Shaker Heights a year later with the middle chapters presenting what has happened at the Richardson house over the past 11 months or so. Based on Genette's definition of story time and narrative time in *Narrative Discourse*, we can represent the story time and narrative time of the main story line of the former 19 chapters separately via using the axes.

Story time of setting fire:



Narrative time of setting fire:



As shown in the axes, Celeste Ng places the burning of the house the forefront of the entire story line, constituting the complete analepsis. This kind of structure sets up suspense cleverly which leads the readers to think about the causes behind the disaster step by step, while also revealing the spiritual journey of Izzy along the way gradually. The story is set in Shaker Heights, where boasts the name of a rainbow's arch at a mountaintop of Shaker Heights. And one of the protagonists Izzy, an 14-year-old girl, is considered mental incompetent by the local for her failing to observe the rules of her home and the community from time to time. Being intolerable to her fiddle teacher's humiliation to a black classmate, Izzy hit the teacher, and as a result, she was disciplined by the school and grounded by her mother for this, as always, she decided to accept the punishment silently. When she was grounded at home due to punishment, she met Mia who came to clean her house. Mia showed no incomprehension after learning the truth but asked Izzy: "What are you going to do?" (Celeste Ng, 121) Afterwards, she offered Izzy a solution, for which Izzy felt the understanding from others for the first time. Thus Mia ignited the fire of research for self in Izzy's heart, and Izzy had felt, finally, as if

she could speak without immediately bumping into the hard shell of her sheltered life' (Celeste Ng, 266). So she decided not to suppress the sparks in her heart any longer. To fight against injustice, Izzy put a toothpick into the keyhole, bravely protesting to the rigid rules and regulations of the school and her mother. She stood up alone for Bebe Chow when all of her family members supported their white friend's adoption of the Asian child Mei Ling. Knowing the truth that Bebe Chow lost the custody of her child in the lawsuit, Izzy burned down her house, thus revealing that the Shaker Heights, known as the perfect place, is actually full of injustice. The oppressive school system, the selfishness and indifference of the siblings, the incomprehension and suppression from Izzy's mother Elena, and the unjust system of Shaker Heights all become the sparks that fuel the ending fire, which eventually form the fire of rebellion in Izzy's heart. On the one hand, via dealing with the past of each character, Celeste Ng put readers into a situation that they feel like as if they are experiencing all the things that happened to those characters again, and the hidden stains in Shaker Heights were presented so that the reader can better understand Izzy's seemingly "crazy" behavior. On the other hand, the application of analepses connects the causality

of the whole story logically, depicting the rebellious process of Izzy from suppressing herself to being herself bravely, which echoes the theme.

2.2. Partial Analepses

Genette tends to name 'this type of retrospection, which ends on an ellipsis without rejoining the first narrative, simply partial analepses' (Genette,62). In other words, A partial analepsis traces back to some isolated fragments of the past, which ends on an ellipsis without rejoining the first narrative, and its function is to provide the reader with an isolated but indispensable piece of information. In those novels created by Celeste Ng, the omniscient perspective is always employed with the purpose of presenting the past of the characters, which works as a way to acquire basic understandings of them from readers. Therefore, It is fair to say that a large number of partial analepses features her novels. The paper will follow the discussion of the self-pursuit process of other two characters-- Elena and Mia ---in the novel from the relationship between reach and extent of partial analepses.

2.2.1. The Fire of Rediscovering self: Elena

There appear four prominent analepses about Elena in chapters 6,8,11 and 20 respectively,and the reach and extent of each use varies.

The novel reviews Elena's past from the perspective of omniscience. In Chapter 6, half a page is used for describing Elena's efforts to live a regular life since the beginning of her teenage years. On the one hand, the half a page reveals that Elena's faith of 'using coffee spoon to measure the life', depicting Elena as a self-proclaimed person whose life has been dull and boring for decades. On the other, through partial analepses, the author also revealed that Elena's fluctuating mental process in seeing the Mia's picture of spider dancers. By contrast, Elena started thinking 'to understand according to - and how - she did what she did.' (Celeste Ng,61), which can be seen as the first small flame of Elena's rediscovery of herself.

In Chapter 8, Izzy's words-- 'You're a reporter' --said to her mother Elena when she wanted her to investigate a photo triggered Elena's review of her career. Elena had the dream of becoming a reporter since high school, and then she turned into a reporter in Shaker Heights through step-by-step efforts. While due to her reluctance to break out of the norm, Elena's responsibility to cover small, inconsequential stories remained unchanged in her department for decades. In contrast to the first time of using partial analepses in Chapter 6, two and a half pages are used this time to summarize Mrs. Richardson's decades-long career, revealing, on the one hand, her conformist past, and on the other, that 'Izzy's words had touched her mother's pride like a finger pressed into an old bruise.' (Celeste Ng,86) .The second employment of partial analepses suggests that Elena has been psychologically impacted again, and from the aspect of the extent of the analepses, it seems that the impact is greater and more profound compared to the first impact, further facilitating Elena's process of rediscovery of herself. Moreover, after the conversation between mother and daughter, Elena acted immediately and started to investigate where that photo came from.

The third partial analepsis about Elena appears in chapter 11, whose reach and extent are deeper and larger compared to the previous two. The text recalls the period from the arrival of Elena's grandparents in Shaker Heights to Elena's graduation from college in nearly four pages, during which

period Elena possess a tiny spark kindling deep inside her when she saw the student riots for rights in 1968. During Elena's senior year ,there was also a small flame with a freedom-seeking boy in her class ,however,as Elena clung to the rules of Shaker Heights , the small flames of both times were extinguished. The nearly four-page analepsis, which demonstrates the profound influence of the Shaker Heights' requirement for perfection on Elena, maps out Elena's previous psychological struggle between the pursuit of self and perfection, foreshadowing the arrival of Elena's rekindled flame of self-discovery.

The final partial analepsis about Elena comes in the close, which ends with a two-page scene of Mrs. Richardson spending the night in the Winslow House. 'Was she the bird trying to batter its way free, or Was she the cage?' (Celeste Ng,277). Mrs. Richardson kept thinking after finding pictures of the empty birdcage and golden feathers in the room she had rented out to Mia. At the same time Izzy's departure made her realize that 'Izzy who she thought had been her opposite but who had, deep inside, Inherited and carried that spark her mother had long ago tamped down' (Celeste Ng,276) ,which also gave her the determination of searching for a spark of the personality in the faces of strangers. '(Celeste Ng,277). Through the partial analepsis of Mrs. Richardson's mental activity in one night, the progress of Mrs. Richardson's determination to find herself again instead of repressing herself is well presented.

From the above analysis, we've noticed that Celeste Ng mainly has arranged four partial analepses for the character Mrs. Richardson, the latter of which is often larger and broader than the previous ones in terms of reach and extent, which implies the psychological process of Mrs. Richardson's rekindling of the fire of self-discovery.

2.2.2. The Fire of Self-Reliance: Mia

Unlike the analepses applied to Elena, the author did not choose to use several partial analepses intermittently when dealing with the character Mia. Instead, one relatively consecutive partial analepsis was used to depict Mia's past in chapters 13 and 14. The entire two chapters are devoted to the events that Mia encountered from the beginning of her childhood to when Mia gave birth to Pearl as a surrogate and took that picture. Why is the analepsis about Mia used until the middle part of the story? Why didn't Celeste use multiple partial analepsis to portray Mia like she did to portray Elena? I think the author may have had two considerations for this treatment.

First of all, the mystique of Mia has been preserved. As an intruder in Shaker Heights, Mia was shaped as an artist seeking freedom through what Mia did after she had come to Shaker Heights and Mia's daughter's memories of the past from the former 12 chapters. Throughout the development of the story, it is Mia who has ignited the fire of rebellion for Izzy to be herself and the fire of rekindling for Elena to discover herself. But before chapter 13 readers still have many points of doubt about Mia, such as her constant refusal to go to New York, her reluctance to reveal the news of her father to her daughter, her full support for Bebe Chow, who is not a close friend, to return her child, and so on. The whole novel adopts an omniscient point of view, but before chapter 13 the author did not do much psychological description of Mia, the character Mia is mostly shaped through her behavior and Mia's daughter's memories of the past, as a person who has an impact on the other two important characters in the novel, Mia has been hidden behind the scenes, so that readers will feel

great curiosity about Mia, who has a free soul and is full of great energy. At the same time, Mia's revelation of the past in chapters 13 and 14 will have a greater psychological impact on the reader, thus provoking deeper thoughts.

Moreover, the use of continuous partial analepses reflects the spirit of Mia's perseverance. Intermittent partial analepses were used when presenting the past life of Elena, which reflects her unstable psychological development process at the same time. In contrast, Mia's past was reviewed in two relatively complete chapters, which reflects Mia's journey of perseverance from the beginning to the end regardless of difficulties she encountered. Mia's love of photography has never been understood by her pragmatic-seeking parents. For her unique perspective and obsession with photography, 'the clerk at the Fotomat thought that if Mia was a little touched.' (Celeste,158) But Mia did not give up on her dream, she found several part-time jobs after school to earn tuition after being admitted to the New York School of Fine Arts with honors. Although Mia had to drop out of school due to surrogacy and family changes, she did not give up on her creation even when she was struggling to make ends meet. Celeste depicts Mia's past in two complete chapters, thus burning fire of self in Mia's heart has been demonstrated, which has spread to Elena and Izzy, forming a triple flame in the road of self-seeking.

3. Internal and External Analepses: The Fire of Destruction and Rebirth

According to the difference in reach and extent between analepses and the first narrative, the narrative can be divided into external analepses, internal analepses and mixed analepses. The entire extent of external analepses is outside the first narrative. The second type is internal analepses whose entire extent is inside the first narrative. Genette has mentioned the advantages and disadvantages of both: External analepses, by the very fact that they are external, never at any moment risk interfering with the first narrative, for their only function is to fill out the first narrative by enlightening the reader on one or another "antecedent." (Genette,49) while 'since internal analepses' temporal field is contained within the temporal field of the first narrative, they present an obvious risk of redundancy or collision.' (Genette,50) Similarly, the author treats the internal and external flashbacks in the novel differently in terms of their reach and extent.

3.1. External Analepses

The entire extent of external analepses is outside the first narrative. The fire of Richardson's house acts as the starting point of the first narrative, so all the events happened before the house fire are included in the extent of external analepses. As mentioned above, *Little Fires Everywhere* consists of 20 chapters, and the first 19 chapters are descriptions of the events that happened before the house fire, which spans a

period of 11 months (from June last year to May this year in the novel). As a whole, through the use of external analepses, readers are prompted to reconstruct their own understandings of the case and views of Shaker Heights with two truths being revealed.

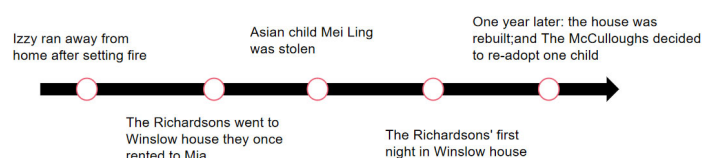
On the one hand, the use of external analepses reveals to readers the causes leading to the raging fire. Celeste Ng employs the usual opening technique of suspense novels to put the case in front of readers at first and then lead them to explore the truth behind the case. Through the external analepses, the arsonist Izzy's spiritual journey from the suppression of self to the liberation of self is shown. Through the use of analepsis on each character, Celeste reveals those sparks once existed in each character's heart, and it is the existence of those sparks that bring about the final fire.

On the other, the collapse of the perfect image of Shaker Heights established in people's minds is presented via the external analepses. Shaker Heights has always been regarded as a utopian place, the orders of which have brought the local a happy and comfortable life. Beneath the surface, however, there are still some crises and impulses lurking here. The color and style of the houses of Shaker Heights were unified merely to ensure the aesthetic harmony of each street; the neatly organized townhouses looked as if there was only one house from the outside, and the front door, door lights, mailboxes, and door numbers are all shared with even the electricity meter hidden behind the house near the garage inconspicuously. The residents of Shaker Heights seemed to be very confident and good, and the seemingly harmonious relationships were actually full of selfishness and injustice. As described in the novel, 'Shaker Heights' where inside them were people who might be happy, or taking refuge, or steeling themselves to go out into the world, searching for something better. So many lives she would never know about, unfolding behind those doors.' (Celeste Ng,276) Actually, The Shaker Heights is depicted as a microcosm of American society as a whole. Against the backdrop of superficial economic prosperity and stable social development, various problems are forced to snowball with the real needs of the citizens being ignored or even suppressed. The arrival of Mia's family prompts the disintegration of the superficially glamorous area, exposing the unbearable and fragile hidden in the depths. At the same time, the inhabitants were led to re-examine themselves at a certain moment when the sparks within them were ignited and burst forth, creating a prairie fire and ushering in a rebirth.

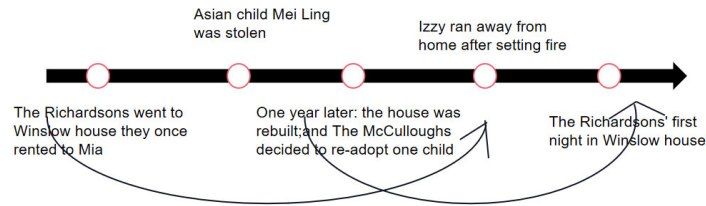
3.2. Internal Analepses

The entire extent of internal analepses is inside the first narrative. The last chapter in realistic narrative of *Little Fires Everywhere* describes the development of the plot in the year after the house fire, and the internal analepses are used to intersperse the activities of several main characters in the day after the fire, again we can use the axes to indicate the story time and narrative time of the main story line respectively.

Story time:



Narrative time:



Genette also divides internal analepses into internal heterodiegetic analepses and internal homodiegetic analepses. Internal heterodiegetic analepses refers to internal analepses dealing with a story line (and thus with a diegetic content) different from the content (or contents) of the first narrative. While internal homodiegetic analepses, that is, internal analepses that deal with the same line of action as the first narrative. (Genette, 52) As the axes show, Izzy's escape to Mia after setting fire belongs to the internal homodiegetic analepses, while The Richardsons' first night in Winslow house belongs to the internal heterodiegetic analepses.

Celeste Ng ends with the story of Izzy's escape from the Shaker Heights in pursuit of Mia's family. On the one hand, by internal homodiegetic analepses, the author reveals where Izzy was going, and on the other, Izzy's escape from the Shaker Heights, which symbolizes restraint and repression and her search for Mia who presents freedom and self embody the theme of Izzy's emancipation and rebirth.

Meanwhile, The fire that hit the Richardson house symbolized a destruction while also implied rebirth at the same time. As Mia told Izzy, "sometimes you needed to start over from scratch." (Celeste Ng, 266). Mrs. Richardson did not realize that her daughter Izzy was not the one who stood against her but the one who has inherited the sparks in her heart until the disaster happened. At the end Mrs. Richardson reconciled with herself from her final understanding of her daughter who had been regarded as a freak by her, gaining rebirth from repentance of the past.

4. The Function of Analepses: The Fire of Understanding between Mother and Daughter

According to the function of analepses, Hu Yamin divides analepses into completing analepses, contrasting flashbacks and repeating analepses. (Hu Yamin, 80)

4.1. Completing Analepses

Completing analepses refer to the retrospective sections that fill in an earlier gap in the narrative after the event. The recall of Mrs. Richardson's birth of Izzy and Izzy's childhood in Chapter 9 is a case in point. Mrs. Richardson paid extra attention to little Izzy because she was a premature baby, fearing that there was something wrong with her health. As the words say: 'anger is fear's bodyguard' (Celeste Ng, 95), because of her worries, Mrs. Richardson was extremely strict with Izzy in all matters even the way she sat at dinner. While Izzy, who was sensitive by nature, always was a devil's advocate on any subject her mother was interested in, and 'the more closely her mother watched her and the more she chafed at the attention' (Celeste Ng, 95). So Izzy had been seen as a freak by his family since she was a child. It is through the additional description of the Izzy's childhood that the reader is able to understand the reason for Mrs.

Richardson's strict discipline of Izzy. Izzy's rebellious childhood was both a traumatic experience for Mrs. Richardson and the beginning of Izzy's rebellion against her repressed nature. Here the fire symbolizes the fire of Mrs. Richardson's anger towards her daughter, which becomes a symbol of the incomprehensibility between the mother and the daughter.

Completing Analepses are also employed in the review of Bebe's abandonment of her child Mei Ling at the fire station and Mrs. McCullough's multiple miscarriages. Chinese Bebe Zhou was brought to the United States by her husband and then she was abandoned by him. With no money of her own, Bebe had no choice but to abandon her child at the fire station. Mrs. McCullough, on the other hand, was an American who wanted to have a child badly, while because of her poor health, Mrs. McCullough had had seven miscarriages, 'she had been painfully aware each time that something alive had sparked in her, and that somehow that little spark had gone out' (Celeste Ng, 111) In desperation, the McCulloughs had to seek adoption.

So when Mrs. McCullough learned that the police had found a child at a fire station and were looking in vain for a mother to adopt, she immediately claimed the Asian child, even though the McCulloughs had never thought of an Asian child all along because they thought white kids were the best candidates for them. On one side was the poor Chinese birth mother who could give the child a clearer sense of identity, and on the other side were the wealthy American adoptive parents who could provide a better material life for the child, and which one could be called Mei Ling's mother? The court in Shaker Heights awarded the child to the McCulloughs, while at the close of the story, Bebe Chow stole Mei Ling and took a plane back to Guangdong, China, overnight. The final unity of Bebe and her child has reflected Celeste's view of the entire event. The seemingly weak Bebe made the bold move of stealing the child, which implies that a mother's love for her child is like a blazing fire, and no matter how much the outside world gets in the way, the flame will never go out.

4.2. Contrasting Analepses

Contrasting analepses comprise the contrast with the present narrative by recalling the past, thus deepening the meaning of the work. In the previous chapters, Mrs. Richardson seemed to hate her daughter Izzy, believing that 'She was usually annoyed with Izzy for some reason or another.' (Celeste Ng, 92), and because of her upbringing in the Shaker Heights, Mrs. Richardson also tended to put others' opinions first, while at the end of the story Mrs. Richardson sat out there on the steps in the dark, 'She probably looked crazy to the neighbors, but for once she did not care.' (Celeste Ng, 276), which implies that Elena began to care less about what others thought. The shift in Mrs. Richardson's attitude toward Izzy and the perception of others constitutes a clear contrast. By using the contrasting analepses, Readers are able

to get a glimpse into Mrs. Richardson's psychological changes before and after the fire. Through an examination of herself, Mrs. Richardson went from misunderstanding to understanding her young daughter, thus the fire of understanding for her daughter that has been suppressed in her heart has been ignited.

The novel also contrasts the McCulloughs' attitudes toward adoption before and after through analepses. Before the adoption, chapter 10 presented the many attempts of Mrs. McCulloughs had tried to get pregnant in the past but they failed, highlighting the McCulloughs' great desire for a child. However, in the last chapter, the McCulloughs decided to adopt another one after the child was found to be stolen, which reveals that their previous struggle with Bebe for custody of Mei Ling seemed to be just a contest over status for them, and they even felt a glimmer of comfort about knowing 'coming from China, the odds of the baby's family trying to regain custody are almost nil.' (Celeste Ng, 273) It is through contrasting Analepses that Celeste reveals the selfish fire in the heart of Mrs. McCullough, a Sickle Heights resident, by drawing a stark contrast between Mrs. McCullough previous desire to have children with her indifference to the theft of their adopted Asian child.

4.3. Repeating Analepses

Repeating Analepses refer to the recapitulation of past events and comprise an emphasis or re-evaluation of past events, which are generally used to recreate those memorable and important scenes. Mia's words to Izzy appear five times in the novel, and three of them are the recollection of Izzy, which embodies the employment of repeating analepses:

'Izzy, home alone, turned Mia's words over and over in her head. Sometimes you need to start over from scratch.' (Celeste Ng, 261)

'the words that had been echoing through her head ever since: how sometimes you needed to start over from scratch.' (Celeste Ng, 266)

'Remember, Mia had said: Sometimes you need to scorch everything to the ground and start over, and new things can grow.' (Celeste Ng, 266)

The three examples of Izzy's recollection about what Mia had said belong to repeating analepses. Hu Yamin indicates that the repeating analepses are the destruction and reconceptualization of the past, an eternal and continuous process of cognition from right to wrong. (Hu Yamin, 81) Mia repeatedly mentioned a prairie fire that she had experienced to Izzy, and through repeating Mia's words over and over again in her mind, Izzy gradually understood the deeper meaning of the those words, as a result, she chose to set fire to her own house, hoping that there will be a new beginning after the fire. The recurrence of Mia's words to her reflects the weight of Mia in Izzy's heart. Izzy had always regarded Mia as her mother spiritually, for she believed that it was Mia who turned her into a very different person from her past and encouraged her to break the framework that bound her. The imagery of fire here represents not only the fire of rebirth, but also the fire of understanding that Mia has always had for Izzy.

5. Conclusion

Little Fires Everywhere consists of three story lines, and the two secondary lines in the story intersect with the main story line, influencing the development of the main line at the same time. In the beginning of the story, Izzy set fire to her own house, which seems to be a crazy and bizarre behavior,

while actually the reason for it is actually traceable. In an interview with *Punch News*, Celeste Ng said, 'We can only understand what is happening now by understanding what happened in the past.' [12] Through the elaborate employment of analepses, readers are able to peek into the psychological changes that have occurred in each character over the past eleven months. For instance, the main line of the story reflects the qualitative changes that occurred in Izzy's mind during the short eleven-month period, which have become the sparks that eventually led to the Richardson family house fire.

In the arrangement of the complete and partial analepses, the rebellious fire of Izzy's search for self, the rekindling fire of Elena's discovery of self and the blazing fire of Mia's insistence on self are well displayed. In the structure of internal and external analepses, the seemingly perfect image of Shaker Heights collapses in the fire, which means a kind of deconstruction of the area in readers' minds, meanwhile in the aftermath of the fire, the local residents had a reflection on the order that has been in place in the Heights, especially for Elena, who was made aware of the fact that she had been repressing herself and suppressing Izzy for years. At the close, Elena, Izzy and Mia were reborn in their own sense, and Shaker Heights became a place where new things can grow after the fire. Therefore, the imagery of fire can be interpreted as the fire of destruction and rebirth here; In chapters 9 and 10, different mother-daughter relationships have been put in front of readers via the analepses of Mrs. Richardson's pregnancy with Izzy and Izzy's childhood, Bebe's reluctant abandonment of Mei Ling, and Mrs. McCullough's unsuccessful pregnancy, which provoke readers to wonder what the definition of a mother is. Therefore, the fire here can be interpreted as the fire of mutual understanding between mother and daughter.

"There may be a great fire in our hearts, yet no one ever comes to warm himself at it, and the passers-by see only a wisp of smoke." (Van Gogh, 342) It is through the use of analepses that readers are able to follow those characters back to their respective pasts, to pluck away the wisp of smoke from their hearts and see the fire that is burning in everyone's heart. Via analepses, Celeste conveys to readers the eternal themes of the search for self, destruction and rebirth, and the relationship between mother and daughter through the imagery of fire, which provokes them to think while sprinkling their heart with the fire of the search for self, the fire of the breakthrough and the fire of understanding.

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