Masculinity in Yu Hua's Fiction from Modernism to Postmodernism

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Abstract

The Tiananmen Incident in 1989 triggered the process during which Chinese society evolved from so-called "high modernism" to vague "postmodernism". The purpose of this thesis is to examine and evaluate the gender representation in Chinese male intellectuals' writing when they face the aforementioned social evolution. The exemplary writer from the band of Chinese male intellectuals I have chosen is Yu Hua, one of the most important and successful novelists in China today. Coincidently, his writing career, spanning from the mid-1980s until present, parallels the Chinese intellectuals' pursuit of modernism and their acceptance of postmodernism. In my thesis, I re-visit four of his works in different eras, including *One Kind of Reality* (1988), *Classical Love* (1988), *To Live* (1992), and *Brothers* (2005), to explore the social, psychological, and aesthetical elements that formulate/reformulate male identity, male power and male/female relation in his fictional world. Inspired by those fictional male characters who are violent, anxious or even effeminized in his novels, one can perceive male intellectuals' complex feelings towards current Chinese society and culture. It is believed that this study will contribute to the literary and cultural investigation of the third-world intellectuals.

Résumé

Les événements de la Place Tiananmen en 1989 a déclenché le processus durant lequel la société chinoise a évolué d'un soi-disant "haut modernisme" vers un vague "post-modernisme". Le but de cette thèse est d'examiner et d'évaluer la représentation des sexes dans l'écriture des intellectuels chinois mâles quand ils font face à l'évolution sociale mentionnée ci-dessus. L'auteur qui exemplifie bien le groupe d'intellectuels masculins chinois que j'ai choisi est Yu Hua, un des romanciers les plus importants et prolifiques de la Chine d'aujourd'hui. Bonne coïncidence, sa carrière d'écrivain qui couvre la période commençant au milieu des années 1980 jusqu'à maintenant, trace des parallèles entre la poursuite du modernisme des intellectuels chinois et leur acceptation de post-modernisme. Dans ma thèse, je revisite quatre de ses travaux dans des périodes différentes, y compris *One Kind of Reality* (1988), *Classical Love* (1988), *To Live* (1992) et *Brothers* (2005). Le but est d'explorer l'aspect social, les éléments psychologiques et esthétiques qui formulent/reformulent l'identité masculine, le pouvoir masculin et la relation homme/femme dans son monde fictif. Inspiré par ces personnages masculins fictifs qui sont violents, anxieux ou même effeminés dans ses romans, on peut percevoir les sentiments complexes des intellectuels masculins envers la société et la culture chinoise actuelle. Je crois que cette étude contribuera à l'enquête sur la littérature et la culture des intellectuels des pays du Tiers-Monde.

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Table of Contents

Chapter One Introduction

1.1 General introduction

Bestselling book author, Yu Hua (born 1960), labeled as an avant-gardist and postmodernist writer, has been claimed to be one of most successful writers in contemporary China. His works demonstrate vivid linguistic and narrative characteristics that have attracted attention from various academic scholars, film directors, book publishers, and common readers throughout the world. As a critical observer of modern China, Yu Hua depicts the complex impact of Chinese politics, economics and culture. Hence, many aspects of his work, such as linguistic elements, narrative, and psychology offer fertile ground for analysis. In this thesis, I will analyze his works from the perspective of gender representations, such as the depiction of men and women, gender relations, and masculine crisis. What I want to explore is how Yu Hua's representation of gender is influenced by Chinese cultural elements, including Chinese tradition, the status of literature, the function of writers, and the interaction of serious literature with popular culture. Some feminist critics argue that some of Yu Hua's works include a misogynist trait, placing women in a secondary and eroticized position.[1] Although I agree on some of these feminist arguments, my main objective is not to solely illustrate the patriarchal ideology in his writing. Instead, I attempt to explore how his

[1] Please see Tonglin Lu, Misogyny, Cultural Nihilism & Oppositional Politics : Contemporary Chinese Experimental Fiction (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995). Huayu 林华瑜 Lin, "Dancers on Ice at Midnight-- Reading the Female Images in Yu Hua's Fictions 暗夜里的蹈冰者——余华小说的女性形象解读," Research of Chinese Literature 中国文学研究 63.4 (2001), Yuxiang 崔玉香 Cui, "Women, One Distorted and Converted Group 女性，一个被扭曲遮蔽的群体," Dong Yue Tribune 东岳论丛 27.2 (2006), Tonglin Lu, Misogyny, Cultural Nihilism & Oppositional Politics : Contemporary Chinese Experimental Fiction (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995).

representations of masculinity and femininity are challenged, reformed and complicated by Chinese society. By reading Yu Hua's literary works chronologically, it seems obvious that the masculine power becomes "weaker" whereas feminine power becomes "stronger". In his latest work published in 2005 and 2006, quite interestingly, some female characters can control their fate and male characters become "subordinated" and "effeminized". Gender, which is demonstrated in his works by male, female characters and their interactions, is a multilayered and multidimensional discourse. More importantly, my reading of Yu Hua's work does not regard gender relations as simply biological; they can be interpreted as an allegory of the current Chinese social and political situation. If we imagine China's party-state as "father" and the economic reforms beginning in the 1990s as "friend", we find that Yu Hua struggles to a great extent with the complex relations between this "father" and "friend".[2] Along with other male writers in China, Yu Hua believes that writing can help him to build up his own subjectivity and demonstrate his position as "subversive" or "desublimitive".[3] However, his position is frustrated by the powerful "father", and disturbed by the "friend", as he finds that the "power," "value," and "responsibility" inherent in literature is weakened by the market economy that penetrates almost every aspect of Chinese culture. I believe that gender, especially masculinity, is a productive way to examine the interaction of contemporary Chinese social changes and the situation of writers, and to develop a new image of Yu Hua and his works as well.

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[2] Shuyu Kong, Consuming Literature : Best Sellers and the Commercialization of Literary Production in Contemporary China (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005).

[3] For the discussion of sublimity of Chinese culture, please see Ban Wang, The Sublime Figure of History : Aesthetics and Politics in Twentieth-Century China (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997).

I place my analysis of Yu Hua's works within the context of Chinese modernism and postmodernism. Yu Hua's writing career, from the mid 1980s until present, has been paralleled with the period when the "postmodern" was transplanted into contemporary China. Modernism, postmodernism and postmodernity are indispensible for interpreting Yu Hua's works and Chinese contemporary literature. Moving from an avant-garde to a bestselling writer, Yu Hua gives up experimental and aesthetic exploration in his later works in order to focus on popular literature. Many critics claim that Yu's work declines as he gives up his "art pursuit". In this thesis, I argue that when China enters into the so-called "post" era--post-revolutionary, post-socialist, post-new and postmodern--Yu faces various challenges within Mainland China. Therefore, his understanding of literature, Western culture, and history is reformed so that gender relations in his works are depicted as more mature and dynamic. By re-evaluating Yu Hua's works from a gender perspective, I find that he does not give up his "art pursuit"; instead, he expressed his profound thinking as self-mockery. In summary, the profound influence of postmodernism, which includes commercialization, globalization, and so on, deserves in-depth analysis rather than a simple aesthetic judgment. When literature is influenced more by economics than politics, most writers do not gain the freedom or power they previously sought. To better understand my arguments, two issues, which have some special meaning within the Chinese cultural environment, demand more interpretation. The first is Chinese masculinity, especially that of intellectuals or writers. The second is Chinese postmodernism/postmodernity.

1.2 Chinese masculinity and writing

Masculinity is a historical and ideological idea. According to John MacInnes's argument, masculinity does not exist as the "property", "character trait" or "aspect of individuals", but "should instead be understood as an ideology about what men should be like, and this is developed by men and women in order to make sense of their lives."[4] This concept is connected with characteristics that include boys' education, development to manhood, men's health issues, and male image represented in art works. The meaning of masculinity is too broad a topic to be covered completely in one essay. Even the issue of Chinese masculinity is a large topic, so to begin to understand it I use Kam Louie's *wen-wu* structure. In *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*[5] Louie provides a *wen-wu* (literary versus military) polarity to illuminate some of the rough patterns of masculinities envisioned in both traditional and modern Chinese cultural discourse. He points out that, traditionally the study of Chinese masculinity and femininity is based on the *Yin-Yang* structure — *yang* refers to being male, and *yin* refers to being female. However, this structure is only partially accurate, and it minimizes the diversity of men of various ages/classes. In *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*, Louie's basic argument is that Chinese masculinity is structured by two archetypes that operate in a productive tension, similar to the familiar *yin* and *yang*.[6] Furthermore, he

[4] Jane Pilcher, Fifty Key Concepts in Gender Studies (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 2004) 84.
[5] Kam Louie, Theorising Chinese Masculinity : Society and Gender in China (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[6] In discussions of Asian sexuality, the most commonly invoked 'Chinese' paradigm is that of *Yin-yang* in a notion of the harmony of opposites. Within the common superficial appreciation of *yin-yang* theory, femininity and masculinity are placed in a dichotomous relationship whereby *yin* is female and *yang* is male.

presents an expanded account of Chinese male identity in terms of the literary-martial (*wen-wu*) paradigm. *Wen* is associated with the gentleman-scholar or *junzi* promoted by Confucius, who is the patron saint of *wen* masculinity. *Wu* is associated with the Chinese tradition of the macho hero represented by terms such as the outstanding male (*yingxiong*) and the good fellow (*haohan*). Louie suggests: "*Wenren* (literary/cultivated individuals) have been described as desirable and attractive throughout Chinese history."[7] His presentation of the *wen-wu* paradigm provides a useful framework for understanding the models of Chinese masculinity. The polarity between *wen*, cultural attainment, and *wu*, martial valor, invokes the authority of both the scholar and the soldier in the discourse of Chinese masculinity. Louie argues that Chinese masculinity can be comprised of both *wen* and *wu* and that a scholar is considered no less masculine than a soldier. More importantly, Chinese men might aspire to achieve both, and either was considered acceptably manly.[8]

Louie points out that, for most male Chinese intellectuals, writing is one of the important indicators of masculinity. It is not difficult to find a plot in traditional and modern Chinese novels in which the male protagonist obtains political, financial, and sexual advantages through a mastery of written medium or a manipulation of language. This special "maleness" with literary talent is a common phenomenon in Chinese history. In Song Geng's *The Fragile Scholar*[9] and Martin W. Huang's *Negotiating Masculinities in Late Imperial China*,[10] both

[7] Louie, Theorising Chinese Masculinity : Society and Gender in China 8.
[8] Louie, Theorising Chinese Masculinity : Society and Gender in China
[9] Geng Song, The Fragile Scholar : Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004).
[10] Martin W. Huang, Negotiating Masculinities in Late Imperial China (Honolulu University of

authors talk about the poetic talents of Chinese men in ancient China. According to Louie this coherent connection between writing and maleness can still be found in contemporary Chinese writing. For example, in Zhang Xianliang's and Jia Pingwa's novels, male protagonists obtain power and women by using their literary talents.

On the other hand, another trait of Chinese masculinity deserves our attention, which can be called the anxiety of marginality. In *Masculinity Besieged?*,[11] Zhong Xueping claims that, unlike Western men who embrace marginality,[12] most Chinese men, especially intellectuals or writers, are not satisfied with a marginal status. They have the desire to overcome the marginalized position by moving toward the center -- a marginal positionality that ultimately, in Rey Chow's words, "support[s]...the center." In other words, this centrifugal direction marks the specificity of Chinese male marginality anxiety.[13] Zhong analyzes male writers working during the 1980s and finds that in many of their literary works:

> Men appeared as embodiments of dilemmas – political, historical, and cultural – and their "problem" dominated a discourse centering on a weak/strong dichotomy concerning the uncertainty of male identity. In short, there is an ambivalence in the representations of men: they are considered 'weak,' but they want to be (and it is thought that they should

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Hawai'i Press, 2006).

[11] Xueping Zhong, Masculinity Besieged? : Issues of Modernity and Male Subjectivity in Chinese Literature of the Late Twentieth Century, Issues of Modernity and Male Subjectivity in Chinese Literature of the Late Twentieth Century (Durham [N.C.] ; London: Duke University Press, 2000).

[12] The argument of "embrace" the marginality is coming from Kaja Silverman. Please see Kaja Silverman, Male Subjectivity at the Margins (New York: Routledge, 1992).

[13] Zhong, Masculinity Besieged? : Issues of Modernity and Male Subjectivity in Chinese Literature of the Late Twentieth Century.

be) strong.[14]

I agree with Zhong's argument: Chinese male writers prefer to play a central role in society rather than just staying at the margins. In sum, most male intellectuals in China would like to play a relatively important role in society and writing is one of most possible approaches to achieve this goal. Therefore, the interaction between social power and intellectuals, especially their ability to "subvert," "communicate with," "interact with" this power becomes one of most important concerns of Chinese male intellectuals. Nevertheless, the above argument does not intend to deny the women writers' contributions and achievements in social improvement through their works. Although, in China's long history of feudalism, most women were always a marginal group deprived of political and economic rights. They were excluded from social life and confined to the household, reduced to a state of dependence on men. They were even denied the opportunity for education because of the belief that "a woman's virtue lies in her lack of knowledge or ability." (*Nu zi wu cai bian shi de*.) There still exist many women writers' works in pre-modern China focused on family education, sisterhood and history. In modern China, some pioneering women writers broadened their writing to other social issues, such as women's liberation, marriage freedom, and national modernity. Bing Xin (1900-1999), Ding Ling (1904-1986) and Lu Yin (1898-1934), for instance, wrote as their male counterparts to enlighten millions of common readers.[15] In Chinese Communist

[14] Zhong, Masculinity Besieged? : Issues of Modernity and Male Subjectivity in Chinese Literature of the Late Twentieth Century 5.
[15] Wendy Larson, Women and Writing in Modern China (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998).

Party (CCP) regime, women writers including Zhang Jie (b.1937) and Yang Mo (1914-1995) wrote extensively on the themes of Chinese revolution, intellectuals' reformation, and economic reforms. As a result of belonging to an androcentric society, Chinese women writers, as compared with their male counterparts, are always active in writing for social improvement and enlightenment while having to face much more bias and suspicion.

1.3 Chinese modernism and postmodernism

The issues of Chinese modernity/modernism and postmodernity/postmodernism attract the attention of many scholars. Every scholar has his/her own definition of these terms. In this thesis, I will adopt Zhang Xudong's argument about Chinese modernism and postmodernism. The temporal boundary of modernism and postmodernism in Mainland China is around 1989. According to most scholars, the Tiananmen Incident and Deng's economic reforms (upsurge around 1992) signified the transfer of contemporary Chinese society from "high modernism" to the period of postmodernism. In Zhang's *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms: Cultural Fever, Avant-garde Fiction, and the New Chinese Cinema,* "Chinese modernism is often an abstract, intentional act driven by the determination of a national cultural elite to transform its immediate environment and, in this process, to soar beyond all social and experiential bounds."[16] In other words, from the mid 1980s to the 1990s, there

[16] Xudong Zhang, "Introduction," Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms : Cultural Fever, Avant-Garde Fiction, and the New Chinese Cinema (Durham, [N.C.] ; London: Duke University Press, 1997).

were lots of cultural movements in China, in which intellectuals and writers attempted to use their works to transform the society. More precisely, they believed they had the power of enlightenment.

The concept of postmodernism was introduced into China in the mid-1980s. Fredric Jameson visited China in 1985 and taught at Beijing University in that fall semester. The Chinese translation of his lecture was subsequently published under the title *Houxiandai zhuyi yu wenhua lilun* (Postmodernism and Cultural Theory) in 1986. The lecture remains to date the most widely read and quoted work in Chinese discussions of postmodernism.[17] After that, some scholars and writers attempted to use "postmodern" theory as their new way of writing and of literary study. Almost the whole 1990s, Chinese culture experienced the switch from high elite art to mass culture. Films, TV episodes, and Internet reading materials gradually replaced the dominant position of books. Moreover, serious literature became more connected with commerce and customers.

While postmodernism in the Western countries was connected with post-industrialism, Chinese postmodernism was chiefly a "borrowed" thing from the West. China's politics and economy have been developing in an uneven and pluralistic way. China is a nation with concurrent premodernism, modernism, and postmodernism. In the late 1990s, globalization and commercialism had penetrated all aspects of Chinese society. Most writers who focused on serious literature had to find a new way to survive: some of them writing for TV episodes, some of them giving up their creative writing, and most attempting to keep

[17] Arif Dirlik and Xudong Zhang, "Introduction: Postmodernism and China," Postmodernism & China, eds. Arif Dirlik and Xudong Zhang (Durham [N.C.] ; London: Duke University Press, 2000) 16.

balance between elite literature and popular literature. Many scholars announced that postmodernism referred to the demise of intellectual culture.

1.4 Thesis overview

The body of this thesis consists of three parts, corresponding to three stages of Yu Hua's writing. Chapter Two focuses on Yu Hua's avant-garde fictional works. In the mid-1980s, literary exploration was categorized as an elite movement or high cultural activities. And Yu Hua's success was confined to a small circle and cited by few literary critics. Yu, as a then-young writer, switched from a dentist to a novelist. At that time, he believed that the author could control the characters' lives. In order to produce the "new image" of his generation, most of his early works are full of language experiments and violent plots in which female characters are depicted as victims of violence.

In Chapter Three, I will revisit his most popular novella, *Huozhe* (To Live). This novel published just after the Tiananmen Incident, which influenced Chinese culture in a variety of complex ways. According to some Chinese literary critics, after this event, Chinese literary history entered into a Post-New Era, from New Era. CCP demonstrates their violence not only through the use of guns and tanks, but also through tough cultural control. The literary journal that had previously pushed avant-garde works had been closed or re-organized, thus the Chinese literature experienced a short silence. At this point, Yu Hua realized the powerlessness of his "violent narrative". A writer, like other intellectuals of 1990s' China, was better of playing a cooperative role rather than a dissenting one. Yu

Hua therefore attempted to minimize the "intellectual" voice in his works. Surviving, rather than pursuing "individualism" or "enlightenment", becomes the most important theme of his works. At that time, he was also confused about commercialism and marketing. He lingered between pursuing literary explorations and pleasing readers.

Chapter Four focused on Yu Hua's magic realistic novel and Chinese postmodernism. From the mid-1990s until now, due to the burgeoning of both TV and the Internet, private sexualized writing became an important part of Chinese people's "cultural life". Many amateur writers put their homosexual, crime, or romance stories on the Internet. The original "elite" and "avant-garde" aura had been diminished from most serious writers' works. "TV/film writing" and "sexualized writing" gained increasingly popularity in mass media. Mian Mian and Wei Hui, for instance, wrote various types of sexual experiences of urban women. Some young ladies jumped from sex to music to drugs in an unending circle, looking for so-called happiness and satisfaction. Therefore, it became much more difficult to predict what was going on in the new generation of Mainland China.

Yu Hua, however, continuously set his attention to contemporary China. Most Chinese have neglected the trauma of the past history. Money had become one of the most important pursuits for every individual. In his latest novel, *Brothers*, sexuality is not a taboo and "the male" is far from a traditional image of "violent hero or passive father/son". Two male protagonists in this novel adopt different approaches to life. One becomes a millionaire and the other becomes poverty-stricken. Most tragically, in order to survive and get respect from others,

the poor guy acts either consciously or unconsciously as a woman, and struggles greatly for this transformation. He almost loses his maleness and thereby being confused about his gender identity.

1.5 Biographical introduction to Yu Hua

Before providing a detailed analysis of Yu Hua's writing and contemporary Chinese culture, I will briefly introduce this writer. Yu was born on April 3, 1960, in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. After finishing high school during the Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1976), he worked as a dentist for five years, from the ages of 18 to 23. Then Yu gradually became bored with his job and decided to begin writing literary work in 1983 because it allowed him to be more creative and flexible. It did not take long for Yu to switch from being a dentist to a professional writer. He published his first short story in 1984. Later on, he produced a lot of shocking, innovative, and highly controversial short stories and novels. Actually, "he is a part of a new generation of young writers (including luminaries like Su Tong and Ge Fei) who rose to literary stardom in the years of intellectual and cultural ferment that preceded the Tiananmen Incident of 1989."[18] This group of young writers was labeled as "avant-garde", or experimental.

From a literary perspective, these avant-gardists are different from the writers who preceded them. The writers popular in the 1970s, such as Wang Meng (b. 1934), Liu Xinwu (b. 1942), and Zhang Jie (b. 1937), were educated during a period in which the Chinese literary circle consisted almost entirely of political

[18] Andrew F. Jones, "Translator's Postscript," trans. Andrew F. Jones, The Past and the Punishments, ed. Howard Goldblatt (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996) 263.

propaganda. They have little or no access to overseas literary works in Chinese translation. The liberalized cultural policies of the 1980s, however, resulted in a flood of new literary translations. Like many of his contemporaries, Yu Hua was inspired to write by encountering such modernist authors as Kawabata Yasunari, Franz Kafka, Jorge Luis Borges, and Alian Robbe-Grillet. These influences are displayed obviously or implicitly throughout his works. We can see touches of Kawabata's cruel, incisive lyricism in stories like *Shishi Ruyan* (*World Like Mist)*. We can also see Kafka's absurdity in the narrator's bizarre encounter with a truck driver in *Shiba Sui Chumen Yuanxing (On the Road at Eighteen).* This short story is about a young man who sets out to see and encounter the real world. On the road, he can not find a hotel and, as evening fell, gets a ride on a truck. However the direction of the truck is towards where he had just come. The truck is carrying a load of apples, and when it breaks down along the way, it is robbed and demolished by a crowd of peasants and children. The truck driver is smiling as he watches the robbery. The young man is badly beaten while trying to stop the mob.

Some events and incidents in the story seem improbable yet casually acceptable. For instance, when the young man was looking for a hotel nobody answered his question; they just asked him to move on. Also, the truck driver did not care about the robbery of his apples and he took away the young man's red backpack. A strange and mysterious force controlled the young man's travels seems to exist; he could not figure out the aim of his travels and was frustrated by the apathy and absurdity were all around him. The "strange and mysterious force" is similar to Kafka's absurdity in *The Metamorphosis* and many of his works. In *The Metamorphosis*, protagonist Gregor Samsa wakes up one morning to find

himself turned into a vermin. He tries to convince himself to feel normal, but his incomprehensible condition as an insect causes him to feel otherwise. Gregor's transformation seems bizarre and impossible. However, every character in the story accepts this change without huge surprise. Kafka exemplified the "absurdity" of life by the devices of narration and a complex representation of the character. Yu Hua also attempted to employ such surrealistic language and images in his early writing.

In the early 1990s, Yu Hua gave up his experimental writing style and in a major stylistic shift, he began writing in a simple and realistic way. This realism is different from both the humanist "critical realism" of the period of Republic of China (1919-1949) and the "revolutionary realism" of Mao's era (1949-1979). This style is labeled as a "plain realist" mode, which inevitably retains certain experimental features in spite of his principal concern with writing and reality. Most plain realist novels are different from his earlier avant-garde works, which are full of abstract narratives and absurd plots. Yu Hua depicts a lot of characters' movements (including walking, eating, crying, and laughing) and dialogues in his plain realist works. The main plots of the novels become melodramatic and accessible. However, the most important theme of those stories is not just presenting "reality itself"; [19] Yu Hua intentionally maintains some raw and exaggerated parts in his stories and extends distance between readers and the events. The only thing transferred by both his avant-garde works and realistic

[19] Kang Liu, "The Short-Lived Avant-Garde Literary Movement and Its Transformation: The Case of Yu Hua," Globalization and Cultural Trends in China (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004) 125.

novels is some kind of "truth/reality".[20]

His most successful realist novels are *Huo Zhe* (To Live) and *Xu Sanguan Maixue Ji (*Chronicle of a Blood Merchant). *To Live* was published in the sixth issue of *Shou Huo* (Harvest)[21] in 1992 and translated into English in August, 2003 (Random House, trans. Michael Berry). This novel was awarded the Grinzane Cavour Award in Italy in 1998 and made into a film by renowned director Zhang Yimou. In turn, the film won the Grand Jury Prize and Best Actor at the Cannes Film Festival in 1994. *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* was published in the No.6 of *Shou Huo* (Harvest) in 1996 and the English version appeared in November, 2003 (Pantheon, trans. Andrew F. Jones). These two novels were bestsellers in China in the 1990s and made Yu Hua a worldwide celebrity. The success of these works is due much to their thematic seriousness and their accessibility to a wide range of readers. Both deal with everyday life in contemporary China,

[20] In his essay, *Xuwei de Zuopin* (Hypocritical Works), Yu Hua puts forth his views on the relationship between literature and truth (*zhenshi* 真实). According to his argument, the most important goal of his writing is to approach the truth. This truth is not just the facts of what has happened in our daily lives. Yu Hua does not intend to simply show us the objects as they are, like a journalist's writing. He explains that when we give up drawing a conclusion from reality then the former experience is not indestructible. And when we start to find our limitations we might be closer to truth. He emphasizes that being suspicious of and re-thinking the "common wisdom" are indispensible for approaching the truth. He repeatedly notes how preconceived ideas, as embodied in the common language of the masses, preclude a true understanding of reality, as well as the necessary freeing of the imagination. In other words, Yu Hua attempts to use bizarre narratives to expose and destabilize common rules and received wisdom as a means of approaching the truth from a "new" perspective.
Then, Yu Hua further describes how loss of confidence in the order of civilization led him to stress violence in his writing: "Actually, up to and including '*Xianshi yizhong*'（One Kind of Reality） my reflections about truth were only a skepticism towards common wisdom. That is when I could no longer trust common wisdom about real life, this distrust led me to stress another part of reality and consequently directly inspired my extremist thinking about chaos and violence." Please see Hua 余华 Yu, "*Xuwei De Zuopin* 虚伪的作品 (Hypocritical Works)," *Meiyou Yitiao Daolu Shi Chongfu De* 没有一条道路是重复的 (No Road Is Repetitive) (Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi Publishing House, June 1989).

[21] *Shou Huo* (Harvest) is one of important Literary Journals at main-land China. It was first published in Shanghai in July 1957.

concentrating on oppressed and poor farmers, laborers, and other rural and small-town people, and presenting life experiences in a straightforward, if sometimes melodramatic, manner.

Following the commercial success of his two realist novels, *To Live* and *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant,* Yu Hua has had many more opportunities to communicate with international literary communities. Since 1995 he has visited Europe and North America almost every year, attending international literary forums, writers' festivals, and giving lectures to the students of universities.[22] He had not released any fictional works for almost ten years, instead publishing some journals and essays about movies, music, or his traveling experience in foreign countries.

His latest novel, *Xiong Di* (Brothers),[23] published in two volumes in 2005 and 2006, became a bestseller in Mainland China immediately. Millions of readers have talked about this novel in literary journals and websites. This novel is a black comedy in which Yu Hua tells us that contemporary China is a society where everyone is scrambling to get money. Literary and cultural scholars have controversial opinions of this novel. Some critics claim that *Brothers* is complete trash and the writer has lost all of his talent, whereas other critics argue that it is a representation of Magic Realism; it mimics Latin American literature, and represents the current scene in China in a brilliant way. From Avant-gardism to plain Realism and Magic Realism, Yu Hua's writing is always changing with the

[22] Hong, Zhigang (洪治钢) Hong, *Yu Hua Pingzhuan* 余华评传 (the Commentary and Biography of Yu Hua) (Zheng Zhou Zhengzhou University Publishing House, 2004 10).
[23] Yu, Hua 余华 Yu, *Xiong Di* 兄弟 (Brothers), vol. One (Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi Publishing House, 2005).

reality of Chinese society.

From the 1980s to the beginning of 21st century, Chinese literature experienced ebbs and flows in some male intellectuals' works; the representation of diminished masculinity embodies the "frustrated" and "anxious" feeling towards the decline of the "serious/pure" literature. As a writer whose works developed from avant-gardist to best-selling, Yu Hua grew up during the Cultural Revolution, witnessed the Tiananmen Incident and experienced the rampant consumerism in contemporary China. All aforementioned political and social events required Chinese writers to find an appropriate way of adapting to the society. Although Yu Hua seems to have successfully handled all of these challenges and has become one of most popular writers in current society, the male characters in his works have become much weaker and more frustrated. The protagonist's alienation and frustration also illustrate the writer's feeling of desperation and crisis in contemporary society. Yu could not change the corrosion and degradation of Chinese culture by rapid commercialization in last decades. At the same time, Yu Hua also embodies the aspirations, confusion and disillusionment of Chinese writers, whose works are now increasingly seen as commodities. The urbanization of personal space and lifestyle for both the author and the protagonist means drastic and traumatic cultural changes, which entail necessary estrangement from their familiar community and their senses of self. The shift from a violent maleness to a dysfunctional man reflects a process in which male potency has been gradually reduced, tamed, eroded and diminished. In a postmodern society, nobody has a central position; gender opposition has

given way to gender hybridity, and high culture is no longer distinguished from popular culture. Male writers could not find a position as purveyors of enlightenment and therefore no longer have the power they once believed they had. In the following chapters, I will analyze his works systematically to explore the writer's representation of gender identity.

Chapter Two Patriarchy and Chinese Modernism

2.1 Chinese literature and culture in the 1980s

It seems a little ironic to place patriarchy and modernism together; however, in the mid 1980s, Yu Hua's writing includes these two characteristics. Actually, the idea of Chinese modernity/modernism is a controversial one on its own terms. The May Fourth Movement and Mao Zedong's socialist revolution each claimed one form of modernity, respectively. In this thesis I adopt Zhang Xudong's argument about modernism, which is connected with culture and ideology. Chinese modernism could be viewed as an "example of deferred modernism, or modernism of underdevelopment" which is radically different from advanced nations.[24] The literary environment in China of 1980s was relatively free and prosperous; both writers and readers wanted to cast away Maoism and ultra-leftist artistic styles. Writers were able to work more freely than ever before under Communist Party rule, and they focused on aesthetics rather than politics. Zhang claims that there was a Cultural Fever in that period.

From the late 1970s to the mid 1980s a variety of literary genres, such as *Shanghen* (*wound*), *Fansi* (*introspection*) literature and *Gaige (Reform)* literature appeared in Mainland China. Intellectuals felt free from the victimization that characterized the Anti-Rightist Campaign and Cultural Revolution and hoped they could function as intellectuals prior to the socialist revolution. Zhang Xudong,

[24] Xudong Zhang, "Introduction," Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms : Cultural Fever, Avant-Garde Fiction, and the New Chinese Cinema (Durham, [N.C.] ; London: Duke University Press, 1997) 20.

claims that Chinese intellectuals in the 1980s enjoyed one kind of privilege, referring to "the vocation of saving the nation and enlightening the people."[25] They believed they re-obtained the power of accelerating the nation's development. Zhang also explains the three protections for intellectuals' privilege: the first one is the Chinese tradition which accords respect to the gentry-literati and gives them a higher social status; the second is the socialist nation-state, "which pumps into its intelligentsia an unchallenged technocratic and ideological importance"; and the third one is power wielded by a subset of elite intellectuals to access Western culture and introduce it to China.[26]

These "empowered" intellectuals drove Chinese modernism in the 1980s, which has special characteristics that are different from Western modernism. According to Marshall Berman, the modernism of advanced nations is built on the infrastructure of political and economic modernization. "The modernism of underdevelopment is forced to build on fantasies and dreams of modernity, to nourish itself on an intimacy and a struggle with mirages and ghosts."[27] In Zhang Xudong's argument about Chinese modernism, he explains that "Like its Russian, Irish, and Third World predecessors, Chinese modernism is often an abstract, intentional act driven by the determination of national cultural elite to transform its immediate environment and, in this process, to soar beyond all social and experiential bounds."[28] By doing so, Chinese modernists attempted to "transform"

[25] Xudong Zhang, "Introduction," Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms : Cultural Fever, Avant-Garde Fiction, and the New Chinese Cinema (Durham, [N.C.] ; London: Duke University Press, 1997) 10.
[26] Please see Zhang, "Introduction," 10.
[27] Zhang, "Introduction," 20.
[28] Zhang, "Introduction," 21.

their environment "in building theoretical systems, engaging in philosophical debates, aesthetic experiments and historiographical revisionism, and so forth."[29]

Yu Hua and a cluster of young writers including Ma Yuan, Ge Fei, and Su Tong, intended to make their voices heard by their writing. They published a number of avant-garde fictional works in literary journals, such as *Shou Huo* (Harvest) and *Beijing Wenxue* (Beijing Literature). Liu Kang announces that they adapted a special writing style to demonstrate their radical understanding of the reality.[30] They did not want to write "politicized propaganda" works, but intended to make a new "image". Experimental narrative and avant-garde language became part of Yu Hua's writing. Some scholars, for instance Yang Xiaobin, claim that this group of avant-garde writers marked Chinese postmodernity, since they totally break from a century-long practice of literary modernity (from 1911 to 1980s).[31] Other scholars announce that these experimental works represent Chinese modernism. For example, Tang Xiaobing categorizes Yu Hua and Su Tong's works as a kind of "residual modernism."[32] This concept of "residual modernism" is similar with Raymond Williams "ideology of modernism". For Williams this ideology selects some writers "for their denaturalizing of language, their break with the allegedly prior view that language is either a clear, transparent glass or a mirror, and for making abruptly apparent in the very texture of their

[29] Zhang, "Introduction," 13.
[30] Please see Kang Liu, "The Short-Lived Avant-Garde Literary Movement and Its Transformation: The Case of Yu Hua," Globalization and Cultural Trends in China (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004).
[31] Please see Xiaobin Yang, The Chinese Postmodern : Trauma and Irony in Chinese Avant-Garde Fiction (Ann Arbor [Mich.]: University of Michigan Press, 2002).
[32] In Xiaobing Tang, "Residual Modernism: Narratives of Self in Contemporary Chinese Fiction," Modern Chinese Literature 7.1 (1993).

narratives the problematic status of the author and his authority."[33] Zhang Xudong also argues that avant-garde works refer to a general tendency in Chinese literary modernism. [34] In this thesis, I correlate avant-garde works with Chinese modernism rather than postmodernism and I strongly agree with Liu Kang's argument that the avant-garde literary movement is "often associated with aesthetic self-reflectivity and subversiveness, with strong political and ideological contentions in modernist movements."[35]

On the other hand, at that time the subject of (male) sexuality and its emotional perspective became the theme of several male writers' works.[36] They found that returning to traditional gender hierarchy would also be one allegorical way to subvert communism/Maoism ideology. They learned from their feudal/May Fourth predecessors, both of which groups involved "misogyny" and "patriarchy". In Lu Tongling's words, "They intend to get power from their grandfather to subvert their 'communism' father."[37] For gender representation, Yu Hua took the same route. From 1986 to 1988, he wrote several avant-garde works that include lots of bloody and violent descriptions. Some feminist critics announced that Yu Hua depicted women as depressed, partly in order to demonstrate the power of men. In this thesis, I do not want to argue against the

[33] Raymond Williams and Tony Pinkney, "When Was Modernism?," The Politics of Modernism : Against the New Conformists, ed. Edited and Introduced by Tony Pinkney (London [England] ; New York: Verso, 1989).
[34] Xudong Zhang, Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms : Cultural Fever, Avant-Garde Fiction, and the New Chinese Cinema, Post-Contemporary Interventions (Durham, [N.C.] ; London: Duke University Press, 1997).
[35] Kang Liu, "The Short-Lived Avant-Garde Literary Movement and Its Transformation: The Case of Yu Hua," Globalization and Cultural Trends in China (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004) 102.
[36] Please see the further analysis in Xueping Zhong, Masculinity Besieged? (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000).
[37] Tonglin Lu, Misogyny, Cultural Nihilism & Oppositional Politics : Contemporary Chinese Experimental Fiction (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995).

idea that Yu Hua represented women as inferior. However, I feel that the reason for such depictions is connected with his "subversive" intention that the power of men could prevail and male writers were thus able to subvert the dominant discourse. The "center" position of literature and culture enabled him to buttress masculine gender subjectivity.

2.2 Women as commodities

The first literary work I will analyze is *Gudian Aiqing* (Classical Love), adapted from a traditional Chinese love story. Actually, the archetypical story had been polished by writers of several generations and became a "scholar-and-beauty" narrative model. Before my specific argument, here is a brief summary of this literary work. A young, impoverished scholar named Liu makes his way down a "yellow highway" to the capital in order to sit for the civil service examinations.[38] Along the way, he stops in a thriving town where he accidentally wanders into the garden of an aristocratic mansion. Here, he sees a beautiful woman named Hui, and they fall in love. Then Liu proceeds to the capital, where he duly fails the exam. Upon his return to the town, he finds that Hui's mansion has been suddenly and inexplicably left in ruins. Hui is nowhere to be found.

Three years later, Liu sets off once again in hopes of winning a name for himself in the capital. As he traverses the "yellow highway," he is met by the sight of a devastated landscape, famine-stricken refugees, and emaciated corpses. He stops in the town only to witness a butcher selling "human meat" to a group of

[38] Attending the civil service examination is the only way to become a government official in premodern China.

hungry townspeople. Soon after, Liu pauses at a village tavern to rest. A rich merchant sitting across from him orders a serving of freshly butchered meat. Anguished screams emerge from an adjacent room. Liu rushes over to investigate, only to find that the meat in question is Hui's leg (how she has come to such a pass, however, is never explained). At Hui's request, Liu purchases her body, kills her, and buries her.

Having once again failed the exam, Liu returns home only to find that his mother has passed away and his own cottage has vanished. He finds a job tending the graves of an aristocratic family, but soon resolves to return to Hui's grave site and devote the rest of his days to its maintenance. He travels once again through the countryside, which has been restored in the interim to its former prosperity. Hui's palace has been rebuilt, but is occupied by a different maiden. When Liu returns to Hui's side, Hui's ghost visits the thatched hut that Liu has erected next to her burial mound. Liu, convinced that Hui is about to resurrect herself in order to live out her life with him, digs up her grave. This is a fatal mistake; his premature discovery of the gradual rejuvenation of her corpse destroys any hope of her resurrection. Hui's ghost tearfully bids him a final farewell.

This work of fiction is adapted from *Yingying Zhuan* (The Story of Yingying), by Yuan Zhen (779-831), which could be read as an autobiographical work.[39] The main structures of the two stories are similar. Both male protagonists

[39] This story is written through an "omniscient" perspective; in other words, the narrator knows everything and every characters' thoughts. At the final part of the story, the author, Yuan Zhen, explains that he heard the story from his friend Zhang Sheng, the male protagonist. Yuan was highly impressed by the story and recorded it. However, according to Stephen Oven's argument, this story could be read as Yuan's autobiographical work. This story was very possibly a real experience of the author himself. Yuan adopts the image of Zhang Sheng to tell his own love affair. Please see, Stephen Owen, An Anthology of Chinese Literature (New York W.W. Norton &

obtain support and love from a pretty and wealthy girl on their way to attend the civil service examination. The traditional result is that the hero becomes a high-level official and abandons the heroine; whereas the modern result is that he stays with the dead heroine. Actually, in Chinese literary history, *The Story of Ying Ying* has been adopted and revised by writers of countless generations. It becomes a narrative model between a successful scholar and a submissive girl. A scholar initially falls in love with a girl, and then the girl supports her lover until he succeeds in his career. Whether the girl is abandoned or becomes the wife of a successful man depends on the author's intention. It is obvious that these types of stories are written and appreciated from a male perspective that keeps women silent.[40] In regards to sexual relations, only the women take the responsibility for the consequence. Men have the authority in the whole process; before their success, they obtain the female body by their talent; after their success, they have the moral power to judge women's virtue. Yu Hua's modern version does not present a new configuration of gender identities. Instead the story offers only a mask for what is at bottom a very traditional patriarchical ideology.

Let's examine one of the bloodiest scenes in the story. Three years later Liu goes for the examination again and, on his way to the capital, he is confronted with dreadful scenes along the road: herds of cannibalistic and grass-grazing

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Company, 1996) 540-49.

[40] More precisely, the heroine, Ying Ying, in *The story of Ying Ying*, is not an extremely silent and passive girl. She writes poems to express her love and hesitation. She also has a long monologue to identify her insistence on the virtue. When she knows that Zhang is in the capital and will not come back to marry her, she writes a brief letter to Zhang. She explains that she understands the situation. Although she feels shameful and regretful that she could not be his wife, she accepts her fate. She also reminds Zhang to cherish his current lover and to not dwell on his past life. In sum, the female voice in *The Story* is in accordance with general "male" "Confucian" requirements with some pity and complaint.

people. When he arrives at the site of Hui's mansion, even the ruins no longer exist; there is only a wasteland left. Then he enters a "market for edible human," where he witnesses the bargaining for the sale and slaughter of a girl. The butcher-proprietor refuses a woman's plea that he kills her daughter before dismemberment, and cuts the girl's arm while she is alive for the fresh meat. The excessively cruel episode culminates in the following passage:

> Afterwards, the proprietor wipes his face with a rag, while his assistant hands the arm over to someone outside the shed, who puts it in the basket, pays and leaves. At this point, the woman runs into the shed, picks up a sharp knife from the ground and thrusts it fiercely into the girl's chest. The girl chokes, and her cry stops suddenly. By the time the proprietor realizes what has happened it is already too late. He knocks the woman into the corner of the shed, picks the girl again off the ground, slices apart her body in a helter-skelter way with the help of his assistant, and hands the pieces one by one to people outside of the shed.[41]
>
> (店主此刻拿住一块破布擦脸，伙计将手臂递与棚外一提篮的人。那人将手臂放入篮内，给了钱就离去。 这当儿妇人奔入棚内，拿起一把放在地上的利刃，朝幼女胸口猛刺。幼女窒息了一声，哭喊便戛然终止。待店主发现为时已晚。店主一拳将妇人打到棚角，又将幼女从地上拾起，与伙计二人令人眼花缭乱地肢解了幼女，一件一件递与棚外的人。)[42]

The mother and girl's relationship becomes so inhumane here where the

[41] Hua Yu, The Past and the Punishments, trans. Andrew F. Jones, ed. Howard Goldblatt (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996) 38.
[42] Hua 余华 Yu, "*Gudian Aiqing* 古典爱情(Classical Love)," *Yu Hua Zuopinji* 余华作品集（Selections of Yu Hua's Works）, vol. 2 (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1995) 179.

mother is forced to "kill" her own daughter as the final desperate means to end the girl's suffering. And in this whole process, there is no language, no communication at all, between the mother and girl; in the face of death, they become lifeless. This paragraph is reminiscent of Luce Irigaray's critique of the 'poor mother' image in Western culture. Irigaray points out that "Mother is the 'dark continent' par excellence." [43] To emphasize how mother/daughter relationships are sundered in contemporary Western culture, Irigaray turns to Greek mythology. For example, she discusses the myth of Demeter, the goddess of the earth (agriculture), and her daughter Persephone. In the myth, Zeus, Persephone's father, helps his brother Hades get Perspephone. When Demeter learns that her daughter is missing, she is devastated and abandons her role as goddess of the earth, thereby leaving earth barren.[44] Irigaray reads this myth as an example of both a positive mother/daughter relationship and the success of men at breaking it apart. It's known that mother and daughter love each other and mother strives to protect her daughter. However, in this myth they are ultimately at the mercy of the more powerful males. The mother figure becomes silent and powerless. Furthermore, Irigaray admits that daughters find it is hard to communicate with their mothers, who do not have their own language and identity. The mother in Yu's story is just like Irigrary's mother's image. She loves her daughter and tries her best to help her; however, both of them were sold by the father. The mother could not change the tragic life for her daughter and herself.

[43] Luce Irigaray and Margaret Whitford, The Irigaray Reader, Essays. English. Selections (Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1991) 35.
[44] For more details about the Greek mythology and Irigaray's argument, please see Sarah K. Donovan, Luce Irigaray (1932-Present), Accessed on June 06, 2009 <http://www.iep.utm.edu/i/irigaray.htm>.

Both in Greek myth and in the above scenario, men have controlled the fate of women --whether they are wives, daughters, sisters, or mothers.

2.3 Masculine power

Another important issue is the male protagonist's status. From the traditional to modern version, the male protagonists of the above two stories differ substantially. The traditional one is a brilliant scholar who finally becomes a "successful" official; the modern hero is, by contrast, a "loser" in society. However, the difference in their social statuses does not mean that the heroine of the contemporary story therefore granted greater subjective agency compared than her counterpart in the traditional one. Actually, she is even more powerless and suffers a more tragic life. The modern useless man in society still could be a hero in front of her. Although he has no wealth or power to change his own life, he still has the ultimate power to determine her fate. The hierarchy of men and women is determined not only by their social and economical situation, but also by their gender.

There is another bloody scene. In the kitchen of a small village, Liu finds his lover, Hui. She is lying on the ground and one of her legs that had been left intact is bent slightly to the side. The other leg is gone. Blood and flesh blur together into an indistinct mass where the leg had been chopped away. After a moment, the girl's eyes blink and her moans come to a sudden halt. Liu watches her eyes grow soft and luminous with tears, as her hands grope toward him unnoticed, stroking the air. (After he brought her leg back and set it next to where

it had been severed from her body). He watches the girl's lips curl into a smile. She glances at the knife in his hand and looks up at him. Liu knows what she wants him to do. He kills her.[45]

In this bloody scene, the man plays the role of rescuer. At this point, the only thing he can do is just let her die as fast as she can. He still becomes the hero who salvages the girl's leg, stops her suffering, and gets a final smile from his lover. Women become the objects of men's desire for self-recognition and self-certainty, which is achieved when the self is recognized by another. The heroine in *The Story of Ying Ying* is indeed a "brilliant woman", although this kind of woman is a fantasy produced by the male imagination. While she does have some literary ability as well as the opportunity to express her ideas, these ideas are dominated by men. In Yu Hua's contemporary version of the story, Hui is reduced almost entirely to mere flesh, and is hacked to pieces and sold. The traditional process of poem exchanging (the way in which the scholar tries to persuade his lover) that is so important in the Tang version of the tale is entirely absent here. In the "scholar-and-beauty" model, the beauty falls in love with the scholar automatically, deserving no further explanation. In other words, in the traditional story, the heroine is depicted from a male perspective; in the modern story, she becomes not only an icon of masculine desire but also a senseless body.

In these bloody scenes in Yu Hua's story, women become lifeless meat. Both Hui and the poor unknown mother and daughter in the market are reduced to abstract numbers or pieces of meat so as to satisfy men's sadistic appetites. As Irigaray notes in her essay, "Women as Commodities on the Market," men are

[45] Yu, The Past and the Punishments.

exchangers of women's bodies. In *Classical Love*, women have no feeling towards the environment and each other. The male protagonist can express some feelings, such as desperation, abhorrence to cannibalism and sympathy to victims, whereas the desperate mother minimized the agony of her daughter. The male protagonist, who tries three times and fails three times, cannot succeed in his examination. Even though, he still maintains the power of speaking, thinking, and saving his lover.

Although in *Classical Love* Yu Hua did not subvert the traditional gender hierarchy in China, it does not mean that he just rewrote the love story in a stereotypical way. Actually, he embedded a slew of modern, symbolic, and surrealistic elements into his work. He disrupted the "normal" sense of time and space in *Classic Love* and created characters almost totally absorbed within their own world and consumed by a sense of fear and uncertainty. Romantic love and bloody killing are placed together. And a beautiful mansion could suddenly become barren land. The protagonist has no intention to clarify what has happened; instead he is just preoccupied by his own remembrance and paranoia. Yu Hua used long paragraphs to depict a scene of great famine in *Classical Love*. On Liu's way to attend the civil service examination for a second time, "he had seen a man sitting on the ground, gnawing on a dirt-encrusted root, his face covered with mud." (他曾见一人坐落在地，啃吃翻出泥土的树根，吃得满嘴是泥。) All along the way, the bark of the trees by the side of the road had been notched and scarred by hungry refugees. Sometimes he saw teeth sticking out of the bark, teeth that had been embedded there when refugees had gnawed too

greedily into the bark."[46] (一路之上的树木皆伤痕累累，均为人牙所啃。有些树木还嵌着几颗牙齿，想必是用力过猛，牙齿便留在了树上.) The hungry people grazing the weeds resemble as a herd of sheep. Although there is no spatial-temporal information in the scenario, many Chinese readers would think about the Great Famine (between 1958 and 1961) before the Cultural Revolution. In the face of the huge natural (or political) disaster, most common Chinese could not live as decent human-being. They had to eat roots, bark or weeds and behaved like animals. As I have introduced before, Yu Hua also depicted cannibalism in the "market for edible human". The descriptions of people "selling" "buying" "killing" or "eating" each other could remind readers of endless political movements in contemporary China. The author inserted modern political metaphor into the traditional "scholar and beauty" narrative. What is his intention? Did he attempt to recover Chinese literary tradition? Or did he want to exhibit the turbulent historical trauma or expose the weakness of Chinese culture? It is extremely hard to provide a definite answer for above questions. What is more important is that the world he composed is fragmented, uncertain, and scattered continuously challenging our reading expectation. Summarily, in *The Story of Ying Ying*, Yuan Zhen was always attempting to record and retell a "real" event. He wanted to tell the readers what is right or what is wrong and how to perform as a self-disciplined man. In *Classical Love*, Yu Hua destroyed the didactical function of the traditional story. He attempted to write about his truth (*zhenshi* 真

[46] Hua Yu, "Classical Love," trans. Andrew F. Jones, The Past and the Punishments (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996) 31.

实) which always pushes readers to challenge their expectation, common sense, collective memory or something else.

2.4 Women as victims of violence

As we might have noticed, in *Classical Love*, there still exists some romanticism, in that the two protagonists are in love, though the love accompanies with unexpected blood and death. In Yu Hua's other avant-garde work, *Xianshi Yizhong* (One Kind of Reality), readers cannot find any trace of romanticism or human warmth. Relations among family members become extremely cruel and apathetic. In January of 1988, one of Yu Hua's most violent literary works was published in *Beijing Wenxue* (Beijing Literature). According to Zeng Zhennan, this story is, to some extent, based on real events that took place in a small town in South China.[47] This literary work is about a dramatic plot of death and revenge between two brothers. At the beginning of the story, Shan'gang's son, Pipi, a four-year-old boy, accidentally causes the death of his baby cousin. The baby's father, Shanfeng, then kicks Pipi to death. In order to avenge him, Shan'gang employs unusual wile, enticing a dog to lick and tickle his brother's soles until he cannot stop laughing and breathes his last. Shan'gang is caught by the police and executed in a public scene. After his death, Shangang's sister-in-law has his body donated for dissection. In the meantime, their senile mother with whom they live dies without being noticed by anybody. The final section of the story is a detailed description of the dissection process, from the first thrust of the scalpel to the final

[47] Zhennan 曾镇南 Zeng, "Xianshi Yizhong Ji Qita (One Kind of Reality and Others) 现实一种及其它," Beijing wenxue (Beijing Literature) 北京文学 2 (1988).

peeling of the skeleton. The whole story is full of violence and bloody description. Any familial relation, e.g. mother/son, father/son, brothers, sisters-in-law, is silent and without any direct communication, even eye contact. At first glance, this story depicts violence between brothers. However, as we read it more carefully, it is not difficult to find that there are several conflicts between men and women beneath the narration. Women in this work become victims of patriarchical violence and men become winners of gender struggles.

Every individual in this family seems to live in total alienation, having lost touch with reality. “The lives of the two brothers and their wives and children take place in an emotional void, day in and day out according to a dull routine, eating meals and going to work. There is very little dialogue (among the individuals).”[48] There are three women in this family: elderly grandma and the two wives of the brothers. Their sole roles in the family are to do housework and reproduce next generation. The old grandma, who seems useless as regard to any feminine aspects, cannot earn any attention or respect from her relatives. The wives of the two brothers are often beaten by their husbands.

The story begins with the grandma’s complaints. She feels that her bones have been broken into small pieces and some moss has been growing in her stomach. Nobody pays attention to her words and the two brothers grumble that they dislike her endless complaints. The only way in which the old grandma lives is indifference and apathy. She does not care for her sons and grandsons, and later does not do anything to prevent one of her grandsons from killing the other. At the

[48] Anne Wedell-Wedellsborg, "One Kind of Chinese Reality: Reading Yu Hua " Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR) 18 (1996 Dec.): 131.

breakfast table, she continuously complains that Pipi is trying to eat some of her food. By doing so, she attempts to get some attention from others since Pipi is the center of attention for her eldest son; however, not surprisingly, nobody speaks with her. It appears that she lives as a useless icon and is used to her sons' verbal abuse and apathy. As an old lady who has survived in a traditional family for all her life, she does not possess any value in her sons' minds. Hence, she lives only as a lifeless item and nobody cares about her existence.

On the other hand, there is little communication between the two couples. The first long dialogue appears when Shanfeng discovers the death of his baby and interrogates his wife. When he cannot get any information from her, he gradually loses his patience and beats her mercilessly:

> Flustered, she started shaking her head and watched her husband's fist lift upwards. A moment later her face suffered a heavy blow. Then she fell back onto the bed.
>
> Shanfeng leaned over her, grabbed hold of her hair and lifted her up. Then he punched her face again. This punch knocked her to the ground, yet she remained speechless.
>
> Shanfeng pulled her up again, and she covered her face with her hands. However, Shanfeng instead struck her breasts. Shocked by this, she sobbed on the ground, sounding as if she was suffocating.
>
> When Shanfeng hoisted her up again, she was so heavy that it seemed her body had been soaked in water. So Shanfeng bent his knee and wedged it into her abdomen, pushing her up against the wall. He then banged her head at full force against the wall three times.

Shanfeng yelled: “Why wasn’t it you who died?!" After roaring out these words, Shanfeng loosened his grip and her body slid down the wall.

(她慌乱地摇起了头，她看着丈夫的拳头挥了起来，瞬间之后脸上挨了重重一拳。她倒在了床上。
山峰俯身抓住她的头发把她提起来，接着又往她脸上揍去一拳。这一拳将她打在地上，但她仍然无声无息。
山峰把她再拉起来，她被拉起来后双手护住了脸。可山峰却是对准她的乳房揍去，这一拳使她感到天昏地暗，她窒息般地呜咽了一声后倒了下去。
当山峰再去拉起她的时候感到特别沉重，她的身体就像掉入水中一样直往下沉。于是山峰就屈起膝盖顶住她的腹部，让她贴在墙上，然后抓住她的头发狠命地往墙上撞了三下。山峰吼道：“为什么死的不是你。”吼毕才松开手，她的身体便贴着墙壁滑了下去。)[49]

From this violent scenario, we see that Shanfeng does not care whether or not his wife is grieving for her baby’s death. Moreover, he believes that she should be responsible for the accident although she was working when the accident occurred. The husband intentionally bullies his wife and treats her as a murderer rather than a victim of the accident. For instance, he beats her face and snatches her hair. When she attempts to protect her face, he beats her breast unexpectedly. Compared with the dead baby, she is meaningless and valueless. His interrogation of “Why wasn’t it you who died?!” presents the poor women as more like the baby’s servant rather than the man’s wife and the baby’s mother. In fact, the wife does not have any ability to defend herself, much less the intention of doing so. Except for her tears, she cannot find any manner of responding to her husband’s assault. Not surprisingly, nobody in the family dares to protect her and

[49] Hua 余华 Yu, "*Xianshi Yizhong* 现实一种(One Kind of Reality)," *Yu Hua Zuopinji* 余华作品集（Selections of Yu Hua's Works）, vol. 2 (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1995) 12-13.

stop the violence.

Neither the old grandma nor the poor wife possesses any independent value, voice or action in this family. In Shanfeng's marriage, he maintains authority over the household and the wife. The wife is a subordinate semi-person whose identity is swallowed up by her husband's hegemony. Women of two generations in this family have to suffer the apathy and domestic violence. They take it for granted that men are superior to women. It seems like women in the family still live in ancient China, when women were inseparable from family and could not find an independent voice.

In ancient China, women were required to follow the "three obediences and four virtues" (obedience to one's father [prior to marriage], obedience to one's husband in marriage, and obedience to one's son following the death of one's husband). Confucianism and the premodern Chinese society laid down a double-standard code of behavior for men and women. For instance, a woman had no freedom regarding marriage. She had to marry the man her parents chose whether she liked him or not. Actually she often had no way to know one or the other, since she would not have set eyes on her would-be husband until the wedding night. A man had the freedom to desert his wife, while a wife had no right to ask for divorce. A man was allowed to have more than one wife or concubine; while a woman had to devote her whole life to the man she was forced to marry. [50]In Tani Barlow's argument about Chinese women, she points out that women were supposed to play the role of daughters, wives and mothers, "there is no term

[50] Jie Tao, "Introduction," Holding up Half the Sky : Chinese Women Past, Present, and Future, eds. Jie Tao, Bijun Zheng and Shirley L. Mow (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2004).

present before the twentieth century that might indicate women as a group outside the family."[51]

The unbalanced relationship between men and women in marriage is not a unique phenomenon in ancient China. The last two volumes of Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* centered on the Greco-Roman, from the fourth century BCE to roughly the second century CE. Foucault selectively reads some classical Greco-Roman texts. He explains that ethical behavior in the ancient world was different from that of the modern West. Marriage was an economic and political affair negotiated between the father of the bride and the male suitor. Hence, the husband would freely enter into it, while the wife would enter in deference to the authority of her family. He had a choice; she had none.[52] In Greek marriage there was a "reciprocal" relationship though not a "symmetrical" one. The husband trained his usually younger wife, who was expected to stay indoors and to manage the household and the children.[53] Elite married men often kept mistresses and concubines in ancient Greece. [54] Foucault placed the blame for the lack of reciprocity between husband and wife on the institution of marriage. Within Yu Hua's writing, he constituted defining "women" as "other." Women's identities

[51] In her exploration for the definition of women in Chinese culture, Tani Barlow found that "Before [women] are married [they] are *nü*/female/daughters; when [they] get married they are *fu* or wives, when [they] give birth to children, [they] are *mu* or mothers." Please see Tani E. Barlow, "Theorizing "Women"," The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) 37-63. It is very hard to find in Confucian canons some terms to describe a "single" "independent" woman outside the family kinship group.

[52] Michel Foucault, "The Use of Pleasure: Volume 2 of the History of Sexuality," trans. Robert Hurley, The History of Sexuality (New York: Vingage Books, 1985) 156.

[53] Michel Foucault, The Use of Pleasure: Volume 2 of the History of Sexuality, trans. Robert Hurley, The History of Sexuality (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978) 157-58.

[54] In Foucault, The Use of Pleasure: Volume 2 of the History of Sexuality 143. "Mistresses we keep for the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily care of our persons, but wives to bear us legitimate children and to be faithful guardians of our households". This statement has been attributed to Demosthenes in *Against Neaera*.

are subsumed under the identities of their husbands. Clearly, this asserts the authority of the husband over the wife while withdrawing any possibility of authority from the wife, as authority and power of a woman that can only develop by considering her as an equal individual. Without equality with the husband, her power, freedom, or choice does not exist. Foucault summarizes in *The History of Sexuality*, "For while the wife belonged to the husband, the husband belonged only to himself."[55]

2.5 The success of phallus

From the above bullying scenario, we find that women in Yu Hua's literary works of this period seem weak and passive and have no control over their lives. Men have advantages over women since they have more physical power. However, *Xianshi Yizhong* is not just a depiction of domestic violence; the latter part of the story tells us of another war between men and women. In this case, they do not fight with each other directly. On the contrary, they use their own approaches.

After Shangang kills his brother and is executed by the local police, his wife is very calm, continues her routine life, and does not bother to collect her husband's corpse. Shangang's sister-in-law (Shanfeng's wife), the poor woman who has lost her son and husband, finds it is a good opportunity to revenge on her "enemies". When her baby dies, she cannot do anything; the only thing she does is just wait in her room and endure her husband's bullying. However, after her husband also dies, she becomes a brave woman with an extremely clear mind. She

[55] Foucault, "The Use of Pleasure: Volume 2 of the History of Sexuality," 147.

strives to find out when Shangang will be executed and often goes to the local police office to announce that she is “Shangang’s wife”. Later, she claims that she would like to donate “her husband’s” body (for medical research). In Chinese culture, it’s considered extremely inauspicious to “donate one’s corpse for anatomy” because people believe that the corpse could reincarnate for another life after the individual dies. If the body is cut into several pieces, the reincarnation will be impossible. Shanfeng’s wife does not want to forgive her brother-in-law, who directly caused the death of her husband. She attempts to prevent the corpse from ever reincarnation. In other words, she wants to “eliminate” her enemy in her own manner. Actually, Yu arranges for a woman to help her realize her dream. The woman is a female doctor who is in charge of dissecting Shangang’s corpse. Through the hands of the female doctor, Shanfeng’s wife seems to have successfully “erased” Shangang forever from the world. It appears that women might not be as weak and powerless as we imagined. However, the final scene conveys another idea. Here is the result of the dissection:

> The part of Shangang’s body of which he was proudest had to be his testicles. The urologist transplanted them into the body of young individual whose testicles had been crushed in a traffic accident. This lucky young guy got married shortly after the surgery, and soon his wife was unexpectedly pregnant, giving birth to a stocky son ten months later. Shanfeng’s wife could never have anticipated this scenario in so far as she indirectly helped Shangang have a successor.
>
> (山岗身上最得意的应该是睾丸了。(泌)尿医生将他的睾丸移植在一个因车祸而睾丸被碾碎的年轻人身上。不久之后年轻人居

然结婚了，而且他妻子立刻就怀孕，十个月后生下一个十分壮实的儿子。这一点山峰的妻子万万没有想到，因为是她成全了山岗，山岗后继有人了。）[56]

This result is quite ironic. Shanfeng's wife attempts to avenge the deaths of her son and husband by making her enemy disappear permanently. However, the proudest part of her enemy remains and "produces" a son, though not Shangang's son nominally. Shangang has a successor so his male organ becomes the final winner of this gender struggle. Although Yu Hua does not refer to masculinity directly in this episode, we can still read the underlying meaning of the testicle as a signifier of men's power. By successful transplantation, masculine power and violence can be transferred generation by generation. Yu Hua's allegorical usage of testicles can be connected with Western gender theories about "phallus", which refer to both the biological male organ and the symbolic meaning of men's power.

As a psychoanalytic term, "phallus" is often found in Freud's writings. He uses the notion of phallus as "a representation of the erect male organ and a symbol of sovereign power."[57] Freud does not distinguish between the penis as an actual bodily organ and the 'phallus' as a signifier of sexual difference. According to Freud, "It is the sight of the presence or absence of the penis that forces a child to recognise that boys and girls are different."[58] Furthermore, Freud postulates that both sexes disavow the absence of the woman's penis. Eventually, however, both boys and girls are forced to admit its absence and they account for its

[56] Yu, "*Xianshi Yizhong* 现实一种(One Kind of Reality)," 45.
[57] David Macey, "Phallus: Definitions," Feminism and Psychoanalysis : A Critical Dictionary, ed. Elizabeth Wright (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1992) 318.
[58] Sean Homer, Jacques Lacan (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2005) 54.

absence through the idea of castration. The boy sees the woman as a castrated man and the girl has to accept that she does not, and will never have a penis.[59] At a very early age, a boy can discover that he and his mother are different, and that he has a different organ than his mother. Yu Hua understands fairly well the symbolic meaning of the phallus. When Pipi first looks at his baby cousin's penis, he took great pleasure in telling his auntie that, "He is a man." Though Pipi is just a four-year-old boy, he already has enough gender identity to declare that "he is a man," and is very proud of this special organ.

In Lacanian psychoanalysis, however, the link between the phallus and the male organ is transcended. "The phallus is believed to be an abstract signifier which is not to be confused with the biological organ."[60] The phallus in Lacanian theory does not only refer to the male genital organ, although it clearly carries these connotations. In the Lacanian tradition, the phallus is the central organizer of gender. His *Ecrits: A Selection* includes an essay entitled, *The Significance of the Phallus,* which articulates the difference between "being" and "having" the phallus. Men are positioned as men insofar as they are seen to have the phallus. Women, not having the phallus, are seen to "be" the phallus, since she is fetishized into the symbol of completion for the male. The symbolic phallus is the concept of being the ultimate man, and having phallus is thus having the divine gift of God.

In summary, we realize that the male and female characters in Yu Hua's avant-garde works, at least the two selected here, are depicted as gender icons. Women become commodities or victims of violence, men become executer of

[59] Sean Homer, Jacques Lacan (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2005) 54.
[60] Macey, "Phallus: Definitions," 318.

violence or signifier of phallus. Yu Hua does not intend to spend more time demonstrating the intricate relations between two genders. Masculinity is connected with simple language, physical strength, or generative power, all of which embody the writer's "subversive" attitude towards mainstream culture and communistic ideology. According to Lu Tonglin, "experimental fiction has broken much further away from the conventions of socialist realism in terms of language, narrative structure, and ideological complexity. However, its subversive role also reinforces the misogynistic mark carried by this literary form."[61]

[61] Tonglin Lu, Misogyny, Cultural Nihilism, & Oppositional Politics (Standford, California: Standford University Press, 1995) 184.

Chapter Three Masculine Crisis and Historical Trauma

3.1 Chinese Literature in the Aftermath of the Tiananmen Incident

In the second chapter, I claim that, in his early literary works, Yu Hua prefers to re-build the dominance of traditional Chinese masculinity, which insists on the power of phallus, and that Yu believes that this power can be transferred by men. This traditional patriarchic representation symbolizes his way of subverting the communist "father". However, there is an important event in contemporary China that not only undermines his "subversion" but also changes the whole trend of Chinese writing. Some scholars even claim this event is a signal of the beginning of the Chinese Post-New era, such as post-revolution, post-socialism, post-modernity, and so on.

This event, called the Tiananmen Incident, happened on June 4th, 1989. In the past two decades, the Chinese government strictly forbade the appearance of the term "June 4th" in any context on the Web or in other media. The original recollections of June 4th have been gradually extirpated from common peoples' memories. Many young people who were born in the later 1980s have limited knowledge about it. In June 2009, overseas Chinese got together and commemorated the twentieth anniversary of Tiananmen Incident. In Hong Kong, for instance, millions of Hong Kong citizens memorialized the victims with candles. [62] Yet, people in mainland China were not allowed to publicly

[62] "Remembering Tiananmen, 20 Years Later," The Boston Globe June 5, 2009. Accessed on June 19, 2009.

commemorate the victims and the event, even though journalists and scholars in Hong Kong, Taiwan and North America attempted to record and analyze this historical event,[63] and some private websites tried to objectively represent it.[64] Since the Chinese government, a group highly involved in the incident, still kept silent, many discussions about this event remained controversial. Some pivotal questions, e.g. the number of the victims in the final bloody killing or why the Chinese government did not use rubber bullets rather than heavier artillery, are still vague. In the following paragraph, I will briefly introduce this event, which I believe directly or indirectly changes Yu Hua's and many other intellectuals' thinking in later years.

The Tiananmen Incident started as a student protest movement. On April 15th 1989, Former Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang, deposed in 1987, died of a massive heart attack. People began to gather in Tiananmen Square to commemorate Hu and voice their discontents. On April 22th, some university students in Beijing attempted to submit a petition and asked for a dialogue with a high officer in the government. Their efforts failed. On May 13th, students started their hunger strike, and the formal talk between student representatives and government did not go well. At this time, labour activists, intellectuals, and common residents in Beijing gathered in Tiananmen Square and attempted to join

[63] Some books about June 4th Incident include: Dingxin Zhao, The Power of Tiananmen: State-Society Relations and the 1989 Beijing Student Movement（The University of Chicago Press, 2001）. And Tragic Democratic Movement—The Most Peaceful Beginning, The Most Bloody End 《悲壯的民運——最和平開始、最血腥結束》(Ming Bao Publishing House, June 1989, 明報出版社，89 年 6 月出版）, Real Recording of Bloody Massacre in Beijing《 血洗京華實錄》(Hong Kong Wenhui Publishing House, June 13,1989. 香港文匯報出版社有限公司, 一九八九年六月十三日.）

[64] The websites about this event include: June 4th Memoir, http://www.64memo.com/d/, and The Gate of Heavenly Peace, http://www.tsquare.tv/. Accessed on June 16, 2009.

the movement. Meanwhile, hundreds of students from other areas of China were moving towards the capital. The Chinese government felt the movement gradually getting out of their control. On June 3rd, troops received orders to reclaim Tiananmen Square at any cost. Around 10:00 pm, soldiers opened fire on people trying to block the army's advance, as well as on those who were simply shouting at the troops. Tanks and armoured personnel carriers moved toward the center of the city. Many people in the streets were killed or wounded, including bystanders. Until the afternoon of June 4th, almost all students and teachers in Tiananmen Square had left. On June 9th, Deng Xiaoping, in a nationally broadcast television appearance, spoke to the commanders of the martial-law units. The "rebellion" had been completely suppressed. Following the violence, the government conducted widespread arrests to suppress protesters and their supporters, cracked down on other protests around China, banned the foreign press from the country and strictly controlled coverage of the events in the PRC press.[65]

There was a short-lived silence immediately following the Tiananmen Incident. As it became clear that the Chinese communist regime would stay in power, writers reacted as their circumstances allowed. Dissident writers associated with the protest movement were in danger of arrest and imprisonment. One of "Misty"/"Obscure" poets, Duo Duo (b. 1951), for instance, managed to get a flight to London on June 4th, joining those like Bei Dao (b. 1949),[66] another "Misty" poet, who was already abroad and had no choice but to remain overseas.

[65] All above description of the historical event is coming from Tiananmen Square Protests of 1989, 2008, Available: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiananmen_Square_protests_of_1989, The chronology of the event is mainly extracted from: The Gate of Heavenly Peace, http://www.tsquare.tv/, and June 4th Memoir, http://www.64memo.com/d/. Accessed on June. 16, 2009.

[66] A co-founder of the original *Jintian* (Today) in 1978 and its revival in 1990.

Writers in high political ranks were also vulnerable; Wang Meng was forced to resign from being the Minister of Culture in 1989 and dropped from the party's Central Committee at the 1992 Party Congress."Less prominent established writers …waited for a more propitious time to publish."[67]

In order to survive in the new situation, many writers switched the themes of their writings from ideological/political evolution to economic/sexual issues. A large number of protagonists became small business owners or officials of different ranks. Furthermore, corruption and illegal or immoral sexuality became popular themes in most works after 1990. For instance, some works portrayed fiscal corruption, as in Liu Heng's *Canghe Bairimeng* (Daydream on the Cang River) (1993).[68] Other works treated gluttony, adultery and legal corruption, as in Mo Yan's *Jiuguo* (Wine Country) (1992), or sexual excess, as in Jia Pingwa's *Feidu* (The Abandoned Capital) (1992). Some of these works illustrated not only a tremendous rise in prostitution, but also what appears to be a sexual market generally less tied to formal marriage. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the most popular writer was Wang Shuo (b. 1958). He invented a new gangster genre named 'Hooligan Fiction' ('*Liumang Xiaoshuo*') showing mafia-like entrepreneurs engaged in prostitution, extortion, and other organized criminal activities. This genre gained popularity by fast-growing entertainment media, such as a 1991 television series, *Bianjibu de Gushi* (Stories from the Editorial Board),

[67] Bonnie S. McDougall, Fictional Authors, Imaginary Audiences : Modern Chinese Literature in the Twentieth Century (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2003) 241.
[68] For an analysis comparing negative visions of market reforms in Jiang Zilong's 'Shoushen ji' (Records from a trial) (1989) and Liu Heng's novel Daydream on the Cang River with more optimistic portrayals in Jia Pingwa's stories, see Melinda Pirazzoli, "The Free-Market Economy and Contemporary Chinese Literature," World Literature Today 70.2 (1996).

based on his same-titled novel.[69] At the same time, most avant-gardists of the 1980s virtually do not stay with the edgy, symbolic style of writing that gained popularity in the period before the Tiananmen Incident. "Su Tong then began to write in the 'nostalgic realistic' mode, telling sentimental stories about an imaginary small town or about village life during the early Republican periods (1910s-1930s)."[70] Ge Fei spends more time on academic research than creative writing.

Just around the same period from 1988 to 1991, Yu Hua gained an opportunity to enter the professional literary circle. Lu Xun Literary Institute (*Lu Xun Wenxueyuan*) and Beijing Normal University (*Beijing Shifan Daxue*) organized a "creative writing post-graduate program" in Beijing. Yu Hua, Mo Yan, Liu Zhenyun, and some other young writers in mainland China became classmates in this program. During three years of study (1988--1991), Yu Hua's view of the world and of literature experienced a significant change. He gradually entered the center of the Chinese literary circle. Most of his classmates and teachers in the training program were famous or promising writers in China. Moreover, Yu Hua was granted many opportunities to access art works, including modern literary works and movies, in that training program. He was strongly impressed by modernism movies produced by Ingmar Bergman, Federico Fellini, Michelangelo Antonioni, and Jean-Luc Godard. These movies were completely different from

[69] Please see Geremie Barme, "Wang Shuo and Liumang (`Hooligan') Culture," The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs.28 (1992). For novels by Wang Shuo available in English, see Playing for Thrills, trans. Howard Goldblatt (New York: William Morrow, 1997) and Please Don't Call Me Human, trans. Howard Goldblatt (New York: Hyperion East, 2000).

[70] Howard Goldblatt, "Fictional China," China's Transformations : The Stories Beyond the Headlines eds. Lionel M. Jensen and Timothy B. Weston (Lanham, MD Rowman & Littlefield, 2007) 168.

the "eight model works"[71] and illustrative political propaganda movies of the Cultural Revolution. On the one hand, Yu Hua had more opportunities to access Western "modern" art; on the other hand, his writing, ironically, faced more "totalized" censorship or a more "politically dominant" environment. The "subversive" intention in his early works seemed powerless in the face of the huge party-state cultural control. His most popular novel, *To Live*, demonstrates the "frustrated" feeling of that time.

3.2 Male subject and historical trauma

Intrigued by an American folk song entitled "Old Black Joe", Yu Hua wrote one of his most popular novels, *To Live*, which is labeled as "plain realism".[72] The novel is the life-long narration of an old farmer, Fugui. In his youth, Fugui spent his time whoring and gambling, and lost some of his family property. However, when a professional gambler, Long Er, came to town, things became tragic for Fugui's family. Fugui was completely abandoned by involving

[71] The "eight model works" (Yang Ban Xi) was popular during the ten years of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1965-1975). Traditional opera was banned by Mao's wife Jiang Qing, and replaced by a new kind of art in which the world was presented in a much simpler way: all the good guys were farmers and revolutionary soldiers, always singing and dancing in the broad spotlight; all the bad guys were landlords and anti-revolutionaries, who wore dark make-up and were poorly lit. Yang Ban Xi incorporated the most modern techniques of cinematography, song, and dance, thus developing a new art form in Chinese culture: Revolutionary model opera.

[72] Kang Liu explains some characteristics of plain realist writing: (Yu Hua) allows "the mimetic or figural mode of dialogue and the character's reported speech to dominate the narrative and by restricting the narration to the minimum report of their outward movements: walking, eating, speaking, crying, and laughing. That is, he refrains from guiding the reader's comprehension of the events. Yet, the figural discourse and reported speech tend toward melodrama in their rawness and exaggeration." Please see Kang Liu, "The Short-Lived Avant-Garde Literary Movement and Its Transformation: The Case of Yu Hua," Globalization and Cultural Trends in China (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004) 125. More importantly, this "plain realism" is not a return to the "grand tradition" of revolutionary realism of the Mao Era. Also, Yu Hua is also not a member of the group of writers who continue to write in the tradition of critical realism since the May Fourth cultural enlightenment movement (1919).

himself in gambling with Long Er, and lost almost all of his family's property. The loss of the family's land and house was too much of a shock for Fugui's father to handle, so he passed away in despair. After Long Er moved into Fugui's house, Fugui had to move his family into a ramshackle shelter and rent some land from Long Er. When his mother was sick, Fugui had to ask for a doctor in the town. However, on his way home he was forcefully conscripted into the Nationalist Army, and was forced to march north to fight against the Communist Army. Eventually, the Communists won the Civil War and Fugui was allowed to go back to his home. His family was glad to receive him, but he soon learned that his mother had died and his daughter had become deaf due to a severe fever. Fugui was shocked and scared while the Communists executed Long Er as a devil rich landlord. From then on, Fugui survived a series of successive political campaigns and he lost all his kin, including his son, daughter, son-in-law, his wife, and his grandson. Nevertheless, Fugui always is still alive. It seems that he had been seeing through the vulnerable life of civilians; nothing could deter him from living; while it might not have been a great life, he was alive and accepted his fate with detached satisfaction.

This novel is written about a series of catastrophes in China during the course of the 20th century. Those political movements made the hero lose his friends and his family. Fugui was a powerless and desperate guy, and he could not help anybody in his family. This text dramatized the vulnerability of conventional men and masculinity in the face of trauma. For a better analysis of this novel, I would adopt Kaja Silverman's argument about male subjectivity. Hence, I will introduce some concepts of her theory. The first one is of dominant fiction, which

refers to one kind of ideology. According to this ideology, men and women find that they are different, and men believe they have more power than women since they have penis. In Silverman's argument, dominant fiction makes both men and women "deny all knowledge of male castration by believing in the commensurability of penis and phallus, actual and symbolic father."[73] More importantly, Silverman points out, "Social formations consequently depend upon their dominant fiction for their sense of unity and identity. Social formations also rely for their continued survival upon the dominant fiction."[74] Another important concept is the historical trauma, which refers to "any historical event, whether socially engineered or of natural occurrence, which brings a large group of male subjects into such an intimate relation with lack that they are at least for the moment unable to sustain an imaginary relation with the phallus, and so withdraw their belief from the dominant fiction. Suddenly the latter is radically de-realized, and the social formation finds itself without a mechanism for achieving consensus."[75]

In order to explore the way in which historical trauma undermines the male subject, Silverman reads Freud's death drive and trauma theory. She claims that the death drive could "be defined as the compulsion to repeat experiences of an overwhelming and incapacitating sort – experiences which render the subject hyperbolically passive."[76] The Freudian death drive here does not fall on the notion of death but rather on the notion of repetition. Silverman argues that the

[73] Kaja Silverman, Male Subjectivity at the Margins (New York: Routledge, 1992) 42.
[74] Silverman, Male Subjectivity at the Margins 54.
[75] Silverman, Male Subjectivity at the Margins 55.
[76] Silverman, Male Subjectivity at the Margins 59.

death drive should be differentiated from the repetition that leads to mastery. Mastery "results when those same experiences are actively repeated – when they are linguistically rather than affectively reprised."[77] The passive repetition of the trauma, in this sense, contributes to undermining the male subjectivity. In other words, the historical trauma causes male individuals to find that they are not as strong and powerful as they imagined. The equation of penis and phallus power just is built up on fantasy. They have to learn to live with men's weakness.

In *To Live*, there were three men from the same generation: Long Er, Chunsheng and Fugui. Long is the oldest, Chun is the youngest. After experiencing the turbulent civil war and subsequent political campaigns, Fugui witnessed the death of many soldiers and found that men were extremely weak in the face of trauma. He gave up all his social ambition and preferred to live in a simple way. Long Er and Chunsheng gained wealth and power at different times and both died in political movements. Their deaths left a deep impression on Fugui. In the beginning of the story, Long Er became rich by gambling. Later on, he gave up gambling and wanted to live as a regular landlord, owning a number of houses and a large amount of land. However, when CCP took over mainland China, the Land Reform started in which the Party took back land violently from previous landlords and shared with the previous tenants. In this campaign, Long Er was considered a member of the landlord class and he was obligated to submit his property to the government. He refused to do so and was killed for being a counter-revolutionary. Long Er was so uncooperative because he had a rather large ego. He won Fugui's house and thought he had an impervious life: "Long Er

[77] Silverman, Male Subjectivity at the Margins 59.

really was extremely foolish. He thought that they'd lock him up for a few days and that would be that. Never for a second did he believe they'd execute him."[78] Long Er did not understand that Mao wanted the counter-revolutionaries dead. The most important tusk for Mao was social progress and Mao wanted nothing standing in his way. Before his execution, Long Er told Fugui, “I am dying for you”. Fugui was frightened that if he and his father had still been holding their land, the person executed would be him.

Chunsheng, on the other hand, was first conscripted by Nationalist Army during the civil war and later became a PLA soldier by surrendering to PLA. In the civil war, he arrived in the Fujian province, and then participated in the Korean War as a Chinese Volunteer Army soldier. He survived all aforementioned wars and became a county mayor in the late 1950s. It seems that he would have a bright future in Mao’s regime. However, during the Cultural Revolution, he was bullied by the Red Guards. There was one scene depicting the bully experience:

> Chunsheng has his head bent down, so he does not notice Fugui. As he passes by, he suddenly raises his head and chanted, “Long Live Chairman Mao!”
>
> A couple of kids wearing red armbands rushed over to him. Kicking and hitting him, they cursed, “Was that you who yelled? You fucking capitalist roader!”
>
> Chunsheng was knocked down to the ground, his body resisting on the wooden sign that hung from his neck. One of the kids kicked his head,

[78] Hua Yu, To Live : A Novel, trans. Michael Berry, Huo Zhe. English (New York: Anchor Books, 2003) 84.

making a “bong” sound; it sounded like a hole had been knocked in his head. His whole body collapsed to the ground. Chunsheng was beaten until he couldn’t make a sound—never in my whole life had I seen a person beaten like that.[79]

（春生低着头，没看到我，从我身边走过去后，春生突然抬起头来喊：“毛主席万岁。”
几个戴红袖章的人冲上去对春生又打又踢，骂道：“这是你喊的吗，他娘的走资派。”
春生被他们打倒在地，身体搁在那块木牌上，一只脚踢在他脑袋上，春生的脑袋像是被踢出个洞似的咚地一声响，整个人趴在了地上。春生被打得一点声音都没有，我这辈子没见过这么打人的，在地上的春生像是一块死肉，任他们用脚去踢。）

Shortly after the humiliating experience, Chunsheng committed suicide. Both Long Er and Chunsheng were smart and hard-working guys. However, a series of political movements forced them to death. It is fairly difficult to maintain a successful position in the turbulent Chinese political environments. In *To Live*, what constitutes the historical trauma is none other than political persecutions that culminated in violence during the CCP's socialist regime, such as the Land Reform, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, and so on. Fugui experiences the trauma again and again, and he understands the inadequacy of men. At the later part of the story, Fugui completely gives up any ambition to be a successful man conforming to “dominant fiction”. When “to live” becomes the most important objective of life, he prefers to give up the traditional male ambition of “making the family wealthy and famous”. The only thing for him is to live.

[79] Yu, To Live : A Novel 97.

"It seems that my life will be over soon. It's an ordinary life. My dad thought I would bring honor to our ancestors. He thought wrong. As for me, this is my fate. When I was young, I squandered the money my ancestors left to me in a short while, but as time elapse, my life became worse and worse. Finally, things worked out for the best. Look at the people around me, like Long Er and Chunsheng. They each had their day in the sun, but in the end they lost their lives. It's better to live an ordinary life. If you go on striving for this and that, you'll end up with sacrificing your life. Take me for instance, the longer I've managed to squeeze by, the more useless I've become, but in the end I've lived a long time. One by one, everyone I knew dies, but I'm still alive."[80]

(这辈子想起来也是很快就过来了，过得平平常常，我爹指望我光耀祖宗，他算是看错人了，我啊，就是这样的命。年轻时靠着祖上留下的钱风光了一阵子，往后就越过越落魄了，这样反倒好，看看我身边的人，龙二和春生，他们也只是风光了一阵子，到头来命都丢了。做人还是平常点好，争这个争那个，争来争去赔了自己的命。像我这样，说起来是越混越没出息，可寿命长，我认识的人一个挨着一个死去，我还活着。)

3.3 Father and son

Fugui's difficulties with social life were transcribed into difficulties with his family in which he was neither a successful son nor a powerful father. His father died because of him; the father tried to dissuade the son from his gambling problem. There are two Father and Son relationships in this novella: Fugui's father and Fugui, and Fugui and his son. When his father asked him to "make

[80] Hua Yu, To Live : A Novel trans. Michael Berry (New York: Anchor Books, 2003) 231.

contribution to their families", Fugui refused, believing that such a tough task as making his family famous was not worth it. When his father stopped him by force, Fugui pushed his father into the corner of the wall and announced that he was a "son of a bitch". Finally, his father died by knowing that gambling lost the house. Fugui felt very guilty that he virtually "killed" his father. On the other hand, he also could not play the role as a good father. When he was in the civil war, his daughter became deaf as a result of a severe fever. When he saw her again at home, he felt "like a needle insect his body".

When his daughter had grown up to be around twelve years old, Fugui planned to send the girl to another family in order to save more money for the better education of his son. There is a detailed depiction of the leaving scenario: "When I got to the field, I took my hoe in hand and tried to get to work, but I just couldn't get my energy up. Looking around and not seeing Fengxia there cutting the grass made me feel empty inside. Realizing that I would no longer have Fengxia there next to me as I worked in the field, I could hardly bear it. I felt that all my energy had drained away." [81] (我是心里发虚啊，往四周看看，看不到凤霞在那里割草，觉得心都空了。想想以后干活时再见不到凤霞，我难受得一点力气都没有。) "Then I couldn't take it – with my head cocked to one side, the tears began to fall"[82] (这时我实在忍不住了，歪了歪头眼泪掉了下来。) Fugui felt depressed about his daughter, but his poverty could not allow him to do anything else.

[81] Yu, To Live : A Novel 90.
[82] Yu, To Live : A Novel 90-91.

There was a complicated relationship between Fugui and his son. He undoubtedly hoped that his son could change his life, and not end up the same as himself. However, when he became a father, Fugui could not build a successful relationship with his son Youqing; their communication was mostly stressed and uncomfortable. Youqing liked lambs and running, but Fugui wanted his son to do more pragmatic things. The only way he educated his son was just by "beating"; he even threatened his son, "if you do not study hard, I will kill you." Although Youqing obtained highest rank in the running competition, Fugui did not praise him; instead he said, "I've never heard of anyone making a living by running. We sent you to school because we wanted you to read and study, not so you could learn how to run. Running isn't something you need to study or learn. Hell, even chicken can run!" [83](可我从没听说过跑步也能挣饭吃，送你去学校，是要你好念书，不是让你去学跑步，跑步还用学？鸡都会跑？) Fugui had no idea how to communicate with his son. He wanted to prevent his son from facing the same hardships that he had already experienced; however, he seems lack of this capability.

Youqing's death was the most important sign of his lack of ability. When his boy died, Fugui found that he could do nothing. His son was set to donate blood to the school principal and felt extremely excited to have the opportunity to do it. In the hospital, doctors found that Youqing's blood was just what they needed, so they took too much of his blood without considering his life. Youqing finally died. When Fugui arrived at the hospital, he found that the patient needing

[83] Hua Yu, To Live : A Novel, trans. Michael Berry, Huo Zhe. English (New York: Anchor Books, 2003) 130.

the blood is the county mayor's wife, whom doctors and nurses were struggling to save. With his son dead by such a ridiculous accident, Fugui felt angry, however, he could do nothing to save his boy or avenge his death. The only thing he could do was crying for his son's death. Doctors drew Youqing's blood to aid the wife of a county magistrate until Youqing collapsed. There was no direct political reason for his death, but we can feel the harshness of the bureaucratic administration. As a common individual, nobody cared about the death of Fugui's child. Death is the most important motif of this novella in whichFugui's daughter and son both died in the hospital and Fugui could not find any way to help his children and prevent their deaths.

Whether to be successful or live as a man is not a big issue for Fugui. The old man expressed the "softness" of his penis as a response to the repetition of historical trauma. The equation between penis and phallus has become precarious in this novella. Yu Hua uses a dialogue to depict the softness of the hero's penis:

> Fugui's body shakes a bit before he could stand up. As he patted his knees he said, "My whole body keeps getting stiffer and stiffer. Only one part keeps getting softer. "
>
> After hearing that, I couldn't help but laugh out loud. I looked down at his drooping pants and saw some blades of grass there. He also laughed, happy that I got his joke.[84]
>
> (福贵的身体动了几下才站起来，他拍了拍膝盖对我说："我全身都是越来越硬，只有一个地方越来越软。"
> 我听后不由高声笑起来，朝他耷拉下去的裤裆看看，那里沾了几根青草。他也嘿嘿笑了一下，很高兴我明白他的意思。)

[84] Yu, To Live : A Novel 86.

Furthermore, there was nothing left for Fugui in his family: his son, daughter, and grandson had all passed away. There was also nothing left behind him. If we could still remember the "successful transplantation of testicles" (in *One Kind of Reality*), we could find that, in *To Live*, the gender and male subjectivity becomes less important and to survive becomes more important. As phallus is a signifier of men's power and women do not have it, women's lack of capability and inferiority to men is explained. In this scenario, we can find that men's power connected with phallus is not absolute or constant. They can become precarious to some extent.

3.4 Women's power

From the communication of two male narrators in *To Live*, it is almost impossible to hear women's voice directly. Therefore, some feminist scholars announce that female characters in Yu Hua's realism novels are mindless and shallow. Lin Huayu, for instance, claims that Jiazhen is the sufferer of social tribulation.[85] She maintains virtues of traditional Chinese women who are passive, kind-hearted, and loyal to their family, especially her husband. In the face of endless tribulation, Chinese women feel helpless and the only things they can do are cry and pray. Another scholar in mainland China, Cui Yuxiang categorizes women in Yu Hua's writing into two groups: mothers and prostitutes. Jiazhen is depicted as a representative of the traditional mothers who are passive and silent,

[85] Huayu 林华瑜 Lin, "Dancers on Ice at Midnight-- Reading the Female Images in Yu Hua's Fictions 暗夜里的蹈冰者——余华小说的女性形象解读," Research of Chinese Literature 中国文学研究 63.4 (2001).

and symbolize the expectancy and desire of men. Cui finds that women, as mothers, are depicted as objects; they mirror the patriarchic ideology in Yu Hua's mind.[86] However, the above arguments just reveal one of the characteristics of Jiazhen. As a girl coming from a wealthy family with some education, Jiazhen demonstrated her special value, and we could find her power. Although she does not hold any "revolutionary" spirit, it will be demonstrated in the following section that she has her own ideas and is good at expressing them.

Jiazhen was not an illiterate peasant because she had obtained some education. Fugui recalled his first sight of Jiazhen, who was a modern and pretty lady. "A few years before, Jiazhen had been a student. At the time there was a night school in town. Jiazhen, carrying a kerosene lamp and wearing a moon white cheongsam, was going to class with a few of her girlfriends."[87] (早上几年的时候，家珍还是一个女学生。那时候城里有夜校了，家珍穿着月白色的旗袍，提着一盏小煤油灯，和几个女伴去上学。) "She walked over with a swing in her step. The sound of her high-heeled shoes tapping the stone pavement was like the sound of falling rain." (她一扭一扭地走过来，高跟鞋敲在石板路上，滴滴答答像是在下雨。) "Her hair was neatly combed behind her ears, and when she walked her cheongsam would crease at the waist." [88] (头发齐齐地挂到耳根，走去时旗袍在腰上一皱一皱。) Although Jiazhen did not say anything in this scene, her body language demonstrated that she was completely different

[86] Yuxiang 崔玉香 Cui, "Women, One Distorted and Converted Group 女性，一个被扭曲遮蔽的群体," Dong Yue Tribune 东岳论丛 27.2 (2006).
[87] Yu, To Live : A Novel 24.
[88] Yu, To Live : A Novel 24-25.

from a village woman. The style of her walking, her dress, and her hairstyle implied that she preferred to absorb novel and fashion elements. In the future, we find that she was not just good at making herself beautiful. As a responsible wife and mother, she was much more powerful and intelligent than her husband.

When Fugui was involved in the civil war and away from family for a long time, Jiazhen became a strong-minded mother. Although this novella does not accommodate long paragraphs for the depiction of her experience during the war, we can envision that Jiazhen has accomplished everything that a husband should. She took care of her mother-in-law until the last breath, and raised her two children. Moreover, she had to feed her children and take care of their family's field. War forced men to leave their homes, thereby allowing women to enter the masculine area and appear stronger than before. In other words, she was the indispensable person who kept the wholeness of the family during the war period. When the Great Famine came, Fugui's family and other peasants in the countryside experienced an extraordinarily horrible life without rice, vegetables, and fruits. Lots of villagers had to leave for town and beg for food. Fengxia had to fight against a man for one sweet potato. Youqing could not find anything to eat and had to drink some water in a pond. Jiazhen, at this time, demonstrated her power and wisdom again. She went to visit her father in the town and brought back some rice by herself. Nobody conceived that this sick woman would be able to carry some food and even Fugui didn't expect that his wife could get rice for the family. Fugui's family enjoyed a delicious meal made of the rice and successfully kept the invaluable food from being grabbed by other starving villagers. The rice, as well as the cooperation of the whole family, helped them

survive the Great Famine. Traditionally, finding food is the job of the male house-head, however, this time Jiazhen used her intelligence to obtain some food for the whole family.

Most of the time Jiazhen played the role of a traditional Chinese woman, loyal to her husband and family, and ready to sacrifice herself for her family if necessary. On the other hand, under certain circumstances she had her own ideas and was not always a simple-minded, silent mother. She supported the family, and Fugui was not an emperor who was always right. Therefore, she had the right to agree or disagree with him. Based on the narrative of Fugui, we could hear her own voice directly. After Youqing was dead after losing too much of his blood in the hospital, Chunsheng came to visit Fugui and Jiazhen. Jiazhen refused to see Chunsheng, who indirectly killed her son (he died because his blood was transferred into the body of Chunsheng's wife). When Chunsheng gave two hundred Yuan to Fugui, Jiazhen became enraged; she yelled at her husband, "Your son just deserves two hundred Yuan?" Fugui thus rejected the money immediately. In Jiazhen's mind, nothing could replace her son and Chunsheng could not be forgiven by any kind of compensation. After that tragedy, Chunsheng visited this poor couple twice and Jiazhen refused to let him enter their house. However, when Chunsheng was really in danger and could not survive by himself, Jiazhen demonstrated her kindness and tolerance again. During the Cultural Revolution, Chunsheng was labeled as a "capitalist practitioner" (*zou zi pai*) and was inevitably beaten by Red Guards. He could not tolerate life under the bully of Red Guards and wanted to commit suicide. Before he was going to commit suicide, he visited Fugui, wanting to say "goodbye" to his friend. Jiazhen heard their

conversation and spoke to Chunsheng for the first time after Youqing's death. She said, "Chunsheng, you've to keep on living…You still owe us a life. Hold on to your life to repay us." Chunsheng agreed. The change of Jiazhen's attitude towards Chunsheng from hatred to tolerance demonstrates her unique understanding of life. While the life of her son was invaluable and nobody could trade it for money, another person's life was also important, and she did not want anybody to die, even her "enemy". Furthermore, we find that Fugui completely understood her feeling and respected her decision. This poor couple faced the tragedy together. Jiazhen was not a productive and reproductive machine, but a partner of Fugui, living and suffering together with him. Without Jiazhen, Fugui would not have his two children and a whole family. From the two male narrators' viewpoints, we still can feel the importance of Jiazhen. The tough life, including war, famine, and political struggles, makes a peasant understand the importance of family and wife.

In his avant-garde period, Yu Hua believed that a writer could control all characters that do not have the power to talk and think. However, in the process of writing realism novels, he "discovered characters could actually have their own voice [so] that they could talk for themselves." He "found that the characters could lead themselves. The story would lead itself. That is when [he] found the difficult parts were not so difficult anymore since the characters had control, and they would lead. [He] would give up a lot of control and let them take [him] through the story themselves. After this realization, [He has] noticed these

characters have become more alive, they have their own lives."[89] Therefore, in *To Live,* the male protagonist used plain language to demonstrate his life and worldview. In Yu Hua's words, "I am writing about a character that is greatly different from me, even completely different."[90] So masculinity in this story does not follow Yu Hua's early representation that men are cool, violent and dominant. In *To Live*, the male protagonist demonstrated incredible endurance in an extremely tragic life. The protagonist had grown up in the turbulent society and his subjectivity was challenged and rebuilt through a series of historical traumas. Fugui developed from an evil landlord who was violent toward his wife into an uncertain husband, an adoring father, and a doting grandfather. Family becomes the most important treasure in his later life even he gradually lost the integrity of his family. From the perspective of an old peasant, men and women are both parts of nature and their lives and deaths are absolutely normal and inevitable. He did not want to evaluate anybody as well as comment on his own life. Summarily, Fugui played his role as marginal man or as part of nature; he refused the dominant fiction as a successful man. The death drive made his male subjectivity marginal. "The emperor beckons me; he wants me to marry his daughter. The road to the capital is distal; so I won't go."[91] (皇帝招我做女婿，路远迢迢我不去。)

Masculinity represented in *To Live* is not a gender hierarchy in which men are superior to women. Even a successful man has to face multiple wars, crises and disasters. Male characters also face confusion and powerlessness; they need women and prefer to respect them. The novel is far more than just telling the story

[89] Michael Standaert, "Interview with Yu Hua ", ed. Yu Hua (Iowa City, Iowa: August 30, 2003).
[90] Standaert, "Interview with Yu Hua ".
[91] Yu, To Live : A Novel 7.

of Fugui's life. On the contrary, it repeats the political trauma of socialist China. From the Great Leap Forward, Great Famine, and Cultural Revolution, Chinese were put up and down without any capability of subversion. The "high modernism" in the 1980s made most intellectuals believe that they had more opportunities to control their lives and write in a free way. The totalitarianism of Maoism was far away from them. Yu Hua and lots of New Era writers took a subversive attitude in their writing because they believed that the traumatic period was over, thus intellectuals and writers regained the power to enlighten the masses. However, the Tiananmen Incident made their hope become a daydream. They found that, compared with gunpowder, their pens seem useless and powerless. The "historical trauma" was not far away from them. Mao was dead but Maoism was not dismissed. That was one of the reasons for writing this story. In *To Live* Yu Hua attempted to minimize the voice of any intellectuals, thus let a peasant convey life's lessons. Writers felt that they could not play the same pivotal roles as their predecessors during the May Fourth period because the Party required them to work as followers rather than challengers. On the other hand, the marketing process made writers attract their readers rather than explore aesthetics. Most writers preferred to keep a conceivable distance from "political" and "ideological" issues and placed their attention on historical or surrealistic themes.

Chapter Four Masculinity, Commodity and Chinese Postmodernism

On the subject of Chinese postmodernity/postmodernism, many scholars write either in Mainland China or in western academia, including Zhang Xudong,[92] Zhang Yiwu,[93] Chen Xiaonming,[94] and Yang Xiaobin.[95] Here, I would like to explain my understanding of the distinction between postmodernity and postmodernism. Let me simply say that postmodernism refers to the cultural sphere, especially literature, visual arts and philosophy, while postmodernity refers to technological development, economics and politics. Here, I would like to cite Hassan's argument to clarify the interrelation of postmodernity and postmodernism.

> Think of postmodernity as a world process, by no means identical everywhere yet global nonetheless. Or think of it as a vast umbrella under which stand various phenomena: postmodernism in the arts, poststructuralism in philosophy, feminism in social discourse, postcolonial and cultural studies in academe, but also multi-national

[92] Arif Dirlik and Xudong Zhang, Postmodernism & China (Durham [N.C.] ; London: Duke University Press, 2000). And Xudong Zhang, Postsocialism and Cultural Politics : China in the Last Decade of the Twentieth Century, China in the Last Decade of the Twentieth Century (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

[93] Yiwu Zhang, "Postmodernism and Chinese Novels of the Nineties " trans. Michael Berry, Postmodernism & China, eds. Arif Dirlik and Xudong Zhang (Durham [N.C.] ; London: Duke University Press, 2000).

[94] Xiaoming 陈晓明 Chen, *Houxiandai De Jianxi* 后现代的间隙 (the Postmodern Space) (Kunming: Yunnan People's Publishing House, 2001). And Xiaoming 陈晓明 Chen, *Wubian De Tiaozhan* 无边的挑战 (a Boundless Challenge) (Guangxi: Guangxi Normal University Publishing House, 2004).

[95] Xiaobin Yang, "Whence and Whither the Postmodern/Post-Mao-Den: Historical Subjectivity and Literary Subjectivity in Modern China," Postmodernism & China eds. Arif Dirlik and Xudong Zhang (Durham [N.C.] ; London Duke University Press, 2000).

capitalism, cybertechnologies, international terrorism, assorted separatist, ethnic, nationalist, and religious movements – all standing under, but not causally subsumed by, postmodernity.[96]

4.1 New media and contemporary Chinese literature

After the 1989 Tiananmen Incident and 1990s economic development, postmodernism is not a kind of "theoretical game" played by critics and scholars; it has much more meaning and has penetrated almost every aspect of social life. Chinese literature is almost ultimately dominated by the market. From the mid 1990s until the present is the period in which new media developed quickly. Television, movies and Internet have become increasingly more important forms of entertainment for most common Chinese. These new media began to challenge the traditional word-based print culture, which has long been valued as permanent and introspective. More and more readers have given up their former way of accessing information and spending leisure time; they now prefer to watch television and surf on the Internet rather than reading. At the same time, these media have inevitably renewed how the Chinese, including Chinese writers, express their ideas and communicate with one another. Some of them find the huge profit in embracing TV/films or the huge reputation in cooperating with Internet. For instance, a woman writer known as *Anni Baobei* (Ann Baby) fist published her works on a literary website, *Rongshu Xia* (Under the Banyan Tree), in 2002, and gradually became famous and crossed over from Web into print

[96] Ihab Hassan, "From Postmodernism to Postmodernity:The Local/Global Context," <http://www.ihabhassan.com/postmodernism_to_postmodernity.htm>.

culture. At the same time, some writers who had already established their fame through print culture also began blogs (*Bo Ke*) or 'writer columns' (*zuojia zhuanlan*) on the Web.[97] Literature and its interaction with these new media provide a new image of the contemporary cultural environment.

First of all, China experienced a noticeable development in its television industry during the 1990s. According to the official statistics, by 1999 there were more than 350 million sets with over a billion viewers.[98] Television has almost become the most important medium in the lives of ordinary Chinese; it shapes their ideas and the popular culture as a whole.[99] Although the broadcast of TV programs caused most Chinese to abandon reading printed books, the growth of television production ultimately became an unexpected opportunity for Chinese writers to promote their works and boost their reputations. Some famous writers switched to scriptwriting, finding it a much easier way to make money compared with writing for literary journals. Chi Li, for instance, was famous for describing the lives of urban dwellers in Wuhan and for insisting on not writing for TV soap operas. She changed her mind after her novel, *Lailai Wangwang* (Coming and Going), was successfully adapted to television in 1999. At that point, she became one of the most popular writers of the 1990s and wrote several scripts for TV series.

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[97] Wang Anyi, Shi Tiesheng and Shu Ting opened their 'writer columns' on *Under the Banyan Tree*. Please see Michel Hockx, "Links with the Past: Mainland China's Online Literary Communities and Their Antecedents," Journal of Contemporary China 13.38 (2004).Yu Hua also has a blog at *Xinlang Wang* (www. sina.com.cn). See, http://blog.sina.com.cn/yuhua. Accessed on June 20, 2009.

[98] The data comes from Shuyu Kong, Consuming Literature : Best Sellers and the Commercialization of Literary Production in Contemporary China (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005) 170.

[99] Please see the detail of the analysis in Kong, Consuming Literature : Best Sellers and the Commercialization of Literary Production in Contemporary China 170.

Movies can perform a similar promoting function as TV: making an obscure writer popular. Zhang Yimou turned Yu Hua's novel, *To Live,* into an award-winning film and helped Yu obtain international fame. Zhang, a famous director, has influenced several writers, such as Su Tong, whose story "*Qiqie Chengqun*" ("Wives and Concubines") was filmed *Dahongdenglong Gaogao Gua* (Raise the Red Lantern); Liu Heng, whose novel "*Fuxi Fuxi* "("The Obsessed") was filmed *Judou*; Chen Binyuan, whose "*Wanjia Susong"* ("Qiuju's Lawsuit") became *Qiuju da Guansi* (The Lawsuit of Qiuju); and of course, Mo Yan, whose novellas, "*Hong Gaoliang*" ("Red Sorghum") and "*Shifu Yuelaiyue Youmo*" ("Shifu, You'll Do Anything for a Laugh") were turned into the popular films, *Hong Gaoliang* (Red Sorghum) and *Xingfu Shiguang* (Happy Times). Some have even claimed that Zhang Yimou has helped sell more "pure" literature than the Chinese Writers Association. By combining their works with TV epidsodes or movies, many writers became millionaires during the 1990s. Literary works are now often closely tied with the television and film industries.

On the other hand, since 1997, and especially since 1999, the fastest-growing entertainment medium has been the Internet.[100] Although many users do not have their own personal computers, they can access the Internet in schools, work places or Web bars. They can find a lot of ways to access e-mail, on-line shopping, chat rooms, bulletin boards, and countless other features; and Internet

[100] According to Daniel Lynch, the spread of computerized telecommunication networks and the Internet throughout China dates back to 1994-95, after the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications lost its monopoly and started developing a marketing plan including the promotion of Internet services. But the number of Internet subscribers was very small at first: in mid-1995 it was only 1000 nationwide. Even as recently as 1997, only about 620,000 people had access to the Internet in China see Lynch, 108-9 Daniel C. Lynch, After the Propaganda State : Media, Politics, And "Thought Work" In Reformed China (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999).

has already begun altering ordinary Chinese lives and influencing cultural production and consumption. China has quickly become a member of the global telecommunications family. Lots of Chinese websites are related to literature. Any individual can post creative writing, read, and download any new literary works by Internet. Journals, literary organizations, writers, and countless literary works of all kinds (in both authorized and unauthorized versions) have suddenly spread on the Internet.[101] "Internet literature" ("*wangluo wenxue*") has become a popular topic among the readers, publishers, and writers.[102]

Compared with tough Chinese censorship at publishing areas, Internet provides much more freedom for common writers. Everyone has the right to freely produce and publish, ignoring literary conventions, political censorship, and, last but not least, the prolonged publishing process. At the same time, Internet provides a "direct way" of communication between writers and readers. However, the current subject and style of works on the Internet tend to be narrow, trite, and monotonous, full of conventional and clichéd expressions of predictable personal sentiments. Homosexuality is among the most popular themes of cyber-fiction on literary websites. It is also not difficult to read crime, romances, and science stories. "Clearly, the large-scale invasion of mass media and technology into literary production and consumption has provided new channels through which Chinese writers can communicate with mass readers and the market. It is very

[101] See, for instance, the Writers Association's official website, www.chinawriter.org (Jiri Zuojia Wang); the Chinese Literary Journals Internet Alliance website, www.nethong.com; and Golden Bookhouse (Huangjin Shuwu) (wenxue.lycos.com.cn), which has the most comprehensive collection of modern/contemporary literary works with electronic copyrights.

[102] Please see Kong, Consuming Literature : Best Sellers and the Commercialization of Literary Production in Contemporary China, Yomi Braester, "From Real Time to Virtual Reality: Chinese Cinema in the Internet Age," Journal of Contemporary China 13.38 (Feb. 2004).

hard for Chinese writers to write just for political or aesthetic reasons. In order to survive in a multimedia and multidimensional society, they have to adjust and transform their works to meet the needs of their consumer-readers."[103]

In the 1990s, with the new multimedia and commercialized literature, Chinese women's writing began to demonstrate a new face and their consciousness of and demand for women's cultural and physical space emerged despite various difficulties. The burgeoning cultural market empowered women to make their voices heard to an unprecedented extent. A group of writers who take advantage of Internet is the body writers, or more specifically, "lower body" writers. Mian Mian (b. 1970) and Wei Hui (b. 1973), for instance, wrote various kinds of urban women's sexual experiences. In Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baobei* (*Shanghai Babe*), the protagonist left her family at a very young age and lives a happy life in different cities in China. She jumps from sex to music to drugs in an unending circle, looking for happiness. The book's subject matter was very frightening for mainstream China, not just because of the sexuality, but also because it reflected what was going on with the newer generation. Unlike some earlier Chinese women writers, such as Chen Ran (b. 1962) or Lin Bai (b. 1958), who wrote sexual desire and experience in their works, the sexual experience in Mian Mian and Wei Hui's novels is demonstrated in a more symbolic style. They do not only want to display their personal experience but also demonstrate their personal growth, political protest, or rebellion against social convention. As for Wei Hui and her peer writers of "body and erotic love," they write in a more

[103] Kong, Consuming Literature : Best Sellers and the Commercialization of Literary Production in Contemporary China 183.

straightforward and explicit manner. They are not confused about their female identity and do not need men as "mental mentor/instructors." Any kind of pleasure provided by sex or commodities is an indispensable part of their lives. The standard of heterosexual, monogamous marriage and male-centered society has become a toy for these writers. How to find a man to fulfill their financial requirement and how to find another man to satisfy their sexual desire is not a tough issue. Most female characters in their works have a clear idea of what they want and how to use men to obtain it.

In short, it becomes more difficult for a "serious/pure" writer to survive in the contemporary Chinese literary environment. They have to adapt themselves to the TV/movie industries' requirements, and compete with millions of amateur writers on the Internet. Furthermore, when women writers use "body" as their most powerful weapon, male writers have to change their self-expectation and find more productive ways to compose and publish their literary works. "In this new partnership, it is more and more difficult to distinguish victims from victimizers, and kitschy commercial strategy from ingenious artistic innovation." [104] Most avant-gardists of the 1980s who initiated the language experiment of contemporary Chinese literature could not find their place. Some of them felt desperate and re-evaluated their previous writing experience. Ge Fei, one of the avant-gardists, stated, "The practice of modernism, with its interest centering on ideas and concepts, has inevitably hurt some other essential virtues of the novel,

[104] Kong, Consuming Literature : Best Sellers and the Commercialization of Literary Production in Contemporary China 119.

and limited the potential of Chinese writers."[105] Ma Yuan, who wrote elliptical, often other-worldly tales of Tibet, agrees: "[Modernist works] fail to provide the joy of reading … A great novel must first be attractive."[106] It should also be marketable in these days, a time when, according to Yu Hua, "the popularity machinery has become more and more unpredictable in modern society, where the market interferes more powerfully than ever."[107] Readers want to be entertained more than they want to be educated or uplifted, and their desires are being met by writers and publishers throughout the country.[108] Hence, in order to entertain his readers and meet with the market requirement, Yu Hua offered his black comedy work, *Brothers*.

4.2 Present and past

This novel tells the personal history of the two protagonists, a pair of stepbrothers, in chronological order. It is divided into two parts: Volume One and Volume Two. The first volume of the story takes place during the "Cultural Revolution," which, according to Yu Hua, is characterized by "craze, oppression and tragedy." It deals with the tribulations of the two brothers' childhoods and adolescences in the midst of the "Cultural Revolution" (1966-1976). The book focuses on the special bond between Li Guangtou and his stepbrother, Song Gang. The story starts with the audacious Li earning the admiration of his fellow

[105] Fei Ge, "Avant-Garde Writers Take a Step Back," China Daily Dec.18 2002
[106] Ge, "Avant-Garde Writers Take a Step Back."
[107] Ge, "Avant-Garde Writers Take a Step Back."
[108] Please see Howard Goldblatt, "Fictional China," China's Transformations : The Stories Beyond the Headlines eds. Lionel M. Jensen and Timothy B. Weston (Lanham, MD Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

teenagers when he is caught spying on the most beautiful woman in town as she is using a latrine. He was following in the footsteps of his peeping-tom father, who met an untimely end when he fell into the same cesspool and drowned. His mother lived in a humiliated way for nearly six years. Then she meets Song Fanping (Song Gang's father) and falls in love with him. These two lovers and their sons form a new family. The new family enjoys a happy life for a while; the two boys become real brothers and the husband is a powerful, strong, and friendly guy to his wife and sons. However, during the Cultural Revolution, the family could not escape the tragic class struggles. This part of the novel ends with the two boys' father being beaten to death by a mob, leaving them orphans. Their relationship grows even stronger as the father faces political troubles and is hounded to death, followed by the mother dying from an illness in the ensuing years.

Volume Two occurs in the Reform Era, with "distorted morality, lust and fickleness." When the economic reforms of the 1980s take hold, the two young men are caught up in China's accelerating pursuit of wealth. They take opposite standpoints in their way of making money: one is full of risk and ambivalence, and the other is relatively conservative and safe. Li becomes a director of Liu Town's Good Works Factory which has fifteen members. (In this factory, most of the staff are handicapped.) Besides Li, there are two cripples, three idiots, four blind men and five deaf men. Li obtains some contracts from Shanghai and makes the factory become one of best factories in the town. Later he makes millions by peddling used Japanese suits. However, all of these successes could not compensate for his jealousy of Song, who married Li's lover. At the end of the

story, Li becomes a black comedy hero; he constantly seeks public attention by performing tricks, such as arranging a national virgin beauty competition.

Song's tale is very different. Shy, dignified and upright, Song Gang holds his job in a state-owned factory, assuming it will be stable forever. Actually, at the beginning of his career life, he is relatively successful. He has a stable job and happy family, and his wife is the most gorgeous girl in the town. However, everything changes when capitalism and marketing penetrated every corridor of Chinese society. He struggles with life like millions of other laid-off workers. As a result of mass lay-offs, he loses his job, his wife, his health, and confidence. Out of desperation, he enlarges his breasts to become a seller of breast-enhancement products. Unfortunately, Song becomes a loser and refuses to return to his town. Most importantly, in the face of any obstacles, these two brothers try to help each other. While their different personalities determine their different lives in the contemporary society, one is wealthy and the other poor, this distinction of status does not damage their friendship.

Unlike *To Live*, which tells a past story of China, *Brothers* is a story about contemporary society; most similar scenarios could be found on Internet, newspapers or TV programs. Yu Hua, himself, was highly proud of his ability to write current issues. He proudly announces that "*Brothers*, my latest work, would probably be my truly favorite work because I have discovered my unknown writing genius during the writing." What is the "unknown writing genius" that Yu Hua has spoken of? He explains the specific characteristics of *Brothers* as follows. "Best novels usually depict past events because they are much easier to handle after being discussed widely and having largely reached a consensus. As to those

things still on the way, they remain an unclear picture to people, so it is a much harder task to deal with. I dared not to have a think of it in my past writing experience. But one day when I was writing the second part of *Brothers*, I found that I have the courage and skills to tackle the life of the contemporary China, what an excitement to me!" Yu said with joy. "Though in difficulty, it is worth trying."[109]

However, most of Yu Hua's avant-garde literary works and realist novellas focud on contemporary Chinese issues. How does he discover this "new genius"? In my point of view, it is not the content of the novel but the standpoint of his writing that becomes surrealistic. The story begins with a "science fiction" scenario of Li Guangtou, now 45 years old and one of China's post-revolutionary super-rich. "He was thinking about spending $20 million on a seat on the Russian Space Shuttle Soyuz for a trip to outer space," Yu Hua writes. "Sitting on his famous gilded restroom, Li closes his eyes and envisions how he would float along in orbit, surrounded by an abysmal silence. Witnessing how the great earth slowly turned around, he couldn't help feeling sad and tears rolled out of his eyes. Then he realizes that he does not have a single relative on the earth." As a guy, he is successful in economics; he can obtain any commodities he wants. However, this millionaire does not have any ambition for making more money. Deprived of almost all his relatives, Li Guangtou feels lonely and aimless. There is one similar scene that reappears at the end of the novel. According to the repetition of the "imagined" scenarios, Yu Hua tells the story not from the "current" standpoint,

[109] "Author Yu Hua Says *Brothers* Is My Best Book," People's Daily Online---http://english.people.com.cn/ July 20, 2006.

but from the "future" perspective. In other words, after several decades, people of future generations will find that the madness everyone associates with the Cultural Revolution can also be seen in the period of economic growth. He explains that, "During the Cultural Revolution we lived in a closed society and everything was crazy; everything was black and white, and if you were on the wrong side, you were dead." He continues, "But pursuing economic growth is also crazy. Every evil has come out. Chinese society has found emptiness. After people get money, they don't know what to do." China, moving from the Cultural Revolution to the present economic upheaval, has simply gone from one extreme to another. This point of view absolutely determines his depiction of the Cultural Revolution and Market Economy society. As Yu Hua himself has put it, the novel is the narration of the conflict of two eras. The "Cultural Revolution" is an era of "mania, instinct-inhibition and miserable fate." Today, all the former ethics have been overthrown; people are fickle and indulge themselves in myriad sensual pleasures. Yu Hua holds a contradictory attitude towards current Market Economy Reform. On the one hand, he has to follow the market requirement and entertain his readers. On the other hand, he understands the absurdity of the money-oriented writing. Yu has to compromise his literary principles with the market by writing popular novels embedded with his idea about contemporary China. Yu Hua produces a fictional world with "money-dominance," and believes that everything does not change significantly from the society dominated by politics. As a writer, he frustratingly could not subvert the "political totalitarianism" of the socialist period. He seems still powerless in the face of marketing power.

4.3 Two types of male ideals

It is very hard to find an absolute "good" male model in *Brothers*. What men should do is an uncertain and contradictory issue in this novel. There are two types of men who deserve people's admiration and respect in these two volumes. In Volume One there is Song Fanping, the step-father of those brothers, in Volume Two there is Li Guangtou. These two male characters represent two different moral systems and hence symbolize different kinds of virtues. By reading these two volumes, we could conceive the social requirements for different men and masculinity in the transformation of contemporary Chinese society.

Song Fanping is the person who helps Li Guangtou's mother, Li Lan, end her life of humiliation and brings happiness to their family. He is thus depicted as a moral idol in Volume One of *Brothers*. Li Guangtou's biological father dies while peeping at women's butts in the latrine. Song Gang carries his corpse outside the latrine and makes it clean. He does not care about other persons' comments and scorn. This action makes Li Lan and Song Fanping know each other and gradually become friends. After his wife dies of illness, Song Fanping spends some time with Li Lan and takes care of this poor woman carefully. Finally, they fall in love with each other and get married. In their new family, he becomes the most powerful supporter of his wife and their two sons. He will give Li Lan a huge hug on the ground after he succeeds in a dunk shot. He likes to introduce his new wife to others when they are strolling in the town. When Li Lan gets a headache, Song Fanping will take care of her during the whole night. With Song's careful protection and encouragement, Li Lan gets rid of the humiliation left by her first husband. At the same time, these two step-brothers, Li Guangtou

and Song Gang, become best friends and want to become like their father. The whole family is full of confidence for their assumed splendid future.

During the Cultural Revolution, Song Fanping is persecuted by the Red Guards and one of his arms is fractured as a result of their bullying. However, he is always brave and optimistic. For instance, he keeps on writing letters to Li Lan and encourages her to continue her medical treatment in Shanghai. Furthermore, he actually teaches his two sons how to make food and protect themselves. Song Fanping is a hero with somr of traditional male virtues. He tries his best to protect his family members and diminish any physical or psychological attacks from outside. Unfortunately, such a traditional "morally ideal man" still could not survive during the Cultural Revolution. Song Fanping dies abruptly at the hands of Red Guards.

In Volume Two, Li Guangtou is depicted as a perfect example of a successful man in the Market Economy Reform era. He is a low-brow boy at the beginning of the story. He looks at women's butts in his teenage years. When he grows up, he enjoys taking advantage of any risks and attempts to grasp all the opportunities to make his fortune. In fact, the first huge amount of his money is obtained by selling second-hand suits from Japan. The residents of Liu Town are absolutely lured by these suits and almost every man wants to get one. His customers do not care where these second-hand clothes come from, or whether they are clean and legal for selling. They just find that all these suits are cheaper in price and better in quality than Chinese suits. Soon after that, Li Guangtou becomes a successful director of the Good Works Factory and signifies the "GDP" of Liu Town; almost all the government officials become his friends. When he is

not satisfied with money and outstanding social status, he begins to enjoy the sexuality of women by having intercourse with hundreds of women. The more money he accumulates, the more unimaginable experience he looks for.

However, people do not think his deeds are immoral or unacceptable. On the contrary, they believe that Li Guangtou is powerful and smart. Both the local government officials and most of his peers in the Liu Town want to be friends of Li Guangtou and benefit from his fortunes. Li's control of many factories, ability to help people find jobs, way of acquiring wealth, and attitude towards women, all become part of his notorious achievement. Furthermore, the only two so-called intellectuals of the small town, Writer Liu and Poet Zhao, become his fellows immediately. They give up their literary interest and demonstrate their huge passion for money. Both of them are willing to do anything for Li Guangtou, and are highly proud of their positions as representatives of the wealthy ego in the town.

In a moral spectrum, Song Fanping embodies a traditional male model with laudable moral virtues; Li Guangtou is a contemporary male model connected with money at another extreme. The transition of ideal men signifies the situation of current Chinese society. By the late twentieth century, money had become synonymous with power in China, and the person owning fortune could dominate others at will. In such a money-dictated society, both the traditional Confucian morals demeaning merchants and modern socialist values condemning capitalists have been largely undermined. Common Chinese begin to openly flaunt their wealth without concern about appearing unethical. Both men and women become willing to openly state that the reason they worked so hard is for

financial gain. Although Yu Hua does not want to produce a parvenu who is only concerned with money, he gives many virtues to Li Guangtou and makes the rich man look helpful and responsible. However, these virtues become relatively weak and people have to resort money to assess the virtues of Li Guangtou. In the author's mind, traditional ethics, such as honesty and fidelity are still important, but they must be built on the economic foundation. Without money, they are powerless. And vice versa, a financially successful man could possibly become well-behaved individual. No matter the way in which an individual becomes wealthy, if he can use the money for the local's GDP, he becomes a big ego and deserves respect.

4.4 The fragile scholar

If Li Guangtou is one kind of man exemplifying an "updated male model" in contemporary China correlated with money-related power, Song Gang, on the contrary, is an exemplary "loser." Different from the other young people of Liu Town, Song Gang is an example of a "cultivated man" because he likes reading and writing. His language and actions represent his educated personality. He prefers to solve problems by communication rather than martial power. However, this kind of cultivated person could not survive at the end of the story.

At the beginning of the second volume, Song Gang appears as an attractive young man. The portrait of Song Gang's body is mainly through the residents' eyes. In terms of Song Gang's appearance; he is now as tall as his father

had been, though not as well built. Instead, he is pale and lean.[110] (这时的宋钢已经和他父亲一样高的个子，只是没有宋凡平魁梧，宋钢清瘦白皙.) [111] People in the town often compare Song Gang with his step brother, Li Guangtou: "Song Gang is tall and slim, has a handsome face, and now looks quite scholarly with his dark-rimmed glasses. Li Guangtou, on the other hand, is short and squat and, even in his Sun-Yat-Sen suit, still looks like a bandit. The brothers are inseparables as they stroll down the streets of Liu. The town elders gesture to them, saying that one looks like a civil official and the other a military official." [112](宋钢身材挺拔，面容英俊，像个学者那样戴着黑边眼镜；李光头身材粗短， 虽然穿着中山装， 可是满脸的土匪模样。 这两个人总是形影不离地走在我们刘镇的大街上，刘镇的老人伸手指着他们说：一个文官，一个武官。)[113] Actually, Song Gang likes reading literary works and has already written one fictional work. This depiction conjures up an image of a scholar with refined features and modest demeanor, who exemplifies the somewhat traditional cultivated scholar. Although the unusual political and economic conditions have transformed the *wen-wu* ideals in contemporary Chinese culture, there still exists the historical heritage of *wen-wu* paradigm. Song Gang's image could be a metamorphosis of classic *caizi* who has inherent relation with traditional talented scholars, such as Zhang Sheng in Tang Dynasty. Louie also points out that "the self-identity of the *caizi* and the *zhishifenzi* (the modern intellectual) do have basic similarities that overweigh the

[110] The translation is from Hua Yu, Eileen Cheng-yin Chow and Carlos Rojas, Brothers, Xiong Di. English (New York: Pantheon Books, 2009) 215. I made some adjustments.
[111] Hua Yu, *Xiong Di* (Brothers), vol. One (Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi Chubanshe, 2005) 4.
[112] Yu, Chow and Rojas, Brothers 220. With some adjustments.
[113] Yu, Xiong Di (Brothers) 8.

impacted of changed social or political positions."[114]

His personality is also connected with the "traditional scholar" who is characterized by a strong feeling of anxiety. When Song Gang conceives that both he and Li Guangtou have fallen in love with Lin Hong at the same time, he struggles with the situation. While he and Lin Hong love each other, he could not betray his brother. After he rejects Lin Hong's love, he realizes that his action has broken the heart of the pretty girl. To evade the complex triangle, he attempts to commit suicide. This suicide attempt does not damage his image in Lin Hong's mind; on the contrary, the girl believes that he is a serious lover and will be loyal to their relationship in the future. Song Gang, whose frankness, handsome-looks and friendliness have won him the admiration of many pretty girls in the town, becomes the winner of the love competition. So far Song Gang is depicted as an attractive "scholar," who likes reading literature, is good at handwriting and does everything in an educated manner. His image of pale body and fragile personality is explained in China as a relatively higher level of masculinity and is connected with culture, especially in traditional Chinese literary representation. There are lots of male icons of this group of masculinity, such as Zhang Sheng[115] and Jia Baoyu[116]. Nevertheless, Song Gang is a popular person among the girls of Liu Town and Lin Hong believes that he will be a successful man and good husband.

However, all these physical and psychological virtues become shortcomings when the Chinese society switched to a marketing-oriented era.

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[114] Kam Louie, "Theorising Chinese Masculinity : Society and Gender in China " (2002): 68.
[115] Zhang Sheng is the male protagonist in *Huizhen Ji* (Story of an encounter with an immortal), Yuan Zhen, Tang dynasty.
[116] Jia Baoyu is the male protagonist in *Honglou Meng* (Story of Dream of the Red Mansions), Cao Xueqin, Qing dynasty.

When Song Gang is laid-off by the state-owned factory, he takes a long time to hunt for a new position. On the one hand, he could not do labor work. He once worked as a mover, but the tough job harmed his health so significantly that his backbone has been broken and he cannot do hard work again. After that, he tries some temporary jobs such as selling flowers, film tickets, bus tickets, and so on. Unfortunately, he is not a good sales person, especially in front of his acquaintances. The failure of his career also influences his family life. In his family, he looks like as an effeminized man. He feels embarrassed to submit all his income to Lin Hong. Since this money is so limited, Lin Hong even refuses to accept it. During the cycles of hunting for jobs and losing jobs, Song Gang's confidence becomes much weaker. After his lungs have been permanently damaged，he even refuses to sleep with Lin Hong. Clearly, he could not find his place as a reliable husband.

The final attack for this "fragile scholar" is that people doubt his gender identity. In order to make more money, Song Gang begins to advertise himself for the "breast-enlargement cream." Persuaded by his sales partner, Song accepts the breast enlargement surgery. In Hainan Island, he has to stand on the street and show off his huge "artificial" breasts to demonstrate the magic function of the product. Men and women customers circle around him, touch his "filled" breasts, and discuss Song Gang's gender and his huge breasts enthusiastically. Song feels extremely humiliated and angry, however, the only thing he can do is tolerate it. Song Gang has to open his clothes on the street and display his breasts when his partner introduces the products to their customers. This sale trick significantly

impairs his male confidence and even gender identity. In this scenario, Song Gang's body becomes the object of customers' gazes; all his value depends on the "female organ": breasts. He is thus depicted as a humiliated woman. After the first day's demonstration, Song Gang thinks he will be driven crazy and feels that he has become a girl being raped. It is even more tragic several days later, when their business becomes more and more successful, and Song Gang's humiliated feeling has disappeared gradually; he is used to this new situation and wants to make more money.

In summary, Song Gang intends to perform as a guy to earn enough money to live with his wife. However, in order to survive as a man, he has to perform like a woman. In most occasions, men's bodies are invisible. While women have been associated with sexuality and the body, men have been linked with the mind, culture, and reasoning. As Judith Butler insightfully points out, in patriarchal discourse "the universal person and the masculine gender are conflated, thereby defining women in terms of their sex and extolling men as the bearers of a body-transparent personhood."[117] In other words, demonstrating one's body could be regarded as an act of femininity, whereas writing and thinking is more connected with masculinity. However, in Song Gang's case, he could not find any way to perform in a masculine way. The former virtues that make Song Gang an attractive man, such as reading and cultivated talking, have been discarded by the society; he has to find a new approach to survive. However, Song Gang does not want to be a woman, nor has he any intention of being a gay. On the contrary, the

[117] Judith Butler, Gender Trouble : Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York Routledge, 1990) 9.

only thing he wants is to be a successful man. Society, however, makes the performance of manhood so tough that the only choice for him is to just play as a woman. As Judith Butler's argument on gender, it is a free-floating and fluid rather than fixed concept. Butler concludes that our gender is not a core aspect of our identity but our performance: how we behave at different times. Our gender (masculinity and femininity) is an achievement rather than a biological symbol. "When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one."[118]

In his avant-garde period, Yu Hua depicts the image of "fragile scholars" (Liu in *Classical Love*) as the symbol of masculinity; although they are not really strong in body and personality, they could attract beautiful women and control women's lives. This power is connected with prosperous education and signifies the writer's own confidence about the power of cultivation. However, in *Brothers*, the "fragile scholar" with similar characteristics as his classical predecessors, experiences failure both in career and in sexuality. This ironic situation of the "fragile scholar" embodies the self-mockery of the author. When the society does not need political propaganda or ideological exploration and money has become one of the most important criteria to judge art works, writers have to give up this aesthetic exploration and write for money. It signifies that Yu Hua feels anxious about the power of economic reform and his way of literary exploration. In brief,

[118] Judith Butler, Gender Trouble : Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York: Routledge, 1999) 10.

the prevailing forces of industrialization and consumerism have pushed cultural artifacts into the marketplace as commodities. Scholars and writers, therefore, have to satisfy consumers instead of themselves.

4.5 Women and commodities

In the second chapter, I found that women are depicted as silent commodities or even a "piece of meat" in Yu Hua's avant-garde works. Their values are determined by the exchange of goods between men. Until the twenty-first century, with the introduction of Western ideas about sex and sexuality into China, women demonstrated open-minded attitudes towards their bodies and men's "controlling." In *Brothers*, women's bodies, such as butts, hymen, and breasts, could be so frequently read that some readers even criticized Yu Hua for possibly wanting to broadcast dirty and erotic content. Actually, the representation of body and organs just demonstrates the transition of social attitudes about sex, ethics and money. At the beginning of Volume One of *Brothers*, there are several chapters depicting the "butts", such that Li Guangtou is caught in the public restroom when he is looking at them. The process of being "peered at" is an extremely shameful thing for the ladies in the restroom. Around the 1980s, butts were a private part of any person, especially for women. It is very shameful for a woman to be looked at by another guy except for her husband.

Twenty years later, it is very easy to see women's bare butts. Anybody can find them on TV, in film, advertisements, or posters. Women find that the hymen has become the most powerful body part for making money. When Li Guangtuo

becomes a millionaire in the town, he holds a "National Virgin Beauty Competition". Any girl who announces that she is a virgin could attend this competition and obtain a huge amount of money as the winner. According to this rule, whether a girl is a virgin or not becomes a pivotal point. In order to become the winner, many girls who are not virgins attempt to veil their situation; some of them have surgery at hospitals, and some of them buy artificial hymens to "fabricate" virginity. Even more sarcastically, in order to obtain special support from the committee members of the competition, some "virgins" would like to sleep with the committee members before the final voting. The competition process becomes a cycle where a girl buys one artificial hymen to "become a virgin", sleeps with one committee member to gain support, then gets another artificial hymen and seduces another committee member. The final three winners of the competition are all the girls with "artificial hymens" who slept with committee members or Li Guangtou, the sponsor.

As a traditional preference in Chinese society, Chinese people always emphasize the importance of female virginity. A lady will be diminished to a much lower level in the marriage market once she is suspected not to be a virgin. However, in this "beauty competition", we could perceive that, although men still dominate the evaluation of the women, more and more women have manipulated themselves to survive in the masculine world. They have their bodies changed via surgery and adapt themselves according to some patriarchic critiques. "Hymen" is not a symbol of women's virginity but a lever to control their male partners. The women participating in the so-called "Virgin Beauty Competition" seem to not be deferred by shyness or shame; on the contrary, they boast about their ways of

making money. They are represented as sexualized bodied hunger for economic gain, hence exploitable and prone to the sexual conquest of wealthy men. Women's growing access to male realms of society makes them prefer to stay with men of economic power. Furthermore, women shockingly enter the male domain via body exchange and unintentionally expose the immorality of the men. These women – in contrast to those who are only victims and dupes – are remarkable for their capability to perform exaggeratedly in their own interest. Their behavior is thus taken for granted and understood as a necessary constituent of progress in current commercialized Chinese society.

In *Brothers*, we could find three kinds of men: a perfect husband/father, a successful businessman and a failed scholar. However, it seems that none of them could enjoy their lives in current Chinese society. They either die in the political turbulence or disappear in the economic swirl. Even the most financially successful man could not obtain psychological satisfaction. Thus Yu Hua could not generate a perfect "male icon" for his readers. And more and more women with insatiable appetites and desires attempt to take a risk to exchange their bodies for money, social status or both. By describing these characters, the author displays his own social and psychological anxieties and concerns. Chinese men, especially male intellectuals, have to demonstrate their value through the capability of making money. They have to face the huge power of economics, which has its own way of running. Therefore, Chinese masculinity traditionally connected with culture, family responsibility, and social duty seems in crisis.

Chinese postmodernity is different than Western postmodernity which

asserts the idea that "modernity is over". "In contemporary China, there is an 'uneven modernity,' or a hybridization of different cultural traditions, which includes the legacy of traditional Chinese culture (Taoism, Buddhism, and most significantly Confucianism), modern Western thought (centered on science, democracy, and humanism), Chinese Marxism, and newly introduced postmodernism. These cultural formations sometimes overlap and interpenetrate."[119] In current China, whether male intellectuals have the capability to making money is regarded as their masculine power. This "new ideal male image" is completely different from traditional talented and responsible Chinese men. Right now, most male and female writers produce literary works for their amusement or economic benefits rather than social/political responsibility.

[119] Sheldon H. Lu, China, Transnational Visuality, Global Postmodernity (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001) 35.

Chapter Five Conclusion

In general, the female characters in most of Yu Hua's literary works are represented relatively simple. Most women in his works are depicted as traditional Chinese female images, focusing on family life and physical sexuality. Their attractive power is demonstrated through the body, as in the instance of Hui in *Classical Love*. Therefore, they have intelligence and bravery only when they are working for the family, just as Jiazhen is in *To Live*. Although in *Brothers* Lin Hong, the master of a "modern brothel," embodied the successful business women in current China, she does not escape the life of being controlled by her male partner. Few of those women have clear desires and identifications in those various stories because of the fact that Yu Hua was self-admittedly neither familiar with women nor good at illustrating them.

When skimming Yu Hua's journals and essays about literature, it is not difficult to find that Western or international literature shapes his writing style more than traditional Chinese literature, as shown in a list of ten important literary works that significantly influenced his writing. Only one work was written by Lu Xun (the most well-known writer in modern Chinese literature); the other nine stories were written by foreign writers[120]. From Yu Hua's essays about reading

[120] In August 1999 the New World Publish (Xin Shijie Chubbanshe) published a book series called "Ten books Influence Me Most". The publisher invited some popular writers such as Su Tong, Mo Yan and Yu Hua to select ten favorite short stories from their reading and explain why they made those choices. In Yu Hua's book list, the ten short stories are as follows: *The Fish Can Sing* [Iceland] Halldór Kiljan Laxness ,Winner of the 1955 Nobel Prize in Literature. *In the Penal Colony* [Austria-Hungary] Franz Kafka. *The Dancing Girl of Izu* [Japan] Yasunari Kawabata , Winner of the 1968 Nobel Prize in Literature. *The South* [Argentina] Jorge Luis Borges. *Gimpel the Fool* [United States] Isaac Bashevis Singer. *Kong Yiji* [China] Lu Xun. *Tuesday Siesta*

and literature, I recognize the names of world-class famous writers. Although Yu Hua's literary technologies, narratives, or cultural understanding were to some extent affected by those Western writers, we could hardly notice his gender understanding/representation was influenced by them. It therefore seems plausible that Yu's ideology about men and manhood was rarely influenced by modern (Western) gender discussion, for instance, as regard to social inequalities in education and jobs. Actually, according to the above arguments, the representation of masculinity in his writing acted as a mirror of male status in current Chinese context. To use a female Chinese writer's words to tentatively summarize, "the Chinese male subject… is over-determined by a revolutionary consciousness, a nationalistic feeling and duty, and a responsibility for explaining and discrediting the past." [121] In other words, Chinese masculinity, especially that of male intellectuals, is connected with writing and the way in which they could influence the society by writing.

When Chinese society switched from "high modernism" to "postmodernism", male intellectuals could not play the role of speakers and mentors of the mass. They had to tackle the huge impact of globalization and commercialization brought to the Chinese society by the Western world. This phenomenon reminds me of one question provided by Zhong Xueping in her profound argument of besieged masculinity in modern China. She said, "…in this post-New Era (*hou xin shi qi*) there is an increasingly discernible tendency toward

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[Colombia] Gabriel García Márquez, Winner of the 1982 Nobel Prize in Literature. *The Third Bank* of the *River* [Brazil] João Guimarães Rosa. *The Open Boat* [United States] Stephen Crane. *Birds* [Poland] Bruno Schulz.

[121] Wendy Larson, "Women and the Discourse of Desire in Postrevolutionary China: The Awkward Postmodernism of Chen Ran," Postmodernism & China, eds. Arif Dirlik and Xudong Zhang (Durham [N.C.] ; London: Duke University Press, 2000) 355.

decadence, accompanied especially by the reinvented *wenren* (literary men) image, …One must ask: Is the post-New Era the beginning of a postintellectual era as well?"[122] I am not quite sure of her definition for "postintellectual era:" does it mean "anti-intellectual era" or "de-intellectual era"? Here, I attempt to interpret and answer her question according to my understanding of Foucault's arguments. As an influential philosopher of contemporary times, Foucault put many issues in the frameworks of power and knowledge. Since the Second World War, science and technology penetrated almost every aspect of people's lives, so that more intellectuals switched their attention from abstract topics to daily issues. Their positions, specificities, and political problems were drastically different from their older counterparts. Knowledge was no longer a cultured power controlled exclusively by a small group of intellectuals or elitists, and common people could explore, interpret and represent a variety of topics in their own ways. Chinese humanistic intellectuals were experiencing the same historic transition, as Foucault described, from the "universal intellectual" to the "specific intellectual" that took place in the West after World War II. As Foucault stated, the universal intellectual "spoke and was acknowledged the right of speaking in the capacity of master of truth and justice. He was heard, or purported to make himself heard, as the spokesman of the universal. To be an intellectual meant something like being the consciousness/conscience of us all."[123] "Specific intellectuals" were, on the other hand, savants of particular branches of knowledge and local truth, rather

[122] Xueping Zhong, Masculinity Besieged? : Issues of Modernity and Male Subjectivity in Chinese Literature of the Late Twentieth Century, Issues of Modernity and Male Subjectivity in Chinese Literature of the Late Twentieth Century (Durham [N.C.] ; London: Duke University Press, 2000).
[123] Michel Foucault and Colin Gordon, Power/Knowledge : Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977 (New York, N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 1980) 126.

than spokesmen of universal truth. [124]

According to Foucault's argument on the transition of intellectuals, I believe that post-New Era in China was not the beginning of a "postintellectual era" as Zhong named it, but a period in which intellectuals had a more definite perspective and identification of their status and function. Now Chinese writers and critics play the roles as specific intellectuals rather than universal intellectuals. The Tiananmen Incident suddenly pushed those intellectuals who believed themselves modernists in the 1980s to the underground. For most post-New Era theorists in China, the enlightenment and democracy pursued by 1980s modernists seemed as a "westernized" myth that did not deserve further attention. Western theories have since been adopted as "science" rather than any kind of ideology in current China because intellectuals can only play the role of specialist rather than a general intellectual on the subject.[125]

In twentieth-first century China, Yu Hua has become a so-called "model" writer who obtained both literary achievement and financial success through his writing. Since 2004, Yu has become a "contracted writer" with *Shanghai Wenyi Chubanshe* (Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House). The publisher has put a great deal of attention on promoting Yu Hua and his latest work, *Brothers*. Yu and the publisher cooperated smoothly in advertising and selling B*rothers*. To catch the Shanghai Books Exhibition, the novella was published separately as two volumes: Volume One was (harshly) published in August 2005, and several

[124] Sheldon H. Lu, China, Transnational Visuality, Global Postmodernity (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001) 37.
[125] In this essay, the author makes a comprehensive examination of the frustration of 1980s modernists. Please see Ben Xu, "Postmodern-Postcolonial Criticism and Pro-Democracy Enlightenment," Modern China 27.1 (2001).

months later Volume Two was published in 2006. On April 12th, 2006, Yu attended an interview held by Reading Channel of *Xinlang Wang* (www. sina.com.cn), one of the most important business websites in Mainland China. The same year, he also gave a lecture at the "Series Presentation of Famous Writers" in the Hong Kong Book Exhibition.[126] Almost all above activities were intended to market his novel in a slightly commercial fashion. As a encouraging result of all these advertising endeavors, approximately one million copies of *Brothers* was claimed to be sold[127] and thus became a bestseller in 2006. Yu himself understood the limited power of literature which had formerly been assumed to have some connection with ideological or political subversion. In post-new era, all he can do is get more readers and try to maintain his role as a "contracted" writer. Not only judged by others, Yu was also a chief judge of an Internet Literature Competition held in China.[128] He played a role of literary expert who both guided other unestablished writers and helped young amateurs working on new media such as Internet. Instead of being a marginal, avant-garde or subversive writer who keeps some distance with mainstream literature, he has become a big part of the mainstream, and a professional novelist.

On the other hand, when most Chinese intellectuals, especially writers and critics, switched from universal intellectuals to specific intellectuals, the logic of cultural imagination and representation was therefore evolved. One of the

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[126] Yu Hua's interview with "Sina.com" and lecture in Hong Kong please see, Lijuan 马丽娟 Ma, ""Yu Hua Xianxiang Guankui" 余华现象管窥 (a Restricted View On "Yu Hua Phenomena")," Journal of Shaoguan University. Social Science 29.11 (2008): 80.

[127] Ma, ""Yu Hua Xianxiang Guankui" 余华现象管窥 (a Restricted View On "Yu Hua Phenomena")."

[128] Linzheng 徐林正 Xu, Xianfeng Yu Hua 先锋余华 （Avant-Garde Yu Hua） (Hang Zhou: Zhejiang Literature and Art Publishing House, 2003.2) 119.

important postmodernism theorists in Mainland China, Zhang Yiwu, characterized the new literary phenomenon as a "post-allegorical" mode of writing. The concept of "post-allegorical" is based on Frederic Jameson's argument on "third-world literature." Jameson announces that "third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic, necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society."[129] Zhang criticizes "the kind of 'Third World' cultural strategy that seeks to incorporate the global symbolic order by creatively identifying China with the 'Other'."[130] He claims that one characteristic of modern allegorical writing is that "the 'author' as an intellectual is a spokesperson of enlightenment and seeks to establish a subjectivity for the large collective." [131] And, "Even in the mid-1980s, the so-called 'Cultural Fever' (*wenhua re*) … were only manifestations of the allegory in a different set of circumstances."[132] In other words, during the period of Chinese high modernism, most intellectuals believed that they could work as an accelerator of Chinese modernity and bring modern Western ideology to China. However, in the 1990s, writers had to adjust themselves to the unprecedented power of commercialization. Zhang Yiwu therefore announced that the post-allegorical writing did not restrict China to the "other" place of the Western: "the role of the author is not necessarily

[129] Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," Social Text.15 (1986).
[130] Please see Xudong Zhang, Postsocialism and Cultural Politics : China in the Last Decade of the Twentieth Century, China in the Last Decade of the Twentieth Century (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).
[131] Lu, China, Transnational Visuality, Global Postmodernity 241.
[132] Sheldon H. Lu, China, Transnational Visuality, Global Postmodernity (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001) 241.

the focal point, and his or her role is continuously changing, crossing different types of cultural and linguistic barriers to create a satire of the allegory."[133] Summarily, when writers write allegorical works, they believe they have the duty and power to change the nation. Although the West appeared as a perfect model to mimic and follow, upon China entering into postmodernity, the third world was not just a follower of the first world but one indispensible part of the world market in globalization.

How shall we evaluate the evolution of the roles and images of intellectuals while they lose their "enlightenment" aura and shift from the so-called "national allegorical" to "post-allegorical" writing? Are these changes referring to social and aesthetic development or decadence? Those questions definitely deserve deeper investigation. Personally, I prefer to be optimistic about the above changes. While it is true that in the face of commercialism most writers had to trade aesthetic value for economic profit, at least the new situation provided more options for writers: they could demonstrate their talent for entertainment, for communication or for financial reasons rather than only for propaganda/anti-propaganda. Internet, on the other hand, has provided many opportunities for "silent" or "marginal" people to be heard or seen. Hence, literature, now more accessible and affordable, is no longer a game only to be played by a few cultural elitists. Furthermore, most Chinese literary works are now concerned more with common people and their daily life in China rather than with elitists' fantasies. [Note: I do not intend to underestimate the importance of

[133] Yiwu Zhang, "Postmodernism and Chinese Novels of the Nineties " trans. Michael Berry, Postmodernism & China, eds. Arif Dirlik and Xudong Zhang (Durham [N.C.] ; London: Duke University Press, 2000).

writers' literary imaginations]. "To this extent the "post" in Chinese postmodernism refers not so much to a sense that something is over but that something is finally ready to begin, along with the concomitant breakup of all kinds of rigid epistemological paradigms, aesthetic canons, historical periodizations, geographical hierarchies, and institutional reifications."[134] In the process of evolving from high modernism to postmodernism in Chinese society, both male and female intellectuals felt pressure and anxiety to adjust to new cultural situations though they might have different feelings. In other words, female intellectuals who were traditionally placed in the oppressed position might have more power or freedom to express their ideas; male intellectuals generally regarded themselves as modernists or social accelerators might have to face the fact that they lost their "gender-related" power. Therefore, male characters in Yu Hua's later works are depicted as multidimensional and diverse compared with those in his early avant-garde works. In fact, some of them become frustrated or even effeminized, possibly indicating the anxieties and crisis of male writers in current China.

Since it is quite difficult, if not impossible, to explore every aspect of Yu Hua and the contemporary cultural phenomena related to him in this thesis, I would like to mention here some issues that interested me that also deserve further scrutiny. From my personal view, it is not extremely awkward to face the era when male writers had to produce and sell their works partially based upon readers' requirements in order to maintain or obtain their power from

[134] Xudong Zhang, "Epilogue: Postmodernism and Postsocialist Society -- Historicizing the Present," Postmodernism & China, eds. Arif Dirlik and Xudong Zhang (Durham [N.C.] ; London: Duke University Press, 2000) 399.

marketization and globalization. But how shall male intellectuals evaluate the role-change of them, who have played the roles of mentor and liberator for the common Chinese for thousands of years? If Chinese masculinity is partially demonstrated by the way in which male intellectuals could affect the society through their pens, how could they rebuild or reformulate their masculinity in this new situation?

Furthermore, the decline of masculinity in recent male writers' works has actually gained lots of attention. Some scholars even claimed that TV series from South Korea and Japan have made up a sort of fragile, pale, handsome and wealthy boy as a new ideal of Chinese men. Thus the traditional intelligent, literary-talented gentlemen have lost their sexual appeal for young women in China. The contemporary "crisis" of masculinity was not encountered only in China, though. Even the most generally believed powerful men—Western white men—experienced the same situation. The reasons why first-world white men experienced the gender crisis are the Women's Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Gay Liberation Movement, and so forth in contemporary Western society. In their literary and cinematic works, male characters could not hold their traditional images as breadwinners or Western explorers and felt besieged by various minorities. I wonder whether we could find some inherent similarity or distinction of the "anxious masculinity" between Chinese and Western culture. Finally, modern Chinese intellectuals, who are always struggling between modernity versus tradition, East versus West, conservatism versus radicalism, and modernism versus postmodernism, deserve our further attention.

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