

**CULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND ALTERNATIVE
VALUES:
THE INTERVENTION OF CHINESE WRITERS IN THE
PUBLIC SPHERE**

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by

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Abstract

The present study addresses the intervention of Chinese writers in the formation of public sphere in contemporary China. In 1980s China, the devolution of the state's control has given rise to the autonomization of society. Various social organizations were established in search for different social interests and autonomy. The organizations formed by the Chinese intellectuals, students, workers, and entrepreneurs have expressed their different social interests and demands in the 1989 Democratic Movement. While autonomy as a value is unmistakable in its own right, such autonomous organizations do little to support each other and consolidate in a self-referring civil society. It reflects the insufficient cultivation of democratic culture in China. With the concept of literary public sphere, Habermas emphasizes on the process of cultural communication to identify and transform the common values of the reading public. For a project of democracy, the formation of public sphere is essential to circulate and articulate this democratic vision to the public.

After 1989, Chinese writers have further strengthened their literary revolt against the Chinese communist domination. The role of Chinese writers in this regard, i.e. in the formation of public sphere, is the cultural reproduction of utopian symbols and values reconstitution of an alternative socio-cultural space to counter against the official culture. It is doubtlessly a fundamental step to disseminate the democratic vision to the

reading public. In such a context, three Chinese writers are selected as cases to illustrate their intervention in the formation of the public sphere. They are Wang Shuo, Mo Yan and Jia Pingwa. Based on their novels, we attempt to recontextualize and reconstitute the alternative values of these three writers in particular, and of the Chinese literary public sphere in general.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction - On Literature and Public Sphere

In the modern age, the democratic project is frequently tied in with the notions of civil society and public sphere. The collapse of Soviet Communism in Eastern European countries is characterized by the development of a civil society which provides a realm of social space for the conduct of individual organization and activity outside of state controls. A civil society is again taken as an institutional counterpart to totalitarian control. In this democratic ideal, a civil society also embraces the notion of public sphere. In a civil society, the conflicts of social groups would be settled in the public sphere; based on the criteria of reason and critical inquiry; of competition among ideas rather than on the hierarchy of authority. In this way, the political task of civil society and public sphere is to juxtapose mobilization and organization of social associations on the one hand, the rational conduct of public discussions on the other.

The formation of civil society and public sphere must also promote a democratic culture in society. The project of democracy is not geared only at the institutional-organizational level, but it also cultivates a democratic vision of enhanced autonomy and emancipatory practices in public culture. Thus, the associations of the social group may provide the foundation of the social identity, social integration and social interaction

among their own participants. As a result, diverse voices of the people can be empowered by the democratic associations and unconstrained rational discussion in the public sphere.

Democratization in Contemporary China:

In contemporary China, the economic reforms have encouraged a decentralization of the party-state's control towards the society. Individuals are relatively free to engage in privately owned business from small house-holds to large enterprises. The loosening of vertical control of the party-state has created greater room for negotiatory relations between the state and the community, entrepreneurs and cadres within the collective units.¹ Simultaneously, owing to a change of horizontal controls, individuals have greater mobility in contractual relations.² In addition, the cultural aspect of contemporary China is also relaxed to allow for more foreign contact and influence, and a much wider range of choices in literature, art, music, religion and popular culture.³

The extent of autonomy that Chinese social organizations have gained has led to Western debates about the possible emergence of "civil society" or "public sphere". The outbreak of the 1989 student protest is widely recognized as a struggle for

¹ See White, 1993:202 and Nee, 1989 and 1991.

² Individuals mobility is relatively high in occupation, geography and sector.

³ See Whyte, 1992:88.

people's social rights and interests.⁴ Individuals are self-conscious of their own social freedoms and attempt to seek for their own autonomous space. However, such conditions may not constitute to a formation of public sphere and civil society. Apparently the participants' discussions in the 1989 protest may be more accurately viewed as a "public space", and cannot yet be taken seriously in terms of the self-mobilization of civil society and the rational discourse of public sphere.⁵ Also, the emerged organizations in the 1980s inevitably subordinated to political controls. In liberalized period, individuals are allowed greater scope over some aspects of their lives, such as conducting academic studies, making money, and artistic expression. In more restrictive period, there is the political suppression of Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign in 1983 to 84; the Campaign Against Bourgeois Liberalization in 1987, the Tiananmen Incidence in 1989; as well as the subsequent extensive witch-hunt. As such, the emergence of new social organizations in China cannot self-consciously coordinate the political objectives to confront with the communist state. Therefore, it is better to interpret the 1980s' social condition of self-organized associations as the beginning of an autonomization process of society. This process may be taken as a first step in fostering the formation of public sphere or civil society so that

⁴ Students have voiced for better living environment in university campuses and autonomous space for cultural discussion between the government and people. Workers have also resented the inflation, arbitrary job assignment and poor living standards. They established independent unions such as Capital Workers' United Autonomous Association and joined the demonstrations to support the student movement. Private enterprises in 1989 have expressed economic interests such as demands for more economic rationalization, price reform and an end to official squeeze. See Gold, 1990:139.

⁵ See Kelly and He Baogang, 1992.

individuals have begun to realize the indispensable freedoms of human beings.

Objectives of the Study:

In this process of autonomization, Chinese literary writers have also become alert of the need for autonomous literary creation. In the wake of the Cultural Revolution, most writers became disillusioned with the communist regimes. They attempted to explore a space of "truth" behind the communist ideology, resulting in the building of a momentum of rising expectations that goes beyond the Party's invisible domination.⁶ The cultural self-reflection of the writers are, as a rule, built into novels that encourage the reading public to reflect critically upon the present predicament and the future direction of China. In fact, the writer's role in establishing the socio-cultural foundation for the public sphere cannot be lightly dismissed. Consequently, the principal goal of the present study is to recontextualize the social sentiments or worldviews of Chinese writers that might enhance the formation of public sphere in the current context of China.

The present study will focus on selected novelists, whose writings represent the main current of the contemporary Chinese literary world. By analyzing their representative writings, it may be possible to underline the individual writer's views

⁶ See Leo Lee, 1992.

towards the state and society. In studying these writers, the point is to unravel the intervention of literature or writer in the formation of public sphere. In order to specify more closely the relationship between the public sphere and literature, the following parts will review the concepts of public sphere, and the role of literature and writers in society.

Public Opinion of Political Public Sphere:

In his early notion, Habermas conceptualizes public sphere as "a domain of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be found."⁷ In the public sphere, private individuals exchange information and views on questions of common concern so that public opinion can be conducted. Most importantly, Habermas' concept of public sphere insists on the norms of reasoned discourse in arguments through which general interest among plural parties can be sufficiently generated. This rational approach is probably employed as the base of political action and it avoids any "unresolved plurality of competing interests" in modern democratic society.⁸

Most bourgeois participants in the realm of public sphere recognize a notion of rational-critical discussion. During public discussions, some objective rules should be basically complied with. Firstly, there is an elimination of all privileges. Everyone has a right to voice out, in disregard of

⁷ Habermas 1989a:231

⁸ Habermas 1989:234.

his or her social status. Secondly, it is presupposed the "problematization of areas ... until then had not been questioned" that the discussed issue should be completely settled. The space of problematization of topic is then formed. Thirdly, behavior of "rational orientation" is required. The force of better argument in discussion is particularly emphasized. Fourthly, the topic under discussion is generally accessible so that "everyone had to be able to participate."⁹ Public discussion of public sphere is therefore open to those who are interested in the topics of common concern.

Since the 19th century, the public opinion of public sphere functioned as a criticism against state authority. The principle of publicity was highlighted to guard against any practice of secret politics. "Public opinion is formed, this corresponds with the principle of publicness - the publicness that once had to win out against the secret politics of monarchs and that since then has permitted democratic control of state activity."¹⁰ A sense of political consciousness among the public sphere's participants was developed to fight against absolute sovereignty. Public opinion could be formally expressed in order to regulate state activities.

In its further development, the political task of the public sphere was shifted to the civil task. Participants were consciously concerned with the civil rights of individuals. They

⁹ Habermas 1989:36-37.

¹⁰ Habermas 1989a:232.

demanded legislature for new laws or constitutions to protect individuals.¹¹ In consequence, civil rights of citizens could be institutionally guaranteed. We can thus perceive the notion of public sphere to be "the constitutional state as a bourgeois state established the public sphere realm as an organ of the state so as to ensure institutionally the connection between law and public opinion."¹²

In short, the public opinion in the 19th century was developed in a sense of political scrutiny. Its formation was intrinsically born of the better argument in the public discussions. Citizens were more conscious to "discover what was at once just and right. Public opinion was supposed to do justice to 'the nature of the case'."¹³ Later, the public opinion was also reflected in legal norms which individual rights could be institutionalized. The public use of reason was sufficiently realized by the rational communication during this period of time.

But even before such development can take place, how did individuals integrate themselves into a cohesive community? A socio-cultural foundation is pre-requisite amongst the private individuals, i.e. the formation of the literary public sphere.

¹¹ For instances, there were three sets of basic rights. First of all, private people who engaged in the public debates were guaranteed the freedom of opinion and speech, freedom of assembly and association, right of petition and equality of vote. Second, individual autonomy was protected from the family and the state. Third, basic rights included the protection rights to the market transactions of private property. See Habermas 1989:83.

¹² Habermas 1989:81.

¹³ Habermas 1989:54-55.

It is a sphere of cultural discussions amongst authors and readers. With literary culture, individuals can share with one another their common values and beliefs, and to be collectively bonded together. As such, visible and accessible sets of societal meanings and practices can be consolidated into a public culture in society. Hence the role of literature and of literary culture.

Cultural Communication of Literary Public Sphere:

During the 17th to 18th century, there was a growth of reading public in Europe. Public readers had easy access to numerous publications in poetry, plays, journals, newspapers and novels. Meanwhile, public places were opened where individuals could gather. For example, the salons, literary societies, public libraries, coffee houses, theaters and "table societies." "The predominance of the 'town' was strengthened by new institutions that, for all their variety, in Great Britain and France took over the same social functions: the coffee houses in their golden periods between 1680 and 1730 and the salons in the period between regency and revolution."¹⁴ In Germany, there was a number of table societies and literary societies during the 17th century. These social institutions offered a physical space for the individuals' cultural conversations. The participants in such occasions either discussed cultural or political issues. This kind of cultural communication indeed transcended the

¹⁴ Habermas 1989:32.

barriers of social hierarchy as "the bourgeois met here with the socially prestigious but politically uninfluential nobles as 'common' human beings."¹⁵

Among various cultural products, there were publications of moral weeklies which reported the discussions of the coffee-houses and salons. They were the so-called "periodical essays." These periodic articles not only related to the public discussions, but also became a part of social discussion amongst the public. The editors of the weeklies were then inclined to select the more critical articles for their readers.

In particular, the psychological novel in the 18th century became widely popular. They "fashioned for the first time the kind of realism that allowed anyone to enter into literary action as a substitute for his own, to use the relationships between the figures, between the author, the characters, and the readers as substitute relationships for reality."¹⁶ Reading novels became a wide spread practice in society because of the cultural communication that revolved around these psychological novels. A number of novels were published in newspapers and could be found in public libraries, book clubs, reading circles and subscription libraries.

Through the different genres of literature, intersubjectivity of authors and readers was directly

¹⁵ Habermas 1989:35.

¹⁶ Habermas 1989:51.

intertwined. The reading public was likely to meet together in order to discuss what they read. In the process, cultural debate probably emerged frequently. "Inasmuch as culture became a commodity and thus finally evolved into 'culture' in the specific sense (as something that pretends to exist merely for its own sake), it was claimed as the ready topic of a discussion through which an audience-oriented subjectivity communicated with itself."¹⁷

With the growth of the novels, a newly emerged value of "humanity" was shared by the bourgeois families. Most of them believed that humankind had the ability to be liberated from the constraints of all that existed. A pure human realm had its value that followed its own laws and not any external purpose.¹⁸

"In this specific notion of humanity a conception of what existed was promulgated within the bourgeois world which promised redemption from the constraint of what existed without escaping into a transcendental realm. This conception's transcendence of what was immanent was the element of truth that raised bourgeois ideology above ideology itself, most fundamentally in that area where the experience of 'humanity' originated."¹⁹

The ideas of freedom, love and cultivation of the human were widely expressed by the personal letters and dramatic novels. Alternatively, a person's subjectivity feeling was put into written form to become conversation with the others. Consequently, "the relations between author, work, and public changed. They became intimate mutual relationships between

¹⁷ Habermas 1989:12.

¹⁸ See Habermas 1989:47.

¹⁹ Habermas 1989:55.

privatized individuals who were psychologically interested in what was 'human,' in self-knowledge, and in empathy."²⁰ The literary public sphere constitutes a space for intersubjective communication - where people have access to societal dialogues, which deal with questions of common concern.

To conclude, the literary public sphere enhanced the human's subjective communication. The intimate relationship between the authors and the readers were invisibly established. In this way, the literary public sphere paved a road for the development of political public sphere. In other words,

"the fully developed bourgeois public sphere was based on the fictitious identity of the two roles assumed by the privatized individuals who came together to form a public: the role of property owners and the role of human beings pure and simple." (originally italic)²¹

Although the public sphere of the 18th century is degenerated from its latter phase onward²², its normative value

²⁰ Habermas 1989:27.

²¹ Habermas 1989:56.

²² The second part of *Structural Transformation* is to state why the bourgeois public sphere was degenerated. Though this part is not related to our discussion, the following summary is a reference to our readers. The quality of the public sphere's discourse was undermined through "massification" and "refeudalization." For massification, public sphere was opened to public. New participants, who came from mass, were not all educated to understand the rational arguments. As a result, public sphere grew up with two variants: the bourgeois and the plebeian ones. The rational standard for public discussion could no longer be maintained. For refeudalization, public sphere situated in a "tension-charged field between state and society." An increase of state intervention in society on the one hand, society gradually assumed functions of public authority on the other hand. A space of public sphere was eroded by both sides. Simultaneously, the rational-critical discourse of public sphere was displaced by a more passive culture and an apolitical sociability. Urban life was over-shadowed by mass culture so that the public discussion tended to around consumption patterns. In addition, public sphere was also undermined by an emergence of political parties. With a rise of political election, modern parties tried to have citizens' support in order to gain legislative controls. These party groups in fact came from public sphere. The development of special-

still deserves our attention. The work of the *Structural Transformation* of the public sphere aims at reconstructing a normative ideal of the public sphere which "enables the identification of the social foundations on which the ideal can be partially realized."²³ This normative ideal is a practice of rational-critical discourse, particularly on political matters. In this way, Habermas believes that the rational discourse is a possible mode of social integration. It helps him to explore the notion of subjective communication between different parties. In his later studies, he develops the idea of communicative rationality on the basis of the rational-critical discourse. The notion of communicative rationality is explained in his recent writing of *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Habermas' emphasis is upon the social integration between the system (economy and state) and the lifeworld (human subjective world). His focus has shifted from the institutional construction of the public sphere as the democratic will to the universality of the communicative reason implicit in all speeches. As a democratic concept, public sphere denotes all those conditions of communication under a discursive formation of opinion and will in part of the public. Cohen defines this concept as follows:

"the notion of a deliberative democracy is rooted in the intuitive ideal of a democracy in which the justification of the terms and conditions of associations proceeds through public argument and reasoning among equal citizens. Citizens in such an order share a commitment to the resolution of problems of collective choice through public reasoning, and regard their basic institutions as legitimate

interest groups segmented the public into sub-groups. The general interest was no longer achieved, instead of negotiation amongst sub-groups.

²³ Calhoun 1992:39-40.

insofar as they establish a framework for free public deliberation."²⁴

This discourse-centered concept of democracy emphasizes the communicative notion between intersubjective understandings. Such mutual understandings enhance the generation of consensus in the public discussions.

Habermas' historical description and normative ideal of bourgeois public sphere has become controversial upon its publication. On the one hand, some Marxists scholars questioned why Habermas only focused on the bourgeois public sphere and excluded the proletarian one. On the other hand, many political scientists and sociologists began to show their concern about the significance of public sphere in relations to political matters. In spite of such criticisms, Habermas aims at searching for a social foundation for individuals' communication and rational-critical discourse in the public sphere. The *Structural Transformation* is Habermas' early writing. When he reviews this book, he also accepts others' comments on the omissions or underdevelopment of some significant factors or historical grounding. Most importantly, in his article "Further Reflections on Public Sphere", Habermas also links up his latest idea of lifeworld and communicative rationality with the public sphere. They are crucial keys to understanding what Habermas has put forth. It may be more plausible to view Habermas' public sphere as a normative model that may be adopted under different historical and social contexts.

²⁴ Quotation from Habermas 1992:446.

With the notion of public sphere, it underlines the communicative requirements of viable democracy. Public in this context means individual's "mutual interaction." When we speak of civil society, its central theme lies in the domain of uncoerced interaction and association within daily life. In the history of civil society, there is always an emphasis on the relation between the autonomous individuals and the society, a theme that is still of central relevance today.²⁵ However, it continues to raise questions regarding how the individuals are to be integrated into a cohesive community. With regard to this question, public sphere is particularly related to the civil society. In brief, public sphere constitutes a socio-cultural precondition for the development of civil society.

Cohen and Arato have reconstructed the concept of civil society based on Habermas' idea of public sphere and the theory of communicative action. They juxtapose the conditions of the possibility of modernity and to viability of contemporary projects of democratization. They follow Habermas' insight on civil society:

"The rationalization of the lifeworld makes possible on the one side the differentiation of independent subsystems and opens up at the same time the utopian horizon of civil society, in which the formally organized realms of the bourgeois (economy and state apparatus) constitute the foundations for the post-traditional lifeworld of the *homme* (private sphere) and the *cityoyen* (public sphere)."²⁶

²⁵ By the traditional normative model of civil society (generated from Tocqueville, Hegel and young Marx), it entails the principles of individual autonomy, moral and social plurality, and universality.

²⁶ Quotation from Cohen and Arato, 1992:131.

According to *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas introduces the duality of system-lifeworld which reveals a utopian unification to both differentiation and boundary maintenance. He agrees with Max Weber's idea that the paradox of rationalization is a decoupling of "systemic integration" and "social integration" in modern society. Individual lifeworld is distinguished from both "state" and "economy" systems. Lifeworld refers to individual action orientation as embedded in language and culture and drawn upon by individuals in their everyday lives.²⁷ The reproduction of lifeworld involves the communicative processes of cultural transmission, social integration and socialization. If we further develop the institutional dimension of lifeworld, its task requires the preservation and renewal of traditions, solidarities, and identities.²⁸ In opposition to the lifeworld, the formal rationality is a mode of the state and the economy. Individual actions in these systemic organizations become increasingly instrumental for purpose of calculated means and attainable goals. Within such system-lifeworld duality, an expansion of the systemic integration undermines the essential function of the lifeworld' reproduction. As a result, a colonization of lifeworld takes place when the systemic media of money and power gradually invade the integration of the lifeworld. System as a

²⁷ There are three components revolving around the lifeworld. They are "culture", "society" and "personality." In a societal context, actors mutually share with a cultural tradition. They identify themselves as the members of social groups. When individuals grow up within a cultural tradition and participate in group life, they mutually transmit and internalize values or norms, and develop their own individual and social identities.

²⁸ See Cohen and Arato 1992:132.

realm seems beyond human subjectivity and intervention. However, one thing is obvious: systems are all populated by people. If we recognize the realm of lifeworld as a resource of individual actions, people in systems can possibly operate within their rationalized lifeworlds.²⁹ In order to reconstruct the concept of civil society, the emergence of communicative and solidarity relations of lifeworld should be emphasized.

For the idea of Cohen and Arato, they treat civil society as an "institutionalized lifeworld." They assume the institutionalization to proceed socioculturally. Civil society in such case becomes the societal terrain where the notions of interaction, integration and identity are emphasized in the sphere of lifeworld. In this respect, the public sphere of lifeworld not only provide for the expression of views, the resolution of conflicts and the shaping the political will, it also permits people to develop and alter both their individual and collective identities.³⁰ Indeed, the public sphere has a function of identity formation which incorporates plural individuals into civil society. Calhoun illustrates as follows:

"It is ... a matter of how the public sphere incorporates and recognizes the diversity of identities people bring to it from their manifold involvement in civil society ... Even the very identity of the political community is a product, not simply a precondition, of the activity of the public sphere of civil society."³¹

²⁹ Habermas suggests the imperative of lifeworld should be strengthened up by the communicative rationality.

³⁰ See Dahlgren 1995:131-132.

³¹ Quotation from Dahlgren 1995:132.

In short, both civil society and public sphere entail social interaction. The civil society denotes the active participation on the part of citizens in social or civil associations. The public sphere gives rise to social discourse or dialogues of political relevance. In fact, they mutually reinforce each other. For Cohen and Arato, they perceive the importance of civil society for "the generation of influence through the life of democratic associations and unconstrained discussion in the cultural public sphere."³²

Literature, Society and Public Sphere:

In light of the sociology of literature, literature is organically tied to its social environment. The creativity of literature interacts with its external environment before and after its birth. Albrecht recognizes three kinds of connection between literature and society. Firstly, literature reflects accepted patterns of thought, feeling, and action. Secondly, it also gives expression to the innovation of emerging themes. Thirdly, literature can be perceived as one instrument of social control, serving the purposes of maintaining or changing the inherited patterns.³³ In this respect, literary creation is not only a form of aesthetics, it closely relates with society.

Mannheim further specifies the relation between literature and society. The work of literature is the expression of social

³² Cohen and Arato 1992:ix.

³³ See Nostrand 1970:562.

mentality in social creation. The central question to the sociology of literature lies in "what social ideas, values, beliefs are expressed by art?" The problem of "what" is an attempt to link both the personal and social levels of the creation of art and literature. The artist or writer will be stimulated by their social environment, and his or her work needs of society.³⁴ At the same time, the writer or artist is sensitive to the deeper hidden problem or the societal crisis in society. He or she may find new forms of expression unlike what has been created in society or traditionally accepted. The revolt of art and literature leads its readers or audiences to become more reflexive, more critical to the problems. Art or literature is thus situated within a context of the-artist-in-his-society.

For the works of art and literature, they reflect the social meaning and express world views of the social groups in society. World views can be expressive of the spirit of the age, manifested in all cultural unity. People's social actions in art forms, myths or political ideology at a given period should cohere at the level of meaning. Individuals often recognize and conform to the vital meanings. This cultural unity is constituted by some privileged social groups. In this way, it is possible to probe into the world view of this privileged groups in order to understand the particular spirit of the age.

³⁴ In modern society, popular culture of novels, films or dramas are emerged to fulfill the needs of the urbanities. Mass culture exactly corresponds to the urban consumption patterns.

Mannheim affirms his concept of total ideology of the social groups,

"we attempt to reconstruct the whole outlook of a social group, and neither the concrete individuals nor the abstract sum of them can legitimately be considered as bearers of this ideological thought-system as a whole. The aim of the analysis on this level is the reconstruction of the systematic theoretical basis underlying the single judgments of the individual. Analysis of ideologies in the particular sense, making the content of individual thought largely dependent on the interests of the subject, can never achieve this basic reconstruction of the whole outlook of a social group. They can at best reveal the collective psychological aspects of ideology, or lead to some development of mass psychology."³⁵

Goldmann also recognizes a close connection between writers and the vision of the world which prevailed at his time. Writer's inspiration or idea is coherent with the "significant structure" of the social world. The significant structure can be regarded as the collective consciousness of the privileged social groups.

Concerning these groups, Goldmann observes:

"it is class, linked together by basic economic needs, which has been of prime importance in influencing the ideological life of man, since he has been compelled to devote most of his thought and energy either to finding enough to live on or, if he belonged to a ruling class, to keeping his privileges and administering and increasing his wealth."³⁶

They play a leading role in producing a total view of human life. Goldmann believes that the cultural works always reflect the ideas, thoughts, feelings and behaviors of such groups. In his book *Hidden God*, Goldmann studies the tragic vision from the *Pensees* of Pascal and the tragedies of Racine. He claims that

³⁵ Quotation from Wolff 1975:58.

³⁶ Quotation from Wolff 1975:81.

this tragic vision is coordinated by the individuals who belong "from the point of view of intellectual and artistic activity and creation" in class structure.³⁷ Artists or writers who come from these privileged groups may directly express their collective consciousness to their readers. Indeed, Goldmann links up the conditions of both social structure and literary creation. The significant structure of literary texts are intelligible as a reflection of the world view of the times. Using his genetic structuralist methods, he puts Racine's play into the context of 17th century France, and explicates Jansenism as relating to French society and its class structure. Thus, he regards sociology of literature as a homology of social structure and literary creation.

"The relationship between collective thought and great individual literary, philosophical, theological, etc. creation does not reside in any identity of content, but in more extended coherence and in a homology of structures, which can be expressed in imaginary content quite different from the real content of the collective consciousness."³⁸

As literary imagination, the writing of novel can directly confront the reader with the issue of meaning and value of historical and social conditions. On the creation process of a novel, Kermode introduces the importance of "composition." Composition refers to the writer's style and form to designate "physical settings, situations, actors and actions, and by which these are ordered into sequences which leads to an ending."³⁹

³⁷ Goldmann 1977:16.

³⁸ Quotation from 1975:85.

³⁹ Quotation from Elizabeth and Tom Burns 1973:21.

For the portrayal of realism and "unrealism", writers offer modes of life, of morals, of sentiments to the different sectors of society, and registers their conflicts. In a fictional world, readers can more or less realize the intermittent quality of ordinary everyday life, its meanings, and its direction in which they are going. To a degree, a novel "taken in its concrete terms, is a sociable act; it establishes literature as an institution."⁴⁰ Its sociability serves us with sizable cultural, political and ideological functions. For the public readers, they may be gradually influenced by the values and meanings which embraced with the compositions of novels.

In a society, various kinds of cultural media have to deliver different social messages to the audience and readers. Among these media, why does literature work particularly as a vehicle of the cultural and literary public sphere? Compared with other cultural media, literature is able to constitute a space for intersubjective communication, in which people can share mutual values and question common concerns. Newspaper and journals are oriented to objective and accurate reportage. A journalist's criticisms may expose the hidden problems of society to public readers. Television shows or films are likely to be defined as a mass culture which corresponds to the pattern of urban consumption and entertainment. They provide the audience with the opportunity to relax from daily work pressures. All such mass media are mainly designed for one dimensional delivery;

⁴⁰ Quotation from Elizabeth and Tom Burns 1973:42.

in fact, they seemingly help the audience or readers to understand their social life or the common urban lifestyle in an objective way. The other artistic performances, such as literature, drama, opera, artistic films and paintings, are the artists' subjective expressions. The purposes and functions of these performances are to construe a relationship between social reality and aesthetic presentation. In particular, novels involve a wide range of social and historical conditions which could enhance the readers' capacity to have a comprehensible understanding towards their seemingly familiar world.

In addition, novel writing plays a role of intersubjective communication between writers and readers. A writer can express his sentiment through his style of composition, which can induce the readers to have vicarious enjoyment, suffering, pleasure and thrill. Borrowing a phrase from Habermas, reading of novel arouses the readers' interest and sentiment into fictional composition.⁴¹ As a result, both writers and readers become actors who "talked heart to heart."⁴² Simultaneously, both writers and readers create a "possible world" which is a sphere distinguished from the present reality. In a writing process, as introduced by Sartre, writers deliberately interpret the social meanings of objective world so that he is able to go beyond social constraints.⁴³ Different readers may read out different meanings or relations from the fictional texts. When different

⁴¹ See Habermas, 1989:50-51.

⁴² Habermas, 1989:50.

⁴³ See Sartre, 1949.

readers come together to discuss the texts, they probably enlarge the sphere of possible world from fictions. Consequently, novel and literature have a dual dimension through which both writers and readers mutually construct their ideal or utopian symbols to represent their attitudes towards social reality.

In our everyday life, the question of how to construct a set of democratic culture among different social strata is the most noteworthy one. In works of literature, and particularly the novel, it seemingly works as the means for cultural reproduction in the aspects of freedoms of thought, press, speech communication, assembly and association, and of the significance of human rights. At the same time, novels and literature reflect the writer's social sentiment towards his society and state. The writer's social location in society may affect his cultural discourse in the form of either political or cultural significance. In studying the relationship of public sphere and literature, we will concentrate on the social sentiments or worldviews of writers emerged in their novels and their significance in the formation of the public sphere. Therefore, several guiding questions will be examined, as in the followings: Firstly, what social meanings or values are emerged in fictions? Secondly, why the selected writers have generated such values? In other words, we intend to recontextualize the writers' social thoughts or world views. Thirdly, what social or cultural space is constituted?

Chapter 2:

Cultural Communication and Chinese Writers in Deng Era

In modern society, a writer is regarded as an intellectual. The Italian thinker Gramsci defined intellectuals broadly to include all those who function as organizers in the spheres of production, politics, as well as culture. Intellectuals thus include writers, artists, thinkers, civil servants, political leaders, engineers, managers and technicians. Lipset follows Gramsci's insistence in the importance of training and occupations in defining intellectuals. He describes this special stratum as followings:

"all those who create, distribute, and apply culture, that is, the symbolic world of man, including art, science, and religion. Within this group there are two main levels: the hard core or creators of culture - scholars, artists, philosophers, authors, some editors and some journalists; and the distributors - performers in the various arts, most teachers, most reporters. A peripheral group is composed of those who apply culture as part of their jobs - professionals like physicians and lawyers. When Europeans speak of the *intelligentsia*, they mean all three categories."⁴⁴

Using a more structural approach, Verdery proposes intellectuals to be "sometime occupants of a site that is privileged in forming and training discourses, in constituting thereby the means through which society is 'thought' by its members, and in forming human subjective."⁴⁵ Such approach focuses on social attributes of an intellectual towards his society. In this respect, a

⁴⁴ Quotation from Torpey 1995:2.

⁴⁵ Quotation from Torpey 1995:3.

writer is an intellectual who contributes to the symbolic sphere of ideas and values.

Intellectual discourses in society has a quality with an "unusual sensitivity to the sacred, an uncommon reflectiveness about the nature of the universe and the rules which govern their society."⁴⁶ For Foucault, intellectuals struggle for truth.⁴⁷ Truth is conceived as a totality of procedures regulating its production, distribution, its circulation and its functions. The political problem for the intellectuals is not only to criticize, but rather to know what constitutes a new politics of truth. For Gramsci, intellectuals function as "dispute" or agents in organizing its hegemony in civil society and its domination through the state apparatus.⁴⁸ Intellectuals therefore play a leading role in society.

In accordance to Bourdieu, intellectuals are cultural-capital owners who exercise the "symbolic mastery of their areas of expertise."⁴⁹ Since they possess the cultural capital; the political views, political nature of their works and activities more or less influence the legitimacy of the state-party. Intellectuals are inevitably subjected to absorption by dominant class in society. On whatever political or economic grounds, the dominant class instrumentally manipulates the modes of cultural

⁴⁶ Shils 1972:3.

⁴⁷ Truth in Foucault's sense is "the totality of rules according to which the true is distinguished from the false and the concrete effects of power are attached to what is true." See Lennart 1991:306.

⁴⁸ For detail elaboration, see Roger 1982:96.

⁴⁹ Quotation from Ron and Lennart, 1987:18.

reproduction in order to repress the minority or the subordinate class. Bourdieu has developed a concept of "political capital" to describe this circumstance. Political capital is equally as important as economic capital. It is an indicator that distinguishes different forms political trajectories among social situations. In many socialist countries, for instance, different political capital will lead to different modes of social treatments. The political capital is crucial in determining one's income, employment opportunities, access to housing or other social goods. Other social connections are important for those who live in a communist regime, for example, promotion opportunities, patronage and permission to foreign travel are all special privileges. One can benefit more from the political capital than from the economic capital in communist countries, a phenomenon which Bourdieu calls "patrimonialization."⁵⁰ In particular, intellectuals are encouraged to appropriate political capital. They probably need political and social connection to sustain their lives or guarantee their working autonomy. As a result, both the state and intellectuals are mutually dependent upon each other.

In sum, literature and writer function as the communicated media to its public readers in society. The invisible intersubjectivity communication happens everywhere. Certain values and attitudes are shared by the writers and the readers, and they become bonded together. Because of the writers'

⁵⁰ Quotation from Torpey 1995:7.

distinctive qualities, they construct a cultural sphere for their readers to realize the social meanings of their existing worlds, to share the common concerns and to indicate the possible direction that they will go. Literature sometimes is a revolutionary force against the convention or the dogmatic ideology. Also, writers or literary intellectuals may be spontaneously linked with politics. They are always subjected to the absorption of the state or other dominant class. In the case of the communist regimes; writers, artists and other intellectuals are particularly under state censorship or in the velvet prisons. Under such circumstance, a relation between the writer and the state should be noticed.

Communication of Chinese Writers and Readers:

In the wake of the June Fourth Incidence, most Chinese people have further withdrawn their social life away from political controls. They prefer to retreat to their own private sphere and to tend to their private matters only. Recently, popular culture in China becomes prevalent. Soft-pornographic fiction, rock music, comic television shows, MTV, phone-in-radio, and overseas TV soap operas or films are extremely popular among people. The publishing industry in China has grown in stride. In 1994, there were 561 publishing houses, about 8000 journals, more than 2100 newspapers and over 300 audio-visual publishing companies.⁵¹ Most printed media is semi-independent and in some

⁵¹ See Goldman, 1996:50.

cases funded by wealthy individuals or groups. With the growth of mass media, it is increasingly difficult for the Party to have a strict censorship, even though strict control still remains on the reporting political issues. In this way, the reporters, journalists or other writers carved out a space which is less political. These papers concentrate on the commercial culture and lifestyle topics, commercial information and consumption culture are likewise reported, because of a general emphasis on the consumer and the investor.

The social life in contemporary China has become less political-committed but tended to be more individualistic than before. The pluralistic culture diverts people's values from the mainstream of traditional and communist ideology, which stressed obedience and conformity. As people turn their minds to economic matters and daily life, political ideology inevitably lost its hold. Despite the Party's calls for political study, there are less enthusiasm, less fear, less interest.⁵²

With changes in culture and politics, most Chinese writers in the 1980s are able to redefine their social identity and to acquire a unifying symbol of community and political platform. The writers' personal worldviews or social sentiments have penetrated into the fictions. An invisible communication between writers and readers is empowered by the circulation of literary writings. The diverse voices of writers are the cultural

⁵² See Goldman, 1996:50 and Jia, 1995:145.

producers and disseminators, resulting in a value transmission towards the public. When the cultural discourse works effectively, it has the potential to shape the identities and the perspectives of their protagonists. The following part will portray the directions of the last two decades of the Chinese literary world, with each literary movement reflecting the writer's cultural and political assumption towards the state. The relationship between the writers and the state can be examined from the novel writings in terms of the literary reforms.

After the Cultural Revolution, literary intellectuals had a deep reflection from the past political baptism. They tried to redefine the concepts of literature and state by way of literature. Literature should dismantle from any political ideology instead of a multi-dimensions surpassing.

According to Liu Zaifu's analysis, the concept of "state" not only means the existing state, but rather to a destination of feeling or homeland of spirit.⁵³ As such, the concept of state becomes more subjective and is originated from the writers' subjectivity. Writers have become more removed from the past political relationship with the state. State may be in his heart or outside his heart, which may or may not exist. As a writer, state is not his first priority, he is rather concerned with his own emotional substance. Liu tends to reestablish human

⁵³ See Liu Zaifu 1996:75. He reconstructs the concept of state as in the sense of power, geography, culture, ideal and individual will or emotion.

subjectivity of both the author and fictional characters in current Chinese literary discourse. In this sense, he encourages writers to alter the image of Chinese intellectuals from the past self-appointed roles of prophets or saviors to a self-conscious one. Chinese intellectuals should extricate from the role of propaganda agents for the Party. Liu's position is widely accepted and supported by liberal-minded writers, critics as well as the general reading public.⁵⁴

Most writers in the post-Mao era tended to disengage from the literary orthodoxy and the ideological dialogue. They were likely to adopt many western models and theories to express their individual world views and their subjective emotions. From the 1980s to 1990s, writers have initiated intellectual reflections from Chinese politics and culture. Within these reflections, several literary movements emerged.

The political reflection aims at exploring the historical trauma and criticizing the party-state. Most writers who witnessed the political upheavals from the history of 1957 to 1976 have expressed their lamentation towards the Party. During the late 1970s, the "Literature of Woundedness" prevailed over the community of writers. The writers of Woundedness insisted on questioning the communist history. Although the literary intellectuals are re-invited back to the Communist Party, they still remain scared, suspicious and doubtful. Bai Hui's 'Kulian'

⁵⁴ For detail, see Leo Lee 1990:91-93.

(Unrequited Love) typically represents a sense of self-reflection from the relationship between the intellectuals and the state. By the early 1980s, the "Literature of Reflection" appears. The term "*fansi*" means "self-examination." Most writers call for a serious reconsideration of the people's fate and the historical wrongdoing that occurred during the past decades. The Literature of Reflection demands writers to be more rational in thinking and critical in retrospection. Some writers have implicitly unleashed their criticisms toward the communist Party. Sheng Rong's '*Ren dao zhongnian*' (At Middle Ages) shows the protagonist's reflection towards the past anti-intellectualism, the present bureaucratic system and the ongoing corruption. A stereotype character in the novel, old Mrs. Marxist-Leninist, is particularly created to satirize the CCP as "feudal-conservative." Later on, there is the "Literature of Reform." Most writers support and address the theme of reform at the early 1980s. In such novels as Liu Binyan's '*Ling yu rou*' (Between Man and Demon), Gao Xiaosheng's trilogy of '*Li Shunda jianwu*' (Li Shunda Built a House) and Jiang Zilong's '*Qiaochangchang shangren*' (Factory Director Qiao Assumes Office), the characters passionately served as the mainstay of the current reforms.⁵⁵

From the vision of cultural reflection, it gives rise to a broader movement of "cultural self-reflection", a critical reexamination of all aspects of Chinese culture and history. The "Literature of Root-searching" appears during 1983 to 1986. Most

⁵⁵ See Tsai, 1989.

young writers engage in this movement to examine the source of Chinese cultural origin. It is a retreat from the political center of the Party's culture. They felt compelled to redefine their own culture and they asked "how to find a meaning of being Chinese other than the Party has defined for them?"⁵⁶

The Literature of Root-searching includes writers such as Ah Cheng, Zeng Wanlong, Zhang Chenzi, Jia Pingwa, Han Shaogong, Zheng Yi, Li Hangyu, Mo Yan and Li Rui. They often "choose to ground their works in a certain regional culture which is beyond the reach of the tide of civilization and depict the super-stable cultural mentality fostered by this particular milieu (Liu Zaifu's word)."⁵⁷ They either narrate the regional and minority race culture or the ancient myths and rituals which the official Communist ideology pushed into insignificance.⁵⁸

For the root-searching writers, influenced notably by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the South American Nobel prize winner, have followed in the footsteps of magical realism. They mainly focus on "a life force that extends beyond the struggle between good and evil, illusion and reality, joy and anger, but creates a world filled with these sentiments."⁵⁹ Writers further free themselves from the contemporary politics for excavating the cultural space which has shaped their lives and thoughts. By the

⁵⁶ See Leo Lee 1991:208.

⁵⁷ Quotation from Tsai 1989:19.

⁵⁸ For instances, Zheng Wanlong portrays the culture of Amur River area, Han Shaogong depicts the Chu Culture of the south, and Zhang Chengzhi focuses his fictional world in the northwest of China.

⁵⁹ Quotation from Siu 1989:19.

notion of magical realism, an imaginary boundary between the familiar, real world and the unfamiliar Other world can be demarcated. As a consequence, the root-searching movement opens up the chasm between politics and culture. Writers are therefore more apathetic towards Party authoritarianism.

Simultaneously, some writers seek to embrace Western modernism. Modernist literature is characterized by its emphasis on the emancipation of human subjectivity. Through the techniques of modernism⁶⁰, writers can express their subjective feelings, emotions and frustrations from their everyday life. In the postface of her novel 'Ren a ren' (Ah! Man!) Dai Houying writes: the modernist art "stresses the supremacy of an artist's subjectively constructed world in his or her creation, and the legitimacy of resorting to all means that make this possible."⁶¹ Among the modernist writers, representative authors are Gao Xingjian, Mo Yan, Liu Suola, Zhang Xinxin and Xu Xing.⁶² Most of them have used the absurdist and fantasrealist techniques

"expressing the undercurrent of consciousness, the delicacy of feelings, and the hunger or disturbance of the soul; to the uncanny, the fantastic, and the primitive frontier in the wilderness, resorting to the modern mind of the West to undertake philosophical investigation into traditional Chinese culture; to the universal attributes of man, presenting his primeval life and instinctive drive in order to bring to the fore his attempts to transcend the historical milieu and thus to find some

⁶⁰ Modernist techniques include the stream of consciousness, plotlessness or lack of narrative progression, emphasis on individual psychology, lack of didactic social message as well as internal monologue.

⁶¹ Dai 1987:422.

⁶² In the mid-1980s, there are the appearance of Gao Xingjian's 'Bashi zhan' (The Bus Stop), Mo Yan's 'Touming de hong luobo' (The Crystal Carrot), Liu Suola's 'Ni bie wu xuanze' (You Have No Other Choice) and Xu Xing's 'Wuti' (Themeless Variations).

everlasting existential values.
Correspondingly, they turned from the emphasis
on representation of objective reality to
fabricating a transformed life-world filtered
through subjective consciousness; moreover, the
traditional priority given to well-made plot and
cause-effect connection was replaced by the
tendency to work out a chance combination based
on miscellaneous phenomena and not so well-
plotted..."⁶³

As a result, modernist writers are more self-conscious in order
to heighten the human subjectivity which is the most private
sphere of individuals.

After the Root-searching Literature, there is another mode
of writing - experimental fiction that appeared in the late
1980s. It shares the ideas of roots school and experiments
certain technical traits. The experimental writers have a
greater concern with the fictional language and the construction
of a personal and subjective vision. Most prominently, young
writers are turning inward to matters of thought and psyche. Leo
Lee points to the characteristics of experimental writings:

"the experimentalists tend to be more abstract
and existential, probing the psychic contours of
isolated and abnormal individuals who lead
solitary existence fraught with premonitions of
madness, mysticism, and death."⁶⁴

They actively reflect the inner ravages caused by the past
political upheavals and break down the hegemony of the "official
talk" which has created "a prison-house of language" and
"subjugated the soul."⁶⁵ As a consequence, a sense of individual
"self" and "existence" is reconstructed.

⁶³ Quotation from Tsai 1989:19.

⁶⁴ Leo Lee 1990:99.

⁶⁵ Leo Lee 1991:219.

Most experimental writers have radicalized the traditional realist discourse. They abandoned all ideological tenets, all hard-core realism and all political propaganda. Conversely, they shift to explore the individual sphere of everyday life. The protagonists in fictions are all common people who come from different social backgrounds. Through the depiction of their social lives, writers are more concerned with the quality of life and the truth of human beings. Their ideas are coincident to what Havel calls "human identity" and the individual's will to "live in truth."⁶⁶ In this way, individual can keep their private mental space away from the powerful influence of the state. This mental exile prepares oneself for resisting pressures from the outside. To a degree, it becomes a value of freedom. "It fills a certain psychological gap by suggesting an alternative form of individual resistance to a far stronger central power than that which Havel confronted."⁶⁷ Therefore, the writer's inward looking gradually develops into a kind of internal exile from the state.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, Chinese writers turned to be more flirtation. David Wang once said, "flirtation refers not to the new writings' treatment of sexual subjects but to their attitude toward or approach to any 'serious subject' - above all, to the most serious subject, China."⁶⁸ Generally speaking, new-

⁶⁶ Havel's notion emphasizes on the small scale work starting from the "everyday, thankless and never ending struggle of human beings to live more freely, truthfully and in quiet dignity." See Havel 1989:113.

⁶⁷ Leo Lee 1991:220.

⁶⁸ David Wang, 1994:253.

style writers gave up traditional mission of intellectuals in society. The sole mission of intellectuals was not to excoriate social malaise, resolve national crisis, or struggle for a great future. Writing was subject to individual creativity and not to any social responsibility. The rejection of responsibility led the young writers to redefine a social identity. In this way, they had broken down a sense of "obsession with China."⁶⁹ The Chinese young writers thus became more individualistic to restore their self-expressed space.

Most Chinese writers have been dominated by the communist literary ideology and they have lost their artistic consciousness over the decades. After the horrors and absurdities of the Cultural Revolution, writers or intellectuals are not allowed to remain silent. The changing meanings behind silence and protest, retreat and involvement, is a reflection of how generations of writers reveal their cultural assumptions and political commitments. Obviously, young and open-minded writers have successfully explored their own individual sphere of creativity which is largely immune from the political influence. Their subject concern of art may be an ultimate forms of self-expression. A corollary of the 1990s Chinese literature becomes more individualized and pluralistic in its forms and contents than before.

⁶⁹ The phrase "obsession with China" is written by C.T. Hsia.

Methodological Note:

As an analysis on literature and society, this exercise follows broadly the methodology aspiration of social criticism. Social criticism is an attempt to "reconstruct the process of artistic creation mainly by analyzing the social, spiritual and psychological environment and the origins and the economic positions of the artists."⁷⁰ It contrasts with the purely literary methods or character. It is indispensable in the grasping of the worldviews of writers, the socio-cultural backgrounds, and the forms and the contents of literary texts. This mode of social criticism regards no distinction drawn between the art and the life. Individual subjectivity or quality of life can be freely expressed in the artistic forms or in the content of novels. In this way, social criticism insists on searching for the attitude of life of an individual writer, of his milieu, or age or class. Both the socio-cultural context and individual worldview can be uncovered in the composition of novels.

For the present study, three contemporary Chinese writers are selected as case studies to illustrate the role of writers in the formation of public sphere in post-Mao China. Throughout the 1990s, the writing of novels becomes the mainstream of Chinese literature. Among these novelists, Jia Pingwa, Wang Shuo and Mo Yan may be regarded as the most famous at the present time.

⁷⁰ The method of social criticism is especially exemplified by a eminent Russian literary critic, Vissarion Belinsky, during the 19th century. Most Russian critics and writers in fact strongly believe that the ideas of books or literature can fully express one's life attitude or value. See Berlin 1978:116.

Their popularity and artistic success have been widely recognized as trend-setting by the literary critics and reading public. It is for this reason that they all selected for the case studies. In early 1980s, Jia Pingwa has published his novels set in the countryside of Xian, and has been awarded many Chinese and overseas literature prizes. By 1993, a remarkable full-lengthed fiction entitled as 'Feidu' (City in Ruins) has captivated his millions of readers. In the still ostensibly sexually repressive atmosphere of mainland China, Jia's semipornographic work of art not surprisingly stirs the public and official sensation, and leads to the "Fever of *City in Ruins*" throughout the country. It not only proffers pornography, but also explores the spiritual world of the contemporary writers and intellectuals. It is worth noting that Jia's life attitude in terms of social responsibility, cultural assumptions and individual psychology are reflected in 'Feidu'. Wang Shuo's short stories in the late 1980s, on the other hand, has been extremely welcomed by readers in their twenties, especially the Beijing youths. He opens up a trend of "Wanzhu Literature" closely affirmed with the mainstream of popular culture in today's China. The mentality of "wanzhu" is commonly shared by the young generation, more defiance of the orthodoxy. In particular, the year of 1988 is proclaimed as the "Wang Shuo Year" of cinema, his four novella are adapted as feature films. His popularity is further accelerated because his stories are widely reproduced as TV series, such as 'Kewang' (Aspiration) and 'Bianjibude gushi' (The Story of Editorial Department). As a result, his subjective concern of art can be

widely transmitted to other urban audiences by TV media. In the works of Mo Yan, the last of the three writers, his distinctive imagination of novel expression gives his readers a distinct impression. In 1987, his novel 'Hong gaoliang jiazu' (Red Sorghum Family) was produced as a film. This novel is highly appreciated as a representation of Chinese modernism. With his historical romance, Mo successfully portrays the human force of life which advanced jointly from the communist culture and traditional values. In recent year, his new fiction 'Fengru feitun' marks another peak in his creativity and is worthwhile of our attention.

These three writers come from different social backgrounds, and they provide contrasting expression towards the state and society. Jia Pingwa comes from the intellectual's group and his writing exhibits a more socio-cultural reflections towards society. In 'Feidu', Jia consistently exposes the geared existential question that every modern man may agonize with. In his latest work 'Baiye' (White Night), he further depicts the everyday life of urban dwellers. The subject matter of Jia directly relates to the aspects of social life which has been inevitably influenced, in numerous subtle ways, by the collision of both modern instrumental rationality and the traditional culture. Wang Shuo represents precisely the Eighties generation of China. His portrait probably captures the mood of the Other Cultural Revolution generation at large, negating the ideological camouflage and traditional value system. The mentality of

"wanzhu" is figuratively created in terms of irreverence, rebellion, and mockery, that is extremely "individualism." By his hippy style, Wang Shuo uses sardonic language and playful attitude, directly criticizing the political reality and dismantling all established social order. For the depiction of rural life, Mo Yan always heightens the importance of individual primitive energy, which immerses in human life. Since Mo Yan grew up in the countryside, he has experienced both famines and political strives. He conceives of the notion of human life force as based on the peasants who must actively struggle for survivals. Furthermore, he is particularly familiar with the excavation of a realm of "Other" world which is more subjective and imaginative than the social reality. He proffers his readers an infinite time and space in which one can be freed from the familiar reality.

To an important extent, the writing of these writers reflect the common concerns of contemporary Chinese fictional worlds. Obviously, Jia Pingwa, Wang Shuo and Mo Yan have attempted to establish their fictional language or protagonists in undermining the corrupted official culture and seeking for the autonomous space for self-expression. In the forthcoming three chapters, we are going to reveal the selected writers' literary texts and their emerged worldviews or social sentiments. The conclusion will synthesize and generalize the findings of the previous chapters. It is hoped that a concrete condition of how

the writer or literature constitutes the formation of public sphere in today's China will be visualized.

Chapter 3:

A Master of Irony - Wang Shuo's Wanzhu Literature

In contemporary China, the appearance of cultural and commercial activities outside the party-state controls are rapidly on the rise. As manifested in such phenomena as Mao craze, prevalence of rock music, popular literature, commercial broadcasting, and second-channel of publishing all reflect individual's reservation for their autonomous spheres. By pursuing alternative lifestyle or artistic expression, most members of China's new generation have expressed their deepening alienation and despair from the political suppression in the year of 1989.¹ Many young people have therefore become alert of their personal liberation which must not be deprived by external pressures. It also reveals that the new generation has lost their grand hopes in either the social or political dimensions. Most prominently, Chinese youth turns to seek for a provenance of "self" and to extract their private lives from politics. This trend of rebellious sentiment probably runs counter against the official culture.

Regarding his own social sentiment, Wang Shuo expresses his radically defiant attitude into literary forms and has advocated a total withdrawal from the communist or traditional authorities. His hippy-like irreverence, cynicism and alienation are regarded as personal resistance against the alleged normal orders and

¹ See Schell, 1994 and Barme, 1992 and 1993.

hierarchical rules. Geremie Barme claims that Wang Shuo represents a Chinese "knight-errant", an unconventional hero to debunk the monopoly of Chinese official culture and to proffer personal values and beliefs to his reading public.

In so far as the formation of public sphere is concerned, Wang Shuo's writings represented the rebellious values or attitudes to confront against the dominant authorities. On the one hand, through his fictional characters, Wang Shuo intentionally demystifies the status quo and the official doctrines. On the other hand, he attempts to establish instead his own system of value judgment. As a result, Wang Shuo dissociates himself and other readers further away from the party-state's corruption. A Chinese critic Liao Wen said,

"Today, surrounded by the ruins of bankrupt idealism, people have finally come to an unavoidable conclusion: extreme resistance proves only just how powerful one's opponent is and how easily one can be hurt... Humor and irony, on the other hand, may be a more corrosive agent."²

Wang Shuo's soft-core resistance is particularly manifested in his use of irony, mockery and ennui towards the state, as alternative means to express the younger generation's dissatisfaction. Most importantly, Wang Shuo has articulated the values of individual liberation and the exposure of political camouflages. In this way, the formation of public sphere may firstly establish a sphere of autonomy, in which the visions of democracy and freedom are identified as a crucial part of human

² Quotation from Schell, 1994:321-322.

life. With respect to Wang Shuo's fiction, his protagonists reflect a humanistic strive for real freedom from ideological manipulation, that is possible to arouse the public readers' consciousness of their predicaments under a communist system. In short, Wang Shuo's writings paves the road for a generation of rebellious sentiments in weakening the pervasive influences of central authority.

In the forthcoming sections, we will introduce Wang Shuo's social background, fictions and worldview. Through this review, we attempt to understand Wang Shuo's intervention in the formation of Chinese public sphere during the times of 1990s.

Social Background of Wang Shuo:

By the late 1980s, Wang Shuo had become one of the most famous writers in China. His novels were exceedingly welcomed by readers in their twenties, especially the Beijing youths. Wang Shuo's popularity reached the pinnacle of prominence in 1988 when his four novels were simultaneously produced as feature films. The year of 1988 is claimed as "Wang Shuo Year" of cinema production and most new-styled film directors appreciate Wang Shuo's creation. In the early 1990s, he participated in the development of several tele-series, including the soap opera 'Kewang' (Aspirations) and the 26-part 'Bianjibude gushi' (The Story of an Editorial Department). By the way of the mass broadcasting, it provides urban audience with an opportunity to

familiarize with his remarkable characters, great sense of humor and hilarious satire. In Wang's fictional world, it is populated by a mob of hooligans or "wanzhu". They are the ones who engage in such illegal activities as violence, prostitution, mockery and deception. They disdain all traditional controls in aspects of value system, moral standard and official ideology. Wanzhu in modern life can therefore be regarded as hippy-like irreverence and as rebellion from doctrinaire controls.

Wang Shuo is an independent writer with no fixed salary. He came to public attention with his story 'Kongzhong xiaojie' (Stewardess) in 1986 and reached his pinnacle of fame in 1988 and 1990 respectively. His stories were published in some of the nation's top literary journals and were welcomed by university students and blue-collar workers alike. He also earned lucrative commissions for films and television scripts, supplementing the more modest royalties for fictions. His income made him one of the best paid writers in China. Moreover, he even opened a karaoke club in Beijing, The Seashores, for making money. Wang Shuo may be the one who has relatively more freedom than other writers. A Chinese journalist wrote:

"Wang Shuo is lucky to be a member of the least restricted social group [in China], the financially independent unemployed. They are not what is usually understood by the term entrepreneur: they have no grand ambitions as far as work or lifestyle goes: financially well-off, they can't be induced by material benefits or hurt by their withdrawal. In relative terms, their souls are untormented, and although they are careful not to break the law they can do just about whatever they want."³

³ Quotation from Barne 1992:28.

Many Chinese literary critics viewed Wang's novels as a kind of popular literature which aims at amusing and appeasing people from social pressure. Wang is often labeled as a deviant who ignores serious literature. However, his popularity and influence is evidence that Wang's work is shared by the new generation and public audience. In the depiction of hooligans, their satirical dialogues and irreverent behavior, people are given the chance to release pent-up emotions and frustrations, whether personal, social or political. He believes that "literature ought to have two functions: artistic and popular. I'm always trying to find a middle ground between the two... But if I had to choose, I'd take the latter over the former any day."⁴ To a larger extent, Wang Shuo tends to make his protagonists and his story lines parallel with the everyday lives of the public readers and audience.

Most young male characters in Wang Shuo's fictions are the fast-talkers, wisecrackers, charismatic crooks, the over-sexed and the under-employed. Of course, these *liumang*-typed characters are generally rejected by the majority of society. They are regarded as "pizi" in China. "Pizi" is rendered as "ruffian" or "riff-raff." Wang Shuo especially puts these types of people into humorous performance of vulgarity, roguery, ennui and irony. The "pizi" or *liumang* does not care about others' points of view and they tend to transgress against all the entrenched orders. Song Chong, the former head of the Beijing

⁴ Quotation from Jaivin 1992:33.

Film Studio, has commented on Wang Shuo's fiction as a representative of "pizi culture." The films based on Wang Shuo's stories are thus described: "[these films] are written by a *pizi* for *pizi*, *pizi* read them to read about *pizi*; in the end it has given birth to a whole new group of *pizi*."⁵ Other film critics claimed Wang Shuo's stories as an artistic performance of "hippy irreverence" and it may have a side effect of encouraging social laxity and disintegration.⁶

A Significant Structure of Wang Shuo's Fiction:

By way of Goldmann's approach in the sociology of literature, it can be demonstrated that Wang's literary texts coincidentally reflects a significant social structure of 60s Chinese society.⁷ Unquestionably, Wang Shuo's worldview is deeply shadowed by the disruptive Cultural Revolution. His language exposes a sense of demise from the ideological camouflage.

In terms of Wang's background, he was born in 1958 in Beijing and grew up during the period of Cultural Revolution. His portrait captures and represents the mood of what may be called the other Cultural Revolution generation: the new generation has been disillusioned with the political ideals. When

⁵ Quotation from Barne 1992:34.

⁶ See Barne 1992:34-35.

⁷ See Goldmann, 1977.

the Cultural Revolution occurred in 1966, Wang Shuo was still at primary school. The childhood of Wang was in a world of chaos and crises. The new generation witnessed families torn apart and many felt aggrieved. As a result, they learned from a mendacious reality that "need [not] search for evidence; for us it is not a question that needs investigation... When those of the middle generation see as the need for evidence, we see as their struggle to purge themselves of their myths."⁸ The experience from the Cultural Revolution still colors their worldview and this same obsessive bitterness keeps them far away from the politics and the society.

Most children, during the Cultural Revolution, were given freedom to do whatever they pleased, because of the interruption of schooling and elder's' negligence. Liu Xiaobio labeled this period as "a temporary emancipation from the educational process."⁹ Under such circumstance, many young Chinese became delinquents who participated in fighting and womanizing. His novel 'Dongwu xiongmeng' (Wild Beasts), is his semi-autobiography about his childhood in the time of Cultural Revolution.

"As the Cultural Revolution grew and took hold, so did the tendency among the kids of Beijing to become delinquents... Young toughs set out from their turf, creating havoc and looking for thrills. The boys and girls of Beijing from twelve to twenty lived for kicks and sex..."¹⁰

Given such an unhappy background, the members of the new generation are less restricted during their childhood. Compared

⁸ Quotation from Link 1994:241-242.

⁹ Quotation from Barne 1990:54.

¹⁰ Zuo 1989:129.

with the 1980s, they are likely to enjoy few of the ideological, intellectual or emotional qualms experienced by the ex-Red Guards. It is note-worthy that most members of the new generation feel cynical and desperate towards the party-state. They found the official presentations not even worthy of rejections, but simply irrelevant. "This generation feels basically cold to politics of any kind. Now there are no heroes, no models for them. Heroism is gone. Old-style 'heroic patriotism' is also gone."¹¹ The youngest ones who aged from 16 to 24 become more apathetic than other groups. It is because they absorb the social influences from the "make money, study abroad" ethos of the 1980s. Most young people may share with quotation from one of the "cultural T-shirts": "Money may not be omnipotent, but without it you're as good as impotent."¹² As a consequence, they place their central concern far away from the politics and the society, in turn reconstructing their own value system.

For Wang Shuo, he became a rebel during his childhood age. He is not exceptional as a delinquent who search for his thrills and to enjoy his freedoms. By such life experience, he is unsettling from the ingrained orders and compelled ideologies. In this way, his novel writing reflects his radical resistant emotions. Echoing Goldmann, it is not simply his personal

¹¹ Quotation from Link 1994:241-242.

¹² The cultural T-shirt is a kind of commercial performance art appeared in the streets of Beijing from early 1991.

experience but rather the collective consciousness of the entire Other Cultural Revolution Generation.¹³

Wang Shuo may also have acquired such a resistant mentality from his personal experience. In his childhood, he was always beaten by his father when he was naughty. But, beating only made him hate his old man. He scorns the elders who used only beating or physical force to repress the youth. When Wang Shuo at one point found out about his father's dubious past, he began to rebel from his family. When he graduated from secondary school, his father made him join the navy in the PLA. He soon found the hierarchy and corruption of the navy unbearable. Repulsed by the navy, he spent most of his time womanizing and idling. His old man always mocked him, "you're nothing but a hooligan (*liumang*)!"¹⁴ It is not surprising that Wang Shuo responded with wisecracks and indifference as usual. He simply rejects all criticisms and sympathies from others, and responds with ridicule and derision in turn.

Owing to Wang Shuo's personal belief, he has created a number of free-wheeling and irreverent protagonists in his writings. Most Chinese critics remarked them as rebellious "wanzhu."¹⁵ "Wanzhu" in Beijing dialect means "a master of play." The word "wan" (usually pronounced wan'r, literally 'to

¹³ Other Chinese writers also reflect their resistant emotions, such as Liu Suola, Chen Lun, Xu Xing, Wang Shan, Yu Hua and Su Tong.

¹⁴ Zuo 1989:130.

¹⁵ The term "wanzhu" is taken from Wang Shuo's novel entitled 'Wanzhu' (The Operation).

play') has the meaning of 'to do' or 'to work.' For Wang Shuo, a group of "wanzhu" represents the Chinese new generation's mentality, trying to overturn all extreme values from the doctrinaire ideology embedded in the hitherto socialist culture. Through "wanzhu"'s humor and satire, Wang Shuo intends to unveiling the limitations of traditional beliefs, insincerity of intellectuals and elders, and pomposity of government officials.

The Worldview of Wanzhu:

In the story of 'Wanzhu', all "wanzhu" are the ones who negate to the traditional values. They reject critically on standards of what is right and wrong, good and evil, or sacred and vulgar. On one hand, wanzhu perceives ingrained orders and standards as invisible controls derived from social or political hierarchies. In turn, wanzhu's anti-social behavior of irony, roguery and ennui aims at dismantling the significance of traditional judgment. On the other hand, Wang Shuo believes that customary value judgment or moral standards are insufficient to explain those complicated situations. To a large extent, it is more a gray area, a place of ambiguity, than a clear-cut case of "right or wrong" and "good or evil." Most likely, in this convoluted world, our discretion must be applied on a case-by-case manner. We cannot simply depend or entrust on the old-fashioned value system or the routinization of established orders.¹⁶ In fact, the new generation of Chinese has established

¹⁶ See Zhang Dexiang, 1993:70-71.

their own value system which replaced the outdated views. Apparently, Wang Shuo's generational identity is with the Other Cultural Revolution Generation. His individual historical experience is a striking contrast from the middle-aged and senior Chinese intellectuals. In such circumstance, the worldviews of both Wang Shuo and the Other Cultural Revolution Generation come to despise the elders and the established culture they stand for.

Generally speaking, the group of wanzhu lives without grand ambitions nor any sense of social responsibility. They would rather withdraw from any moral standards or social expectations and they are relatively self-determined. This new value system may not be easily understood or accepted by the old generations or central authority. In elders' concepts, the anti-social behavior of "wanzhu" is regarded as defiance in threatening the normal orders at the end. Apparently, an intellectual in 'Wanzhu', Zhao Yaoshun, worries about "wanzhu" and tells them how they should behave in society.

"You're ill-educated; you don't have any good development in society and you'll be disregarded by others. You can do nothing, but only mask with hypocritical happiness... All of you should cry". Zhao Yaoshun says so.¹⁷

The expression of Zhao Yaoshun, in fact, represents the older generation's view over the youth. In response to other's sympathy, wanzhu says "we don't cry, we're happy." They rather take a positive stance to show their optimism.

"We can put up with all types of inconvenience and still feel perfectly at ease. That's because we know there's no such thing as

¹⁷ Wang Shuo, 1988:70-71.

perfection in this world. Things are the same wherever you go. We ask nothing of other people; if our lives are unsatisfactory we don't go around blaming others. Anyway, no one else can be blamed, not that we feel that we've been badly done by or that we should despise the world. If you make it you can influence the whole world, if you're poor then just take care of yourself. Since we don't get anywhere we'd rather just live out our days in peace."¹⁸

From their point of view, "wanzhu" realize that there is no perfection in the world, any pursuits of ideals or utopias are rather impractical and insignificant. They ask nothing and do not blame others. All matters are subject to oneself only. "Wanzhu" learn to live with themselves and probably enjoy their lives. Yu Guan, one of the protagonists, always advises his friends, "enjoy your life, that'll really piss them all off."¹⁹

The social sentiment or worldview of the "wanzhu" is also shared by Liu Xiaobo, and he once says:

"true liberation for the Chinese will only come when people learn to live for themselves, when they realize that life is what you make of it. They should establish this type of a credo: 'Everything I am is of my own doing. If I become famous, that is due to my own efforts; if I'm a failure it's my own fault.'"²⁰

The new generation has disregarded others' expectations and standards. It is understandable that "wanzhu" or young people demand for self-determination over their private lives. In 'Wanzhu', Yu Guan's father is a conservative old man imbued with Maoist idealism: altruism and self-sacrifice. He encourages his son to look forward to contributing to the nation and the people.

¹⁸ Wang Shuo, 1988:71.

¹⁹ Wang Shuo, 1988:59.

²⁰ Quotation from Barne 1990:53-54.

This however leads to Yu Guan's impertinence. The old man feels generally repellent and questions himself, "why do I have such a son."²¹ Without doubt, the ideals of the old days have gradually degenerated: a new value system has been emerged instead. Wang Shuo implicitly expresses that the old age has passed and any pursuit of ideals remains vacuous.

By Wang Shuo's fictional characters, the rebellious mentality of the Other Cultural Generation is concretely exemplified in literary expression. With respect to Mannheim, each generation has its own special sentiment or cultural meaning that the same generation will share or identify.²² The Chinese new generations may also tend to share with the disillusionment of political ideals which leads to personal carving for their own autonomous spheres separate from others' disturbance.

Wanzhu's Anti-intellectuals:

Wang Shuo's protagonists not only ignore others' comments but also ridicule the images of socially accepted in Chinese society. "Wanzhu"'s irony sometimes represents in anti-intellectuals. The most remarkable episode of the story is the "Three T Award Ceremony" that has been staged for the benefit of Baokang (a writer). Except for Baokang, the other invited guests did not attend the ceremony. Yu Guan still awards him a

²¹ Wang Shuo, 1988:42.

²² See Wolff's analysis, 1975:58.

championship medal. Conventionally, intellectuals in Chinese society are closely subordinated to the reproduction of cultural hegemony. At the same time, the intellectuals always maintain their philosophical rationale of their commitment to a state with humanist concerns for its subjects. Both authors and the subject of their art are tied together by political and moral obligations. In such circumstance, many Chinese intellectuals are highly respected in relations to their morality and cultural capital. They represent a kind of high culture or elite culture, a mainstream of ideology and value system. For Wang Shuo, he is extremely anti-intellectual. Wang believes that the intellectuals have regulated the sets of social or moral standards in order to control other people. All these make Wang Shuo unable to accept their superciliousness and hypocrisy. In 'Dongwu xiongneng' (Wild Beast), the narrator even says:

"I am thankful to my age (the Cultural Revolution). In that age, students gained a far-reaching emancipation such that we do not need to learn forgotten and obsolete knowledge."²³

Wang Shuo tends to attack intellectual knowledge as worthless. In 'Wanzhu', he again satirizes intellectual's image of supremacy with the depiction of hypocritical author Baokang. Despite being a writer or a literary intellectual, Baokang is only concerned with his popularity in literary circle. Though his writing are not admired by the public readers or eminent literary critics; through the prize-awarding ceremony from Yu

²³ Wang Shuo, 1994:5.

Guan, he becomes self-satisfied. Wang Shuo has revealed that human lives are full of camouflage. Many socially acceptable hypocrites are not different from the normal people or even hooligans. "Wanzhu" even warns other people with: "don't treat me as a human" and "treat me like a human being [i.e. like other Chinese], and I'll have all of the faults of everyone else".²⁴ Wang Shuo in fact unveils the intellectual camouflage of Baokang, from the sacred back to the profane.

Also, the wanzhu sell tickets to the people who feel lucky to be able to witness such a glamorous event. The film version of this story ended in disco dancing with all characters dressed up as People's Liberation Army soldiers, Qing aristocrats, public security officers, Guomindang generals, warlords, Red Guards, rustic peasants, and muscular factory workers. Extraordinarily, they are strangely out of place when they interact with good cheer on the same stage. Again, Wang Shuo satirizes two different ideologies in contemporary Chinese history. He reveals,

"this is a typical reflection of how two different ideologies are disco dancing in the heads of a generation of Chinese intellectuals. The values of the traditional form of ownership and the new form of ownership hold equal attractions for China's intellectuals. What can they possibly do? After much reflection there's only one solution: dance away!"²⁵

Those intellectuals, who pursuit their idealism, ultimately achieve nothing at all. Their experiences from the past decades

²⁴ See Barne, 1992:52-53.

²⁵ Quotation from Barne 1992:37.

only cause them unprecedented suffering. What can they possibly do? Just dance and have fun. It further increases a sense of absurdity from the reality. Obviously, the worldview of the new generation has formed contrast from their elder brothers and sisters. Wang Shuo and the other young Chinese would rather retreat from the pursuits of ideals in their lives.

In 'Wan di jiusi xintiao' (An Attitude), Wang ridicules Chinese literature and intellectuals again. A group of supercilious "liumang" decide over a mahjong game to become writers. To be a writer in the present day is a good way to get invited to dinner. But, what topics will they write?

"I don't know what I will write?"
Ang's husband answers.

"To write what you are familiar of?"
The narrator says.

"I only know about the fat guys who play mahjong".

"It's O.K. Can be a bad case to reflect the truth".

"How about social responsibility? I'm a writer. I should teach my people some valuable things".

"All right. Teach what?"
The narrator asks.²⁶

After the mahjong game, they round up the usual genre: one will express his deep concern of the nation; another will go to live in the countryside and write about rural literature; a third will get to do sex and modernism and a fourth will become critics and write about the rest of them. Eventually, they publish a

²⁶ Wang Shuo, 1988:96-97.

As a result, the ideological ambience spontaneously breaks down from a sense of transforming seriousness into humor. With his invention use of paradoxical humor, he succeeds in the inflation of Party rhetoric and the deflation of ideological effectiveness and relevance. He further widens the dramatic gap between official language and social reality, with increasing linguistic dysfunction developed in China that contains greater possibilities for political humor than ever.²⁹ Other cultural, established and orthodox values can also be dissolved by his use of ennui and roguish humor. Indeed, it is a subversion towards the Party ideology and the status quo, turning the elements of the Party and orthodoxy into "linguistic toys" to be played with by Wang's heroes, ignorant and ill-educated disaffected youth. As the writer Wang Meng commented on Wang Shuo's language in 1993:

"What he does is place all forms of language on the same plane of discourse, regardless of whether it be the language of earnest discussion or badinage, whether it be elegant or vulgar, sad or happy ... Although you can't accuse him of using language to incite counter-revolution or to instigate people to engage in serious criminal acts, Wang Shuo can be said to manipulate language in every other way at his disposal ..."³⁰

Through his language expression, he confuses the dichotomy between good and bad, beauty and ugliness, right and wrong and sacred and vulgar in our society. Wang Shuo successfully debunks all political piety and existing orders, with his humor of cruelty to the intellectuals, university students, writers and

²⁹ Barne, 1992:57.

³⁰ Quotation from 1993:8.

young women. Under such circumstance, readers may re-establish their own sense of judgment towards their familiarized world.

Wanzhu's Anti-Social Behavior:

Wang Shuo also creates his protagonists to against the Chinese moral standards and social expectations. To be a liberated person, an estrangement from the traditional and official ideology is individual's effort to breakthrough Chinese ingrained culture. The characters of Zhang Ming, Wu Di and Hu Yi in 'Yiban si huoyan Yiban si haishui' (Hot and Cold, Measure and Measure) represent the most extreme case of individual resistance from the outside pressures. Zhang Ming is a young man who makes a living as a blackmailer (dressing as a policeman and extorting money from Hong Kong traveler who pick up women for whom he and his friend pimp). At the beginning, Zhang Ming meets with Wu Di, a university student, and finally Wu falls in love and co-habits with him. When Wu Di is lovelorn with Zhang Ming, she becomes a prostitute. But she still loves him though despairing at the realization that he may never love her again and kills herself when they are arrested by the police. Zhang is sent to jail. After a year he meets another girl, Hu Yi, strikingly similar to Wu Di.

In this story, all fictional characters have a common place: their total negation towards the founded orders and

ideologies. Zhang Ming is a shameless "*liumang*" and he frankly claims himself as an immoral guy or criminal,

"I'm greedy, a sex maniac, and a complete moral wipeout. Everyday I dress up as a police officer in order to blackmail Hong Kong business men and foreigners. . In particular I'm criminal at large. You'd be doing everyone a service if you reported me to the police."³¹

But he is not simply aimed at blackmailing money or cheating a woman's love. He rather tends to vitiate all existing orders from the traditional ethics. To a certain extent, the author feels extreme estrangement from the authorities which have unprecedentedly enslaved human's quality. Zhang Ming's anti-social behavior is a form of dissent. Individuals can even give up their own social responsibility and disengage from their social roles. Thus, Wang Shuo creates Zhang Ming to represent ways of malicious cynicism and fastidious indifference.

Both Wu Di and Hu Yi exceedingly negate the social standards and traditional values. As a university student, Wu Di loves *liumang* Zhang Ming and gives up her ex-boyfriend. She even becomes a prostitute and kills herself to express her love to Zhang Ming. All these reveal her rebellion against tradition, that she is disinclined to submit herself to all social ideals. Hu Yi's anti-traditional elements are the fusion with Zhang Ming and Wu Di. She is also a university student with defiant dispositions, scornful against her parents, teachers and all elders. She always disdains Chinese culture as "pseudo-deep" and she disregards Zhang Ming's advice to make friends with two

³¹ Quotation from Barne, 1992:42.

"liumangs" who parody writers. This reflects Hu Yi's extreme individualism to live up with her own will only.

Individual's rebel from the existing social orders in Wang Shuo's eyes is only a demand for individual autonomy and independence from the party-state's domination. It is also an indirect challenge with the central authority which is a source of cultural reproduction to society. Though Chinese people would conform unquestionably with the state in previous day, the new generation is more conscious to undermine such legitimated authority by their soft-core resistance.

Individualism of the New Generation:

Simultaneously, Wang Shuo attempts to express the new generation has acquired the values of individualism. Unquestionably, the Chinese youth always voices out for in-between respects, human rights and equality contrast the long-established concepts of hierarchical relationship in Chinese Confucian ethics. Through Wang Shuo's writing, he has articulated both old and new generations' value systems.

An ideological contradiction is particularly portrayed in the story of 'Wo si ni papa' (I Am Your Dad). It is about a paradoxical relationship between a father and son. Ma Linsheng, a divorcee who works in a bookstore, agonizes over his role as a father, suffering from a value conflict with his teenage son Ma

Rui. In order to search for the perfect relationship, Ma Linsheng changes his role from an "authoritarian father" to a "mate father", but he eventually abandons his role. A yawning gap between the older and the younger generations is attributed to their exclusive value systems, paternalism versus individualism. The author explicitly reveals the psychological complexities of both generations in respects to their value oppositions.

For Ma Linsheng, he assumes himself to be the authoritarian father and forces Ma Rui to be a disciplined teenager. At the beginning of the story, Ma Linsheng always orders Ma Rui to clean-up, to have dinner and to rewrite the homework in one day. His words are simply the orders of a ruler that requires absolute conformity. Also, Ma Linsheng likes to eavesdrop on his son's discussions with other teenagers and interrupts their conversations. The teenagers, including Ma Rui, feel exceedingly alienated from the old generation, being deprived of individual privacy.

The authoritarian style is not shown only in the unreasonable orders and interruption, but also the abuse of beating. Once, Ma Rui bravely corrects the pronunciation of his politics teacher at school. The teacher is outraged at his insolence and forces him to apologize. But, Ma Rui decidedly refuses. Other school teachers view this as defiance, disdaining the authority of teachers and school. Although Ma Linsheng is

secretly sympathetic with his son, he forces Ma Rui to hand in a self-criticized letter in exchange for the school's pardon. After drafting the letter, Ma Linsheng forces his son to rewrite it. When Ma Rui reads the words, he cries out. He does not think of himself as picking on his teacher.

"I just hope she'll correct the pronunciation. I do not intend to make her feel unrespected. She can often correct my faults, but why can't I correct her too? We're all human being, why can't we treat each other at a same position?" Ma Rui explains.³²

Disregarding Ma Rui's explanation, his father gives him a harsh beating for being disobedient. Ma Linsheng lets him know one thing: "don't challenge authority; although you're right in reason, one is powerless against the authority."³³ Ma Rui retreats into apathy after his father's beating and unreasonable advice.

For Ma Rui is a fourteen-year-old young boy. In his father's eyes, he is still an innocent child. However, Ma Rui is an inexhaustibly brilliant leader with critical judgment and observation in his class. At home, he does not actively talk to his old man and superficially obeys him. Even though Ma Rui is alienated from his father, he does not really hate him. It is because he regards that all fathers behave in such similar ways. A father-figure in youth's world represents the repression of patriarchy or paternalism. They naturally refuse the parents' intervention over their individual affairs, because of their

³² Wang Shuo, 1992:46-47.

³³ Wang Shuo, 1992:47-48.

authoritarian outlook. As a result, a growing gap perpetually exists between the old and the new generations.

While Ma Linsheng is confounded by his son, he consistently reconsiders his role. One day, he suggests practising in-house democracy. Ma Linsheng talks to Ma Rui, "don't call me dad, call me mate; mate." In a democratic ambience, both father and son hold an equal status and respects each other. Ma Linsheng becomes ever reformed to accept Ma Rui's opinions over the past family arrangements. Ma Linsheng is proud of his democratic approach to make friend with his son and always actively joins the teenagers' gatherings. Their relationship seems more amiable and intimate than ever before.

Nevertheless, since the hierarchical relationship collapsed, Ma Linsheng feels less respected and worthy in the game of equality. This feeling exploded when he faces Ma Rui's open criticisms. One day, Ma Linsheng goes out to attend the opening ceremony of Asian Sport and Ma Rui simultaneously invites his friends to have a party at home. Ma Linsheng is late for the opening time and he returns home. When he comes home, he is glad to join the party and to watch the opening ceremony from the television. But his appearance makes all the teenagers feel uncomfortable. Ma Rui urgently forces his father to leave them alone. Ma Linsheng is extremely exasperated by his son's unexpected exclusion. He assumes that his role to be a friend of Ma Rui and other teenagers, and he will be welcomed to join their

activities. Moreover, Ma Rui has criticized Ma Linsheng's hypocrisy. With his sharp observation, he perceives that his father always camouflages himself as a respectable person. All these constitute him to doubt about his imposition ranging from authoritarianism to democracy.

Ma Linsheng intends to uphold his patriarchal ruling again. Disregarding individual privacy, he opens Ma Rui's locked drawer in order to examine his books, diary, and other things. When Ma Rui discovers the opened drawer, he argues with his dad. However, Ma Linsheng blames him for reading pulp fictions, orders him to break with one teenager, and to call him "dad" again. Ma Rui scornfully questions Ma Linsheng's position, "Do you know human right?" He simultaneously demands his father to give back the books, to apologize and to stop interrupting his private life. By this resistance, Ma Linsheng emerges and answers in this way:

"What's human right? I only know I've responsibility to teach you to be a good guy... What do you own? Nothing! I give you everything, including your life and your human rights. All these come from me!"³⁴

Parents' authoritarian outlook is only derived from their loves and concerns. Children should unquestionably accept and comply with their guidance or orders. It is the traditional concept of Chinese ethics that paternalism and patriarchy cannot be challenged. As a father, he expects his children to give them infinite respects and conformity in a hierarchical relationship.

³⁴ Wang Shuo, 1992:155.

This kind of hierarchical relationship is simultaneously envisaged between the elders and the youths, and the teachers and the students. All inferior ones should conform unquestionably to their parents, elders, teachers and even the party-state. Under such entrenched order, individual independence completely vanished. Man has become a cog in the machine, as a tool of his ruler.

The chief influence of patriarchy and paternalism on Ma Rui or the new generation is the enslavement of individualism. Individual independence is always subject to the oppression of the patriarchal Confucian ethics. It is not surprising that the young generation inexhaustibly calls for an emancipation from the suffocating culture and search for modern democracy in regards to human rights, equality and reasoning. Most young Chinese thus become rebellious from the traditional ideologies. Unquestionable conformity cannot come back; monolithic control has lost its legitimization. Ma Rui inevitably says, "You're my dad, I'm your son, nothing else is going to work. So from now on let's neither of us force the other, okay?"³⁵ What remains between them? Only a family relationship, nothing else.

This story can be read as an allegory about the difficulty in working out a harmonized relationship between the old and the new generations.³⁶ The value conflict seems to be never resolved. But one thing is important; the ruled (the new

³⁵ Wang Shuo, 1992:275.

³⁶ See Jaivin 1992:24.

generation) has disengaged from the ingrained ideologies in both social or political dimensions. Most young people seek for their own independence and resist paternalism and even authoritarian rules. This rebellious vision is a force against both the tyranny and the vulgarity of a corrupt Party culture.

Again, the story of 'Yiban si huoyan Yiban si haishui' (Hot and Cold, Measure and Measure) exposes the zeitgeist of a new generation that has lost the grand hopes of the party-controlled political and social establishments. What do they still believe in? The individual's judgment and integrity is a fundamental criteria when ones makes decisions. Many young Chinese emphasize on one's interest and subjective feelings. In the fiction 'Xuye' (Mr. Hui), the protagonist Mr. Hui gives up his decadent life since he desires to make profits and to accumulate his wealth. His great change is based upon his own individual interests, not according to any moral or social considerations. Wang Shuo once says, "based on individual interest to determine is the most legitimate way."³⁷ Wang Shuo therefore accentuates the notion of individualism as a total release from the ingrained ideologies, instead of individual judgment and integrity.

Wanzhu's Emotional Sharing:

Besides, another characteristic of Wang Shuo's fiction is the description on individuals' subjective feelings and social

³⁷ See Zhang Dexiang 1993:72.

experiences in modern society.³⁸ Wang Shuo has captured a paradoxical nature of contemporary Chinese life. It is one's restriction, a sense of "indifference and isolation as modern man in the post-industrial world; ... aware of the restriction of life and feeling of vacuity."³⁹ Even though the group of "wanzhu" is less restricted, they are incapable of extricating themselves from all social controls. For instance, the establishment of "Three T Company" helps people to resolve personal problems. It reveals that all clients (or the modern men) are incapable of dealing with their personal emotions and frustrations. They agonize over personal restriction which derived from human lives. For "wanzhu", though they cannot resolve all problems, they would rather make fun with their clients and forget the troubles. In this way, Wang Shuo is able to recognize the common people's calmness when they are faced with the challenges of life. Furthermore, Wang Shuo has portrayed a positive stance of his protagonists in '**Bianjibude gushi**' ('The Story of an Editorial Department'). In part of the irrational disputes among the editors, the audience or readers can find that each editor (the intellectuals) has his or her own shortcomings and irritably attack one another. But they eventually understand that mutual cooperation is important to overcome their problem. A sense of cooperation and mutual empathy in everyday life is deeply shared by the readers and audience. Wang Shuo's fictional protagonists give readers the

³⁸ See Liu Xinwu and Cheng Yiwu 1996:43-44.

³⁹ Quotation from Barne, 1992:46.

subjective sharing in the aspects of personal loves, social experiences and worldviews.

Wang Shuo's Gray Sentiment:

For Wang Shuo fiction, he is widely welcomed by Beijing youth and common people. The popularity of 'Kewang' (Aspiration) and 'Bianjibude gushi' (The Story of an Editorial Department) in Beijing China is a good example. Most reading public and audience accept the "liumang" character of the protagonists. Obviously, Wang Shuo's hilarious satire has impressed many urban people. Though Wang Shuo and his fictional characters do not directly fight against the party-state, their alienation and cynicism have threatened the normal orders of authorities. Wang Shuo's appearance in ninety's China has provided people a public channel to express their repressed discontent and frustration. Geremie Barme regards Wang Shuo's irreverence as a "gray sentiment." It is "hopelessness, uncertainty, ennui mixed with irony, sarcasm, and a large dose of fatalism."⁴⁰ The term "gray sentiment" is borrowed from Havel who has used the notion of a "gray zone" to describe the space occupied by those people who opposed the communist system in passive rather than active ways. The new generation in China may live in those marginal gray areas of life over which the party no longer exercised complete control. In fictional world or TV shows, Wang Shuo gives readers

⁴⁰ Quotation from Shell, 1994:321.

a rising expectation to be independent from the party-state and status quo.

Through the circulation of Wang Shuo's gray sentiment, many young readers and audience accept his irony and cynicism as an effective way in undermining the legitimacy of communist ideology. It is also Wang Shuo's success to arouse most silent readers' consciousness to the individual's ability to confront with the overwhelming authority. Before a complete formation of public sphere, a sense of faith for liberation is important to integrate different social backgrounds of participants into a coherent community. Wang Shuo may be one of the navigators to guide his readers in broadening their personal gray zones and in fighting against the all-pervasive power of the Chinese communist state.

Wang Shuo's Influence in China:

The recent cultural phenomena in China exposes people's oppositions towards the party-state. In the early 1990s, "the Mao phenomenon" appeared in which people were beginning to treat Mao as part of a pop-culture. The new generation of Chinese in particular collected Mao memorabilia like his buttons and badges. Some private entrepreneurs soon produced a large number of Mao ball-point pens, Mao tie clips, Mao umbrellas, and Mao calendars. Other avant-garde artists were trying to demystify Mao by converting him into pop art. Most likely, the contemporary

artists transformed sacred into profane, with less serious regard to political ideology.

Most likely, Wang Shuo is one of the dissent artists to disengage from any lofty authorities. Under his pens, all sacred images of serious literature, intellectuals, political ideology, elite culture and paternalism are nothing and worthless. They are only the means to manipulate others. Wang Shuo's writing conducts a way to weaken all established authorities and to encourage individuals' emancipation.

Simultaneously, a Beijing youth Kong Yongqian, inspired by Wang Shuo's fiction, produced and sold the "cultural T-shirts". These shirts were created with the pictures of humorous, ironical and some mocked political statements. In particular, Kong's T-shirts featured the satirical language from Wang Shuo's fictions. For instances, Wang Shuo-styled word *shi'r* (thing, matter, event) was created into a slogan: "Some things only become something when you make something of them. Then they can be a real thing." Another word *fan* (annoyed, pissed off, etc.) in Wang's writing was also printed on the T-shirts. When people wore the T-shirts, they might express their rebel or alienation from the authorities.⁴¹ Liu Xiaobo again comments on the view of cultural shirts held by mainstream of intellectuals. He says:

"'Cultural T-shirts' definitely helped people express the oppression they had experienced after 4 June. Their popularity was in many ways

⁴¹ Kang wanted his T-shirts to appeal a wide range of people. People therefore used them to carry out a voiceless exchange, a silent dialogue between like-minded individuals free from the political restrictions or censorship.

similar to that of [the television sitcom] 'The Story of Editorial Department'. People no longer express their opposition directly or engage in confrontation. They express their dissatisfaction by making jokes and engaging in badinage. It is a type of 'barbed cynicism', 'a critical indifference', a prankster mentality which treats all that is 'holy', 'sublime', all 'sense of mission' and 'duty' with contempt. It is a major expression of mass psychology."⁴²

With respects to cultural shirts and Wang Shuo's novel, the official media has shown the official disapproval towards their creations. Apparently, their artistic expression was perceived as "anti-culture" that "they [are] the latest in a tradition of anti-social behavior that [have] links to the Dadaists and hippies in the West and Wang Shuo's fiction in China." Another critic pointed to the cultural T-shirts: "They carry gloomy, negative and cynical messages which do one thing only: encourage a sense of decadence."⁴³ In late 1996, all Wang Shuo's fictions and his scripts on two television soap operas have been banned with "counter-revolutionary" reason by the central Chinese government.⁴⁴ The political irony and anti-culturalism of Wang Shuo has led to the strict official censorship.

Wang Shuo is one of the important writers in the contemporary Chinese literary world who has delivered cynicism and resistance of the party-state to his readers. His iconoclasm is similar to the May Fourth intellectuals who cried for individual emancipation from the despotism and its authoritarian

⁴² Quotation from Barne 1993:35.

⁴³ See Barne 1993:26.

⁴⁴ See Apple Daily, 12 October 1996.

culture. Under such context, the reading public and Wang Shuo in his novels have established their own value systems that may be an unyielding power to counter with the communist ideology.

Conclusion:

With Wang Shuo's protagonists, the irreverent and sardonic mentality is successfully expressed in literary forms and television soap operas. In particular, his fictional character is used to undermine the iron discipline of official ideologies and status quos. Instead, Wang Shuo encourages a value of individualism which is a real freedom for human beings. Based on one's judgment and integrity to decide is the most legitimated way in modern society. Retreat from the old-fashioned value system suggests that individual is disenchanted with the past illusions and demanded for individual independence. Wang Shuo's spiritual rebellion from the normal orders in cultural sense is an attack on ideological decay. It is a stream of counter culture to negate the old-fashioned values and the party-controlled political and social world.

Chapter 4:

A Race of Heroes - Mo Yan's Ideal Lifeworld

After the wake of the 1989 Tiananmen Incidence, Chinese writers have redrawn their literary dialogue on "center versus margin" along a new strategy.¹ For the previous Literature of Root-searching, the writers tended to remain depoliticized in carving out a deeper feeling of cultural sphere. It stimulated the discussions of "cultural fever" during the midst of 1980s. In 1990s China, the writers are further turning inward to matters of thought and psyche. To reconstruct a sense of self is to reaffirm a "human identity" with eternal existence. Young Chinese writers have again laid their stress on the description of everyday life and the subjective notion of individuals - both authors and their fictional characters. Such a new literary trend has again undermined the party-state's ideology.

Mo Yan, in contemporary Chinese literary world, has also searched for an ideal lifeworld which contrasts sharply with the familiar world. In the depiction of the natural emotions and desires of peasantry, he portrays the peasants' rural lives in their vitality, vigor, and cruelty. Mo Yan believes that such a human life force is able to overcome the brutality and repression of external world. Thus, it is essential to recall the importance of the human lifeworld that embedded in each Chinese individuals.

¹ See Wang, 1994:240-241 and Leo Lee, 1991.

In the formation of public sphere, Mo Yan has addressed his personal and subjective visions capable of transcending the objective restrictions from the communist ideology. In the works of Mo Yan, two distinctive spheres are inextricably linked. They are the world of "reality" and the "individual lifeworld." For the outside world, it is the objective context of the Chinese life. For the individual lifeworld, it is a sphere full of subjective sentiments and imaginations. Though the fictional characters are always repressed by the political and social tenets, individual's subjective or spiritual visions are portrayed as transfigures to exceed beyond the political or social constraints. In fact, Mo Yan has carved out a sphere of subjective world to counter against the communist ideology. His writings allow his readers to be aware of the corruption of central authority, the social predicaments of Chinese people as well as the significance of subjective visions. All these works arouse the reading public's consciousness of present repression stemmed from the official culture and disseminate the personal resistance. It is Mo Yan's attempt to demystify the iron discipline of official ideology.

Mo Yan's Social Background:

Mo Yan, in the contemporary Chinese literary circle (*wentan*), is well-known to the eminent literary critics and numerous readers. In early 1984, his story 'Touming de hong luobo' (The Crystal Carrot) firstly drew the literary critics'

attention and he was admired as a talented writer. His vigorous language and perceptive images of protagonists especially impressed his readers. Again, his novel 'Hong gaoliang jiazou' (Red Sorghum Family) in 1987 caused a sensation among his readers. It was a story about his ancestors' glorious history in his hometown - Gaomi County in Shandong Province. One year later, the film director Zhang Yimou adapted Mo Yan's story to the screen. The film, also entitled 'Hong gaoliang', won a Golden Bear Award at the Berlin International Film Festival. Mo Yan thereby has become famous amongst other young writers since mid eighties.

Mo Yan, the pen name of Guan Moye, was born in 1956 in Gaomi County of Shandong Province. He grew up in a peasant family with thirty-one family members. Because of his upper-middle class background, he could not go to the middle school. After finishing primary five, he helped his parents in the fields and became a peasant. Until 1973, Mo Yan got a job as an accountant in a cotton processing factory in the county town. Later he joined the army in 1976 and in 1979 became an instructor in a cultural unit of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in Beijing. In 1984, he entered the PLA College of Literature and Art to study Chinese literature. Several years later, he was also admitted to the graduate program at the Lu Xun Literary Institute and Beijing Normal University, and graduated in 1991.

Owing to his class background, Mo Yan suffered from tremendous political pressures during his childhood. After the Great Leap Forward, he and his family encountered the great famine, during which he only ate two bowls of wild vegetable soup each day. With his class origin, his education or even political rights were totally suppressed. In both 1963 and 1964, there was the "Siqing yundong" (Four Cleanups Campaign) in his village. Mo Yan came back to his family while the Cultural Revolution occurred in 1966. He witnessed families torn apart and felt aggrieved with this political torrent.

Mo Yan began his writing in 1981 and some of his early short stories were published in the army literary journals. After writing 'Touming de hong luobo' (The Crystal Carrot), he read Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. He was inspired by Marquez's "magical realism" which allowed him to reexamine his past experiences from his hometown, Gaomi County of Shandong Province. Since he grew up in Gaomi County, he had a deep understanding of its history, customs and habits. Moreover, some historical events were always verbally transmitted by the inhabitants. Most likely, people might retell the tale differently. Each time the tale was told, something was added. Mo Yan once said, "the more times the tale was told, the richer it became. The images became more and more colorful. Gradually, history became a myth."² As a consequence, Mo Yan began to

² Quotation from Leung, 1994:149-150.

portray his hometown's history with the mythical description in order to reinterpret the past and the present.

Mo Yan's Fictional Characters:

The protagonists in Mo Yan's writing often come from the countryside and they are simultaneously repressed by poor natural environment and rural bureaucrats. Since Mo Yan grew up in rural area, he is capable of capturing the peasants' attitude and thinking patterns. He is exceptionally sensitive of the peasants' endurance from the hardship. Even though they live in a harsh environment, they have their own way to struggle against the repression. "In fact, they had a great sense of humor. They cracked jokes with each other in the fields. They had to express their struggle against the harsh reality in their own way."³ Mo Yan understands the mind of the peasantry with great sympathy.

Mo Yan's novel is supposed to expose the Chinese countryside as a nightmare world, in great contrast to the traditional and the post-1949 writers of rural fictions.⁴ Nevertheless, he does not only depict the human's tribulation, but also glorify human life force. In his fictional world, it is filled with a paradoxical quality of life. In 'Hong gonglian

³ Quotation from Leung, 1994:152.

⁴ See Duke 1993:48.

jiazu' (Red Sorghum Family), he concludes his impression of the rural area:

"the northeastern Gaomi is undoubtedly the prettiest and the ugliest, the most unworldly and the most mundane, the holiest and the most vulgar, the most heroic and the most rottenest, the most drunken and the most romantic place on earth."⁵

The author strongly believes that life quality is occupied by contradictory components of beauty and ugliness, illusion and reality, good and evil and so on. By his portrait, he describes the negative sides of humanity in order to deepen the tragic ambience and absurdity of reality.⁶

In depicting an individual's lifeworld, why does Mo Yan create such a life sphere and what is he seeking for? To answer these two questions, we can firstly refer to the story of 'Touming de hong luobo' (The Crystal Carrots). A little "Blacky" works in a mine underground during the Cultural Revolution. He is exceedingly pathetic because he is treated poorly by his step-mother, the bitter young blacksmith and the existing political movement. Although Blacky is dearly loved by a young female mine worker (she treated him as her brother), he still remains silent. In fact, his silence can be attributed to the repressive external world. However, Blacky has become revitalized after he dreamt about a completely transparent carrot. In his heart, this carrot turned into his fragile symbol of hope. This dreamy vision makes him brave enough to steal carrots from the fields. Even from

⁵ Mo, 1987:2.

⁶ See Si 1990:114.

such bleak epoch, Blacky can search for his own happiness from this magic dream.

Moreover, Mo Yan in this story implicitly breaks down the gloomy ambience of reality. When the beautiful female mine worker fell in love with a young stonemason, she became more sensitive to her nearby environment. She particularly cared about her lover, mute Blacky and an old master blacksmith. Individuals could mutually feel and share with the sentiment of love. It is convincing that subjective consciousness of individuals cannot be freely exploited by the invasion of external world. He rather explores the "lifeworld" of individuals in the wake of the political and feudal interruption. Little Tiger in 'Kuhe' (The Dry River) has committed suicide because of his family's pressure. Death is little Tiger's only alternative to escape from this nightmare world. The narrator ironically says, "he can experience how attractive death is." Little Tiger is emancipating from the suppression. With a focus on the vitality of human life, Mo Yan opens up a new face of the individuals, that one can consume their primitive energy against the repression of cruel reality.

With respect to life force, how significant is it in contemporary Chinese society? With experiences from past political torrents, most Chinese writers had their cultural reflections to reexamine all aspects of Chinese culture and history. In the midst of 1980s, there was a "Literature of Root-

searching." Writers explored their cultural origins either in the geographical sense or in a motive force of human life. They excavated the parts of national culture that was uncontaminated by the party-state ideology. In addition, most Chinese writers adopted the notion of western modernism to stress one's subjectivity. This began a humanist quest amongst the intellectuals. They searched for the independent existence of man with inherent value and dignity that can extend beyond the manipulation of the party-state. Dai Houying, in her novel 'Ren, a ren' (Oh Man), expressed the notion of humanist quest:

"What motivate me to write was a strong desire to find out the cause behind the Cultural Revolution and I discovered it was the distortion of man, of human nature, human affection and humanism. I must use my pen to restore the dignity of man, to treasure the value of man, and eulogize humanism.

What I write is the blood and tears of man, the painful moaning of a distorted soul, the spiritual sparks that erupt in darkness. I raised a loud cry: 'Oh, my soul, may you come back again!' With infinite joy I recorded the revival of human nature."⁷

Mo Yan undoubtedly followed this literary trend to exhibit "a transformed lifeworld filtered through subjective consciousness."⁸ In the present study, we will focus on three full-lengthed fictions of Mo Yan to analyze his humanist quest. They are the 'Hong gaoliang jiazu' (Red Sorghum Family), 'Tiantang suantai zhi ge' (The Garlic Song in Paradise County) and 'Fengru feitun'.

⁷ Quotation from Lin 1993:180.

⁸ See Tsai 1989:19.

'Hong gaoliang jiazhu' (Red Sorghum Family):

In 1987, Mo Yan published the novel *'Hong gaoliang jiazhu'* (Red Sorghum Family). On the whole, The author has created the resistant subjects (the protagonists Grandfather and Grandmother); reversing the established value system from the communist and feudal culture, and celebrating the primitive energy, love and sexuality of human life.

As a first-person narrator (the grandson), the author tends to review the past history of his ancestors in Gaomi County of Shandong Province from 1923 to 1976. In order to deal with the historical past, Mo Yan integrates the mythical and realistic depiction. For the historical past, it allows the author to recuperate the past in a personally meaningful way. It results from a value concept in the past and the present. Obviously, the story of the grandfather and the grandmother are described through the mouth of their grandson and they are ever heroic in the world, "the most heroic as well as the most bastardly history."⁹ In addition, there is a dichotomy between "my world" and the "world of the red sorghum." The narrator has lamented over his generation so weak, timid and hypocritical. What he says:

"I have been running away from home for the past ten years. Now I have come back, carrying with me the hypocrisy I have picked up from the smart, upper-class society. My body has been soaked in the putrid water of my urban life. It is so contaminated that every pore on my skin gives forth an offensive smell."¹⁰

⁹ Mo, 1987:2.

¹⁰ Mo, 1987:450.

The world of red sorghum represents "permanently longed-for" perfection of "pure humanity and pure beauty."¹¹ Comparatively speaking, the author's ancestors are more courageous to love and to hate, and they are ready to be identified with the red sorghum for its perseverance against the turbulent ages. Their strong emotions and chivalric souls, to a large extent, cannot be neglected by the Chinese new generation.

Mo Yan has construed 'Hong gaoliang jiazu' (Red Sorghum Family) as a historical romance. The characters in the novel meet with the historical events of the warlord, the second Sino-Japanese War, the conflicts between the Nationalists and the Communists, the Communists takeover, and the Cultural Revolution. Individuals in such huge torrents of national disaster are not impotent to combat the immense historical forces. Most likely, the protagonists strenuously have faced the distressing challenges and they will not submit passively to the manipulation of the authorities.

In the narrator's mind, both his Grandfather and Grandmother are the heroes of Gaomi County. Although they are unconventional and deviant, their lives are more evidently powerful than other Chinese people at any times. Grandpa Yu Zhan'ao appears as an eccentric hero because he has devoted himself to be a commander of guerrilla to confront the Japanese troop during the Sino-Japanese War II. "He (grandfather) wishes

¹¹ Mo, 1987:453.

to survive, revenge, re-revenge, re-re-revenge. This rule of vicious cycles transforms each and every kind-hearted as well as timid man in the street into ruthless and bold bandit."¹² His quest is not for national solidarity, but for his own personal sake. Grandfather's action has deviated from traditional value which demanded that one should give his loyalty to the state and safeguard his country. Besides, Yu Zhan'ao conceives that each military leader ultimately fantasizes to be an emperor to unify the entire country. He is no exception. On the other hand, Grandmother in the narrator's portrayal is someone who has gallantly overturned the traditional value of female subservience in China. She resents her parents marrying a leper husband and she eventually cut off ties with her parents. As a wife, she has forbidden her husband to touch her. After her leper husband died, she has gladly cleansed and redecorated the household. She even courageously loves Grandfather and holds the household's business. To a certain extent, she transgresses the rules of traditional ethics. But the narrator exalts his Grandmother's life: "she is writing the last word of her thirty-year history. Her past falls to the ground like fragrant fruits and her future is like ring of haloes which catches passing glimpses of."¹³ With such expression, Mo Yan repeatedly lays stress on the individual's effort being capable of creating history and shaping history with their discursive activities.

¹² Mo, 1987:371.

¹³ Mo, 1987:82.

The people of "red sorghum" represent a race of men and women who own certain unique qualities. Although they are ordinary people, they seemingly acquire a kind of dignity capable of transforming human miseries into nobility. When we read about Grandfather's autobiography, Grandfather can either be seen as a member of banditry or the commander of guerrilla. No matter how difficult it is, he still perseveres in his efforts to defeat his enemies. Interestingly, he has even urinated in the distilled drinks and these drinks have become well known locally for its distinctive taste. Uncle Arhat, on the other hand, has bravely damaged the Japanese facilities and killed two laborer horses. He has undoubtedly become a hero of the Chinese people. Though Uncle Arhat is executed by the Japanese soldiers in the sorghum field, his dead body has mythically disappeared at that night. His blood has poured onto the entire field and made the sorghum grow more vigorous than before. Their primitive life force is the most significant element to face with the external world's challenges.

At the same time, Mo Yan implicitly symbolizes the fields of red sorghum as a human's origin. The red sorghum naturally relates with human life; man feeds on the plant and drinks the spirit distilled from the plant. During the war times, the fields of red sorghum becomes the shelters of the guerrilla to fight against the enemies. In fact, the red sorghum is a source of human existence, it relates with human life and death. When

Grandmother has laid dying in the sorghum field, she even feels extraordinarily satisfied.

"Her last connection with the world is about to be severed. All the care, pain, tension and despair have fallen on the sorghum field. It's like a hail storm hitting the sorghum tips, making the seeds take root, blossom and in time gather tart fruit for the next generation. Grandma completes her own deliverance. She soars with the doves and her mind, which has now shrunk to the size of a human fist filled with happiness, serenity, comfort and harmony. Grandma is totally content. She says in true sincerity, 'Heavens! O Heavens!'"¹⁴

The fields of red sorghum has become a paradise to Grandmother. Her body and soul would enter into the fields, and nurture the sorghum to blossoming. While her body is being taken out to the grave, "the sorghum field is like a fairy land and everyone's body glows with a shining light."¹⁵ The red sorghum fields are always humanized with subjective feelings. They "intertwined like knots of snakes in Grandma's eyes, then they brusquely expanded" and with complex emotions that "they laughed loudly and cried loudly."¹⁶ They are able to experience the most paradoxical actions and feelings. As such, Grandfather, Grandmother and Uncle Arhat are intimately bonded with the red sorghum; they owe to it their semiprimitive force which sustain their lives and for the growth of the next generation. The subject and object of viewing become largely identical in representing the roots of primordial human nature. Mo Yan profoundly reveals a metaphorical world to contrast from the

¹⁴ Mo, 1987:85-86.

¹⁵ Mo, 1987:157.

¹⁶ Mo, 1987:168.

reality which is dominant with the official or traditional ideologies.

A significant part of the author's effort to create resistant subject lies in his depiction of the illegitimate love between Grandfather and Grandmother. Yu Zhan'ao in the novel is depicted as the bearer of natural male potency - a kind of crude male sexual power, aggressive and irresistible to the female sex. When Grandmother Dai is being carried to her wedding at her husband-to-be's house, she is extremely attracted by the masculine body of Yu who is carrying her sedan-chair. It is obvious that Dai's female sexual desire is aroused by Yu's masculine power. Later while Yu has waylaid and raped her, his potent power is said to captivate her completely. She is "soft and limp like noodles, squinting her lamb-like eyes"¹⁷ and she submits to a man with great pleasure. She even does not feel anguished from the influences of feudal tradition where illegitimate sexuality itself is a threat to females in society. Lian'er, the second grandmother of the author, also actively seduces Grandfather to make love for all three days. Subsequently, Dai holds the winery household after his leper husband is dead (he was killed by Yu Zhan'ao). She forces herself to keep distant from Yu for some superficial reasons of morality. But, she simply cannot resist Yu's sexual potency. She becomes powerless,

"Grandma was all flushed; she stood there motionless. He got hold of her in his arms and kissed her on the face. Grandma turned pale

¹⁷ Mo, 1987:81.

instantly; her legs gave in and she collapsed onto a stool."¹⁸

Dai even publicly acknowledges to Yu that herself and her baby belong to him. When Yu asks her in front of other winery workers whether the baby in her is his, she answers directly, "If you claim it is yours, it is yours."¹⁹ And she also says, "If you claim I am yours, I am yours."²⁰ Unquestionably, grandmother Dai becomes entirely subjugated to Yu's powerful masculinity and loved him enthusiastically.

As a country woman, Grandmother Dai has been less concerned with ethical values in her life, or the effects of value confrontation on the suppression of female sexuality in official Chinese literary and cultural tradition. Mo Yan explicitly glorifies his Grandmother as a "heroine", "a pioneer for sexual liberation", and also directly challenges the feudal moral codes through Grandmother's mouth:

"Heaven, what is chastity? What is the right way? What is good? What is evil? You have never told me. I can only act according to what I know. I love joy, I love force. My body is my own. I am responsible for myself. I'm not afraid of damnation or punishment. I'm not afraid of hell. I've done what I ought to do."²¹

Her transgressive sexual behavior is her own choice and she is responsible for herself only. Her confessional voice actually displays Mo Yan's belief in individualism. Since Dai's sexual desire is subject to Yu Zhan'ao's masculine power, she is

¹⁸ Mo, 1987:174.

¹⁹ Mo, 1987:174.

²⁰ Mo, 1987:174.

²¹ Mo, 1987:83.

condemned as a passive victim. To a degree, her sexual desire must be justified by a more lofty or serious cause, which simultaneously demonstrates the author's stance.²² Individualism in Mo Yan's fiction can be considered as a rebellious attitude towards official ideology, an individual's emancipation from overbearing repression.²³

In short, Mo Yan's 'Hong gaoliang' is an attempt to create the subversive subjects that deviate from the communist ideology and cultural legacy. Individual's apparent freedom is attributed to one's ability to consume his or her primitive energy against the suppressions from the entrenched ethics or existed orders. Although the world is full of paradox²⁴, Mo Yan turns it into a symbol of strength, energy, and freedom. It is because the contradictory nature leads to dynamism, tension and movement. In this paradoxical world, constant motions underline the stability of any possible authority. Subjective emancipation is an irreversible trend that individuals are more sensitive to cultivate their own mental space.

²² See Lu, 1993:202-203.

²³ The worldview of Mo Yan is based on his subjective feeling towards the existing authority. Goldmann also mentions that a social groups may have common ideas, aspirations and feelings towards their society. Pascal's tragic vision is due to the rise of rationality and objective science have replaced a sublimate status of Christianity. See Goldmann, 1964.

²⁴ See Mo, 1987:2.

'Tiantang suantai zhi ge' (The Garlic Song in Paradise County):

In 1988, Mo Yan published another full-lengthed fiction entitled *'Tiantang suantai zhi ge'* (The Garlic Song in Paradise County). Mo Yan in this novel exposes a predicament of Chinese peasants during the reform era. The protagonists of Garlic Song had been hampered by the corrupt rural bureaucrats and the deficient judicial rules. In particular, the author probes that a real constrain over the Chinese peasants is the obsolete traditional ethics and the fear of authority. Mo has built up two typical characters to exemplify the problems involved. They are Gao Yang and Gao Ma. Gao Yang apparently represents traditional conformity whereas Gao Ma represents unconventional deviance. Both of them agonized with the exploitation of rural cadres and discriminatory judiciary. For this fiction, the readers can probably perceive a heightened awareness and understanding of the experience of the Chinese peasants - their love, hate, goodness, cruelty, decency and indecency.

This story is based on an actual peasant riot that took place in the summer of 1987.²⁵ At the beginning of the story, Gao Yang and Gao Ma, who participated in the peasant riot, have been arrested by the police. Both retrospectively recall their memories: how they are encouraged to plant large amounts of garlic; which they expect to sell at a good price; how the local

²⁵ In the fiction, the peasant riot in 1987 was similar to the actual one and Mo Yan wrote: "The book is completely fictional in nature. If there are unfortunate similarities to any actual persons or events, they are the result of accidental coincidence. The author cannot take responsibility for either the feelings or the health of anyone who puts on these shoes and finds that they fit."

cadres arbitrarily tax them on their way to the market place; and how their surplus products are refused when the official storage facilities are declared to be full. By such experience, the peasants are all disgruntled with the government cadres. They have hoped that the selling of the garlic will give them profits to improve their poor livings. Gao Ma especially needs the money in exchange for his bride Jinju from her hard-hearted father. Threatened by the squeeze of local cadres and national inflation, Gao Ma launches the peasant riot in order to talk with the county Party secretary. Gao Yang and Aunt Fang are simply swept along in the crowd and participate in the riot with less than full knowledge of what they are doing.

The characters in the 'Tiantang suantai zhi ge' have a wide range of both good and evil virtues. For Gao Yang, he is a model of conformity, absolute obedience to the authorities. Taken figuratively, his name "Yang" means "sheep." It symbolically implies that he is so timid, innocent and docile. Gao Yang even names his son as "Shoufa" (means to comply the law). By Mo Yan's depiction, he is always subject to the coercion of officials. Bitter experience from the childhood, a landlord's son has taught him to be self-effacing and always to do what he is told. Satirically, he is forced to drink his own urine during the 1960s and once again in jail in 1987. In the first case, he is commanded by the bureaucrats to drink. He becomes ever irrational to imagine his urine as delicious as grape wine. It makes it easier for him to accept. In the second instance, he

has drunk his urine by his prisoners' request. At first, he refuses to drink because it is not the command of the government or officials. But his urine makes others feel extremely disgusted and angry, he only convinces himself that it tastes like garlic. After drinking all his urine, his neighbor gladly says, "human beings must learn to comply." In this episode, timid personality of Gao Yang is an irremediable sacrifice from the official compulsion.

On the contrary, Gao Ma and Jinju demonstrate their great courage, an ability to love and a desire for happiness. In his early days, Gao Ma has been insubordinate from the military hierarchy. When he meets with Jinju, he is nearly captivated with her beauty. Gao Ma decides to get marry with her. Nevertheless, Jinju has been arranged to marry with an old man by her hard-hearted father. Under the circumstance, both of them leave home and run to a neighbor county. Unfortunately, they are caught and beaten harshly by Jinju's father and brothers. Jinju's father forces Jinju to marry with one guy in return for her elder brother's bride. Gao Ma has discussed with Jinju's father several times about their affair, but he is totally rejected. Jinju boldly declares that she has made love with Gao Ma and she is unwilling to marry with the one whom she does not love. Even though she is beaten harshly, she remains determined. Her father eventually allows her to marry Gao Ma only when Gao Ma gives him ten thousand yuans.

Tragically, when her father is dead; her mother is put into jail and Gao Ma is on the run from the police; the pregnant Jinju cannot bear to bring another child into this world. She tells the unborn baby that this world is filled with hardships and hanged herself in Gao Ma's broken-down shack. Faced with such brutal world, she is in extreme despair and she chooses to end her life. When Gao Ma sees Jinju's dead body, he has nothing but hates for the authorities. In his mind, the corrupt cadres has made him lost his bride and unborn baby. He feels that fragility of their hopes of happiness, and the guilt at being unable to make those hopes come true. By this episode, the author particularly deepens his lamentation that the peasants are passive victims of an evil and unequal social system over which they have no control. When he invokes other peasants to protest, Gao Ma has shouted loudly with "down with corrupt officials" and "down with bureaucratism." While he is arrested by the police, he refuses to cooperate with the prosecutor. He asks whether his crime is "enough for execution?" The prosecutor kindly answered:

"it's not enough. I'd like you to go along with me, tell me all the details of your love affair with Fang Jinju. I believe that your unfortunate love experience was one of the main reasons for your criminal behavior ..."

"No, I hate all of you corrupt officials! I wish I could flay all of you alive!" Gao Ma replied angrily.²⁶

Gao Ma perceives that his personal predicament is due to the official corruption and he definitely extricates himself from the controls of authority.

²⁶ Mo, 1988:255.

While Gao Yang and Gao Ma are forced to answer the police's questions, they respond differently. Gao Yang is depicted as confounded by the police's prosecution and he is incapable of defending what he had done during the peasant riot. On the contrary, Gao Ma valiantly elucidates his motivation for protest. When he is interrogated whether he hates socialism, he boldly replies, "I just hate you only." Comparatively speaking, Gao Ma is well decisive in judging what is right and wrong. He cannot welcome the irremediable corruption and conscious dishonesty of local cadres. Once a young army officer helps Gao Ma to defend in court, he speaks for the flesh-and-blood author as well. For his words,

"the accused Gao Ma's shouting out 'Down with corrupt officials! Down with bureaucratism! represents a progressive awareness on the part of the peasants, and really does not amount to the crime of counter-revolutionary incitement!'"²⁷

In fact, the peasants consciously favors the economic reforms of the past decades and they want the reform to continue. They repeatedly bore with the insolence and corruption of the local cadres who neglect the central policy and the peasants' predicament.²⁸

As in the previous comparison, Gao Yang represents the traditional image of the Chinese peasants or the ordinary people. He is too weak and timid to protect his own right. His blind conformity toward the party-state is a common problem amongst

²⁷ Mo, 1988:283.

²⁸ Mo Yan has exposed a significant social structure of Chinese society. This equals to Goldmann's idea of a homology of significant structure of both literary text and social environment. See Goldmann, 1981.

many Chinese people. They are very often educated, as the mass of people, to perform unquestionable conformity and to express absolute loyalty. They also learn from tradition that the normal people are powerless to defend against the official's prosecutions. In contrast, Gao Ma is the deviant who breaks down the moral standards and controls of authority. Owing to his desire to love, he argues with Uncle Fang for the illegitimate marriage between Jinju and the old man. Jinju is disinclined and Uncle Fang cannot force her to have such marriage. While he is beaten brutally, he never gives up Jinju. His very attempt to demolish from all obstacles is his great effort to make hope come true. Gao Ma's slogans in the protest indeed reflects his great distress towards the official authoritarianism. It implies that the social consciousness of the peasants are increasing, they expect the economic reform to keep pace with the scrupulous honesty of officials.

To conclude, Mo Yan in 'Tiantang suantai zhi ge' delivers a message about the predicament of contemporary peasant. Though Chinese peasants favor with the economic reforms, they are exploited by the rural officials. The peasants not only agonize over corrupt cadres, they are also suppressed by the feudal values or communist ideology. Most importantly, some Chinese peasants begin to be more conscious of their own rights, which cannot be deprived by the authorities. Gao Ma and Jinju are evidence that they are eager to strive for their happiness though they are in turbulent times. The young army officer in

the fiction defends for the peasants' interests and rights. Their resistance reflects their subjective consciousness and personal vision for humanist values. The author also exposes a serious plight of the official corruption and incomplete institutions in the eighties China.

'Fengru feitun':

For his recent opus **'Fengru feitun'**, Mo Yan endeavors to delineate a mother figure who is persevering to breast-feed and to bring up her nine children and five grandchildren. The mother's lofty love is exhibited as the basis to sustain human life from one generation to another. Mo Yan once again addresses the individual's life story or life experience within the grand historical frames. For the mother's whole life, she has witnessed the national crises of the Sino-Japanese War II, the collision between the Nationalist and the Communists, the Communist takeover, the ruins of the Cultural Revolution and the modernized era of both the 1980s and the 1990s. In spite of such turbulent times, the mother intrepidly protects her children.

Entitling this novel as **'Fengru feitun'** is the author's very attempt to characterize the mother's instinctive quality. As a mother, her breasts and hip are symbolized as the tools for physical reproduction and nurture. A mother always raises her children up with extra care and gives them a healthful growth. Without mothers, individuals cannot be brought into this world; without mother, the infants or the children cannot grow up. A

mother figure represents the roots of all human beings, her great affection exposes in a form of infinite devotion.²⁹ Thus, this novel is particularly written for all mothers in the world, extolling a mother's industriousness, valorization, sacrifices, and benevolence.

At the beginning of the story, two twin babies, Shangguan Jintong (a boy) and Shangguan Yunu (a girl), are born and mother Shangguan Lushi is exceedingly delighted to have a baby boy. Before these two babies, Shangguan Lushi has seven daughters and she is always defied by her husband and parent-in-law with a reason of "no son." To be a woman, her useful value is to reproduce for her husband in the male children. Conventionally, male children in Chinese society are family cornerstones for extending the next generation. Without a son, a mother violates the rules of the submissions imposed on Chinese women by Confucian ethics. When a mother gives births to female children, her husband and mother-in-law often beat her sternly and force her to work immediately after the births. Mother Shangguan Lushi becomes unworthy until she has got her baby son, Shangguan Jintong. Thus, Jintong is the mother's grand hope in her entire life.

During the Sino-Japanese War II, Shangguan Lushi's husband, father-in-law and her lover Priest Ma are killed by Japanese soldiers and her mother-in-law has become psychopathic. The

²⁹ See Mo, 1996:70-71.

mother is solely responsible for looking after her new-born babies and other daughters. Interestingly, Jintong is greedy enough to exclusively occupy his mother's breasts for the nourishing milk. In Jintong's mind, a pair of breast belongs to him only and he does not allow the others to possess them.³⁰ On the contrary, Yunu has always neglected by her mother since she is perceived as "superfluous." The other seven daughters also feels uncomfortable and does not understand her mother's fondness. Mother once says, "Laidi (the eldest sister) is all right. Jintong is gold; you're at least silver."³¹ Even though mother is indulgent of Jintong, other daughters are still her beloved children.

With the changes of several political powers, family Shangguan has coincidentally associated with the ruling classes. For the eldest sister Laidi, she gets married to a commander of guerrilla, Sha Yueliang, during the Sino-Japanese War II. In the Nationalist era, a commander Sima Ku proposes to second sister Zhaodi. The fifth sister, Pandi, weds with a communist commander, Lu Liren. While they are attached to the ruling ones, their living circumstance and standard have been ameliorated in each turbulent ages. In the meantime, mother Shangguan Lushi becomes more burdened to raise up her grandsons and granddaughters when their fathers are in power bankrupt. Without the mother, the new generation of the Shangguan family cannot be sustained.

³⁰ See Mo, 1996:75.

³¹ Mo, 1996:88.

Faced with the catastrophes, mother still remains persevering to resolve all difficulties. In wartime, she and other sisters go out to search food, to breast-feed Jintong (even when he was a child) and other grandchildren, to protect the children from the gun fights and to run away from the enemies. Mother becomes more and more persistent and valorous to sustain the children's and her lives. She even says,

"In these years, the members of Shangguan family either die or live; death seems to be easy, but living becomes more and more difficult. But, no matter how difficult, struggles for living. My family will float on the water one day. Everyone should strive for me!"³²

During the famine time, she works in the food-processing communion. She quietly swallows the crops and later vomits them for Yunu's everyday food. When Jintong becomes psychopathic in the 1980s, she spends all her savings to let him have medical treatment. All these are the mother's boundless devotion to her children.

In particular, the author also creates the subversive figure of protagonist mother in his fictional world. Originally, Shangguan Lushi is an orphan and she is brought up by her aunt and uncle. When she grows up, she is arranged to marry with Shangguan Shouxi. In her husband's and mother-in-law's eyes, Shangguan Lushi is a tool to reproduce the male children and a laborer to participate in household works only. But, she cannot be pregnant from her husband after three years. Her mother-in-law has always condemned her as valueless and said, "how urgent

³² Mo, 1996:385.

we expect you to have a grandson! Our Shangguan family cannot be deprived of the next generation by you."³³

However, the problem lies in Shangguan Shouxi's body and not his wife. To be pregnant, her aunt makes Shangguan Lushi drunk, and forced her to sleep with her uncle. When they wake up, her uncle feels extremely penitent with her. Unexpectedly, Shangguan Lushi does not agonize with her uncle and said:

"I don't hate you. It is Shangguan family to force me to do such thing... If I choose to uphold my chastity, I will be beaten, blamed and got divorce. By contrast, if I am pregnant from another man, I will be extolled as a good wife."³⁴

A few months later she has reproduced a baby girl, her mother-in-law becomes excited and wishes to have a grandson next year. All subsequent daughters come from strangers when Shangguan Lushi meets them for possible promiscuity in the fields. It is the mother's revenge to the Shangguan family. Her subversion reveals in her body that has been ruined by different males. Mother's daughters and son are totally unrelated with her husband and family. She is only a passive victim who uses sex to protect herself from the corrupted concept of ethics and morality. Likewise, mother Shangguan Lushi is Mo Yan's heroine who deviates from traditional feminine virtues for her personal sake. The readers can perceive how ridiculous feudal or communist ideologies are in Chinese society.

³³ Mo, 1996:622.

³⁴ Mo, 1996:625.

However, Shangguan Lushi still returns to the feudalistic ideology. She ultimately looks out for a son and she views Jintong as her grand hope in her life. To have a son, mother can transform her inferior status in Shangguan family, she will be respected by her husband and mother-in-law. But, she inevitably functions as a reproducer of male child for her husband. Moreover, her affection for Jintong exhibits mother's conservative value concept. Male children are parents' prospects for extending generation. Thus, mother especially loves Jintong and allows him to be extremely dependent upon her. When Jintong is seven years old, he still disinclines to leave mother's breasts. He is used to drinking mother's milk and refuses to eat solid foods. Mother is too late to discover Jintong's problem. She only forces him to drink goat's milk instead. But Jintong has long been dependent upon mother's breast-feeding, he cannot stand alone without mother's intimate caring. When he is a teenager, he is psychologically diseased with yearning for woman's breast. Jintong gets sick over a year. After his release from jail, Jintong has once again suffered from the same problem. Mother feels regretful and says,

"Do you know how cruel you're? You have been an adult, you still absorb woman's breast-milk? It's my fault. Now I understand one thing. If I've raised up a son who only knows to absorb women's breast milk, I rather kill him. It's good to him."³⁵

Mother's fondness to Jintong has caused him to become a weak and dependent man. In the fiction, Jintong always depends upon others' assistance to overcome the problems. Both Jintong and

³⁵ Mo, 1996:507-508.

mother in fact are passive victims who are heavily affected by the feudal ideologies. Their social experiences further reflect the long-accumulated influence of China's feudal past that individuals still suffer from.³⁶

To highlight individual subjectivity, Mo Yan tries to carve out a personal space removed from the official or feudal ideology in the protagonists' life. In the fiction '**Fengru feitun**', all female subjects, especially Shangguan Lushi, are extraordinarily persistent and gallant against the life challenges. Owing to mother's reproduction and devotion, human beings can therefore be sustained from one generation to another. It is a natural life force of human beings; it really transcends from the official party culture and the corruption of traditional values. At the same time, Mo Yan also exposes how the feudal ethics have already repressed the individuals over the past decades. Mother and Jintong are passive victims of the influence of rotten Confucian ethics and morality. Without a son, Shangguan Lushi is despised by her husband and parents-in-law. It forces her to be promiscuous to save herself from others' contempt and physical abuse. Because of her extreme fondness of her son, mother has caused Jintong to become a superfluous person. In fact, a deeper layer of Chinese culture has been destroyed by people's conformity and selfishness. What remains worthy of seeking for? Mo Yan may find his answer in "human dignity" and "human inherent value" that cannot be deprived.

³⁶ It is similar to Goldmann's explanation how Jansenism is related to French society in 17th century. See Goldmann, 1977.

Mo Yan's Resistant Value:

Through the examination of literary texts, it is hoped to uncover a significant structure of one generation's worldview over its familiar environment. From the fictions of 'Hong gaoliang jiazu', 'Tiatang suantai zhi ge' and 'Fengru feitun', Mo Yan exhibits the individual's resistance from the traditional and communist ideology. Mo Yan's literary style is, in particular, colored by his generational background. As introduced at the outset, Mo Yan also comes from the Other Cultural Revolution Generation. It commonly discovers that the members of this generation have already lost any political or societal ideals stemmed from the Communist Party. During the Cultural Revolution, young children had witnessed the absurdities of politics. In their eyes, the communist regime is only a dictator to suppress its people. As a consequence, young people feel alienated from the authority so that they try to exclude themselves from political concerns. It is understandable why Mo Yan and other young Chinese writers have similar radical expressions in unveiling the corruption of Chinese authoritarian rules.

To recall the notion of public sphere, it is crucial to integrate a cohesive community to share with identified values and attitudes amongst different participants. In a realm of public sphere, literature may be an efficacious means in articulating the common values derived from the writers. In regards to the works of Mo Yan, he has simultaneously confirmed

the importance of personal resistance against the Chinese authoritarian culture. A continuing linkage of current authoritarian state and society is attributed to the influence of the feudal value systems.³⁷ Thus, Mo Yan's writings expose all at once the domination of communist state, the corruption of feudal ideology as well as the predicament of Chinese social lives. The writer's intervention acts as a mirror to reflect the hidden problems to the readers.

As manifested before, Mo Yan has constructed his ideal lifeworld, as well as in encouraging and circulating personal resistance from the authoritarianism. A number of Mo Yan's fictional characters are those unconventional deviants who have undermined the feudal ethics and communist corruption. Their resistant sentiment further results in subjective and personal visions. In 'Hong gaoliang jiazou,' Grandfather and Grandmother, in Gaomi County, are extolled as historical heroes. It is because they have created their own glorious histories. Both of them boldly searched for their own happiness, loves and sex. The natural life force is the most primitive factor that impelled Grandfather and Grandmother in challenging the established moral standards and the vulgarity of Party culture. Mother Shangguan Lushi's revenge is, in 'Fengru feitun', due to an unbearable scorns from her husband and parents-in-law. To reproduce a male baby is her own personal desires, but not to extend the Shangguan's next generation. In addition, the mother's

³⁷ See Leo Lee, 1990 and 1991.

perseverance and devotion are identified as life values that are the roots of human beings. In 'Tiatang suantai zhi ge', Gao Ma attributes his personal predicament to the official perversion. When his hopes are destroyed by rural cadres, Gao Ma cannot remain silent. His slogans in the peasants' protest demonstrates his hatred towards corrupted bureaucratism. All these reveal how individual's subjective consciousness has been relatively on the rise. To a certain extent, Mo Yan shows a new life centered on the realization of the "self." When one is subjected to only "selfhood", other official boudages become vacuous. Leo Lee may claim that such emphasis on the "self" is an internal exile to confront pressures from the outside world.³⁸ Most likely, Mo Yan puts his fictional characters in a sanctuary of the soul that stand in opposition to omnipotent ideologies and politics. This personal resistance is similar to Havel's concept on the restoration of human's dignity and authentic self.³⁹ A fundamental way to threaten the legitimacy of communist ideology is to awake humanist consciousness and conscience. In this aspect, Mo Yan has excavated the notions of human's inherent values and subjective vision to go beyond external suppression.

Most importantly, the protagonists' resistance in this fictional world is stimulated by external repression and absurd reality. For instance, in order to combat Japanese troop, Grandfather has become the commander of guerrilla fighters to protect his family and hometown. Grandmother also rejects all

³⁸ See Leo Lee, 1990.

³⁹ See Havel, 1989.

ethical values that imposed on a Chinese female. In contrast, she becomes self-determined in order to love Grandfather. Mother Shangguan Lushi never gives up though she met with frequent disasters. Instead, she puts her efforts to protect her children away from the gun killings. Gao Ma also demands for individual's liberation from the rules of paternalism and bureaucratism. In Mo Yan's portrait, the objective world has called for the individual's resistance. The nature of communist ideology and of human beings are contradictory. Such paradoxical natures only intensify the dynamism, tension and movement. Mo Yan implicitly indicates that the stability of possible authorities is no longer to be. When the communist regime continues its authoritarian control, it only further intensifies the individual's resistance.

Conclusion:

Mo Yan's fictions have contributed the alternative values of "authentic humanism" to his readers. It is essential to recall the notions of human dignity, conscience, consciousness, devotion, desires for love as well as happiness. They are perceived as the individual's life forces to struggle for real freedom. Mo Yan may advocate individual protest in a peripheral position against the center of communist politics. This peripheral position means carving a sphere of human subjectivity removed from any ideology.

This literary performance has simultaneously constituted a realm of cultural community so that the rebellious sentiment is gradually generated. The readers and writers mutually share the utopian symbols and languages, as in sharp contrast from the official culture. Before the maturation of the public sphere, such a cultural community is crucial in articulating and circulating the common values and attitudes among the different readers, writers and literary critics. In regards to Mo Yan's works, he is also one of the writers who come from this cultural community. Through his fictions, the emancipated vision of human beings can be enhanced and disseminated to the reading public. The writer's intervention in a realm of public sphere thereby gives the generation of cohesive community.

Chapter 5:

In Search of the Self - Jia Pingwa's City of Decadence

Jia Pingwa is a native of Shangzhou in Shanxi province, and a much admired literary prodigy in contemporary literature. Jia was born in 1952 and he worked in the countryside as a peasant during the Cultural Revolution. In 1972, he studied in university and began his fiction writing one year later. Jia is regarded as a productive author who has published numerous novels, novellas, and collections of short stories, poetry, and essays from 1978 onward. His opus has won a number of literary awards in China and foreign countries. In 1987, he won the Mobil Pegasus Prize with his fiction 'Fuzao' (Turbulence). In his early writings, he particularly writes about the rural life of Shangzhou. He is also one of the authors to support the economic reforms in the Chinese countryside. His novels and short stories are rich in description of local customs and ethical values. Most importantly, Jia has probed the ideal human qualities with in-depth psychological examination of rural intellectuals, peasants and workers in the reform era.

In 1993, Jia undertook a great transformation in his writing style. 'Feidu' (City in Ruined) is a fiction of extensive pornographic depiction and decadent images of Chinese intellectuals. This made many literary critics, other authors and intellectuals puzzle why Jia has undergone this change. With its juicy portrayal of sexual scenes, it made a great sensation

in China. Apart from this, its main fictional characters, who are all writers and intellectuals, were also described as decadent and hypocritical. This attracted discussions among critics, other writers, intellectuals, readers and even Jia Pingwa himself in 1993. Owing to publisher's advertisement, many readers were attracted by the promotional slogan of the "City in Ruined is The Golden Lotus of our time" and many readers urgently read 'Feidu.' According to its publisher, 'Feidu' sold a half million copies within first few months of its publication. It further led to a 'Feidu Fever' throughout the entire country in 1993. However, this novel was banned by the party's Ministry of Propaganda in late 1993, because the party-state is afraid of the possible bad influence on the adolescents. Though 'Feidu' is full of pornographic details, many literary critics and intellectuals have emphasized its in-depth cultural and philosophical meanings in the context of nineties China. Many intellectuals accept that 'Feidu' is Jia's personal reflection on the urban life and it is worthwhile for other readers to share and to rethink an intellectual's predicament in modern time. After 'Feidu', Jia began to write about the urban life of ordinary people. 'Baiye' (White Night) is his second major novel about the city and the author has concentrated on examining people's everyday lives and inner-world. Jia has repeatedly captured the paradoxical feelings which most Chinese may share with.

With regards to the formation of public sphere, Jia Pingwa also encourages the reading community to rethink the notions of "self-existence" and cultural identity in the current context of China. With the rise of market economy, a collision of old and new values exists. Jia Pingwa has provided an opportunity for his readers to examine their cultural predicaments. Through in-depth cultural reflection, it is hoped that the Chinese readers can establish a sense of self-awareness.

For the present study, 'Feidu' and 'Baiye' will be taken up as the cases to show what are the intellectual's predicament and the ordinary people's unsettling sentiments that Jia Pingwa has perceived from his personal experience and observation.

'Feidu' (City in Ruins):

Jia Pingwa in 1993 published a full-length novel entitled 'Feidu' (City in Ruins). 'Feidu' is Jia's first novel about the city of Xian which locates in the north-western part China. A central plot lies in the predicament of a literary intellectual who agonizes about his social life and the eternal anxieties of human existence. On the one hand, he feels alienated from his literary fame and complicated social relations. He is always in search of his subjective existence. On the other hand, he indulges in sexual pleasure with his mistresses. The fictional character becomes so decadent that he destroys his family, his mistresses, as well as himself. This novel is based on Jia

Pingwa's personal and intellectual reflection from the urban life, caught between traditional culture and the modern materialistic lifestyle.

In the tradition of the 'Hongloumeng', the book begins with a long narrative introduction about the four decadent and prominent men. They are Zhuang Zhidie, Wang Ximian, Kung Jingyuan and Yuen Zhifei. The four prominent men own their different cultural capitals and become well-known with Xijing's people. Zhuang Zhidie is a reputable writer and he is married to a good-hearted wife Niu Yueqing. Wang Ximian is a famous painter and a collector of paintings. Yuen Zhifei is the impresario of a musical company and his shows are popular among the audiences. Of these four figures, the author focuses on Zhuang Zhidie primarily. Jia Pingwa has chronicled both Zhuang's social and sexual lives. For his social life, detailed descriptions of meals, banquets, family finance, parental and marital relations, outings and parties are given. At the same time, Jia also portrays Zhuang Zhidie's sexual adventures with his women. The novel eventually ends tragically in the same view as 'Hongloumeng.' Zhuang's family has collapsed because his women either die or fall in disgrace, and he also flees away.

At the beginning of 'Feidu', Jia Pingwa has narrated the historical background of Xijing. Xijing symbolically represents Xian which has long been the capital of the previous twelve dynasties of China. Most Xijing people are very proud of their

long cultural background and superior civilization. In 'Feidu', people's everyday lives are always associated with their traditional culture and civilization which permeated their living necessities, their habits, their conversations, and even in their minds. Many cultural and historical objects can be discovered in ordinary people's run-down habitation. Sometimes, one can randomly pick up a brick on the street which was made in Han's dynasty. In private residence, some sculptures, armed-chairs or wooden utensil would have a history of hundreds of years. In addition, other traditional superstitions and religious practices still remain prevalent in Xijing. Many medical pills are produced according to Chinese religious writings. People are interested in the Buddhist or Taoist talks about "qigong" and "paranormal abilities." Someone (like the protagonist Zhou Min) plays the "ghost song" on top of the city walls with ancient Chinese musical instruments. Urban dwellers in Xijing are still captivated by the long historical and cultural heritage.

However, Xijing has inevitably declined presently. Compared with other cities, Xijing is less developed in regard to economical business. In fact, Xijing cannot command central government's attention for a large scale economic development. In order to be self-modernized, the local government of Xijing determines to restore Xijing's historical architecture for promoting tourism. For instances, three streets are reconstructed in classical Tang, Song and Qing styles respectively. Many cultural souvenirs and special snacks are

sold to tourists. The new mayor expects that the cultural capitals of Xijing can be used as commercial values for earning foreign exchanges.

Zhuang Zhidie is a middle-aged writer and many people greatly adore him in Xijing. For his enormous literary fame, he is exceedingly welcomed by his friends, his readers and other people who come from various social strata. Many people would engage in gossiping about his appearance, his private life and his writing. Zhuang's friends, relatives, official cadres, and other people are always looking for his help to resolve their own problems. Some ladies and women in Xijing are even fascinated with Zhuang's reputation and are willing to be his wife or mistresses. Although Zhuang Zhidie is welcomed by others, many people tried to take advantages of his eminent fame. For Zhuang's friends and women, they all appreciate his reputation only but not so much his actual talent, personality or capacity. Without doubt, they either use Zhuang's fame to gain their own benefits or for possible upward mobility. For instance, the corrupt mayor calls Zhuang to write an article on a full page newspaper to propagate his scrupulous honesty. A business man looks for his help to advertise the fake products of 101 Drug Factory. Zhuang's bookstore assistance cheats others' money to invest in his own company by means of Zhuang's literary fame. When Zhuang becomes involved in a libel suit, he is forced to rewrite a prose work in the name of Bai Yuzhu's¹ son. Everyone

¹ Bai Yuzhu in 'Feidu' is one of judiciaries in local court.

seems pleased to make friends with Zhuang's great name, but not with Zhuang Zhidie himself.

We can firstly summarize the plots of 'Feidu.' A small-town scheming writer Zhou Min comes to Xijing for his new life. He works in an editorial department, and he seeks the chance to make his name famous. Later, Zhou Min writes a gossipy profile about Zhuang Zhidie, hoping that public readers would want to read about Zhuang's private life. In his book, Zhou freely exaggerates Zhuang's past romantic liaison with a now powerful woman, Jing Xueyin. Before the publication, Zhou Min did not get any personal approval from Zhuang and he even strongly emphasizes that his portrait is based on detailed and objective information collection. However, Jing Xueyin initiates a libel suit against Zhuang Zhidie. As a result, Zhuang Zhidie, his wife, his literary friends and Zhou Min are all involved in the libel suit. All his friends try to use their connections and influences to settle this suit.

Simultaneously, Zhuang Zhidie embarks on an affair with Tang Waner (Zhou Min's mistress) and begins his sexual adventures with other women. In 'Feidu', Jia Pingwa boldly portrays sex graphically and in minute detail. Various sex scenes are exposed "such as masturbation, wet dreams aplenty, a dash of voyeurism, and a menage-a-trios."² Jia Pingwa sometimes seemingly omits some juicy details of sexual intercourse, marking it with six

² Zha, 1995:133.

blank blocks followed by author's note: "(here author deleted xxx words)." After he met with Tang Waner, Zhuang gradually indulges in sexual exploits. Zhuang and Tang frequently undertakes secret rendezvous and lustful fornication. He frequently seduce his housemaid Liuyue and mistress Ah-can for his sexual adventure. All these women adore Zhuang's fame and amiably offer him free sex.

Zhuang's sexual indulgence is attributed to his physical and psychological sufferings. For his physical suffering, he is ashamed of his unfulfilled sexual relation with his good-hearted wife, who 'is a cold fish in bed.'³ Zhuang feels extremely agonized and skeptical about his sexual capability. On the contrary, he enjoys carnal pleasure with Tang Waner's frequent sexual feats. At their first sexual encounter, Tang Waner fully realizes that Zhuang really needs refreshment in sex to revivify his creativity. After the first sexual intercourse, Zhuang instantly cries out to give thanks to Tang Waner since he can recuperate his sexual ability. For his psychological suffering, he is fearful that his creativity will dry up soon. On the other hand, he is agitated about his literary fame which the entire city worships. Through sex, Zhuang strongly believes that he can obtain a private space which is far away from the distressing reality.

³ Zha, 1995:132.

Tang Waner's appearance represents a stepping stone for Zhuang Zhidie's self-salvation. Zhuang is impressed with Tang's beauty and generosity. When Tang actively finds him at the hotel after his cultural conference, Zhuang is pleased to embrace and to make love with her at his room. In her mind, Tang Waner desires to leave Zhou Min, and instead get married with Zhuang Zhidie for the sake of better living circumstance and celebrity. Thus, she seeks for regular rendezvous at "quiquewu", a place for cultural salon. Furthermore, Tang frankly encourages Zhuang to court Liuyue and does not care about his sexual encounters with other women. In fact, Tang always urges Zhuang to keep far away from Zhou Min's deviousness and Niu Yueqing's suspect, and she even has to abort Zhuang's baby to lessen his responsibility. In the end of the fiction, she is kidnapped by her former husband back to the countryside. Unfortunately, she is savagely treated by her husband's sexual abuse and physical force.

To highlight the sexual scenes of Zhuang and Tang, Jia Pingwa reveals a detailed description and a kinky taste that would easily shock his readers. For instance, Zhuang fondly licks Tang's scab and Tang pastes her pubic hair on a love letter to him. They also make love soon after her abortion, "leaving a big splotch of blood on the pillow; afterward Tang embroiders it into a maple leaf design."⁴ The novel is in fact filled with numerous lascivious passages that arouses the reader's sexual imagination and excitement.

⁴ Zha, 1995:134.

Zhuang Zhidie successively embarks on his sexual adventure to conquer other beautiful women. Most women are seduced by Zhuang for randy sexual relations. Liuyue always wishes to become Zhuang's wife while she works as a housemaid in Zhuang's family. With her good looks and wisecracks, she is exceedingly spoiled by Zhuang Zhidie and Niu Yueqing. When she knows about the secret rendezvous of Zhuang and Tang, she feels jealous of Tang's seduction. Liuyue attempts to unmask their sexual relation to Niu Yueqing's notice. She exposes their love letters which was sent by a pigeon. When Niu Yueqing finds out about the affair, she boils the pigeon into a soup and forces it down the two adulterers' throats. However, once Liuyue witnesses a sexual scene from Zhuang and Tang, she is impelled to subjugate to Zhuang's masculine potency. Thereafter, Zhuang reveals his care to Liuyue and he promises to arrange her a marriage with another good man. In spite of his promise, Zhuang Zhidie, at the crucial time, arranges Liuyue to get marry with the mayor's crippled son in return for the mayor's assistance. Liuyue is persuaded to accept this marriage by Zhuang and Niu Yueqing. Even though Liuyue can become an affluent and reputable wife after the marriage, she is still reluctant to have a crippled husband. She inevitably becomes a sacrifice to Zhuang's sexual conquest.

Another mistress, who has been seduced by Zhuang Zhidie, is Ah-can. Ah-can is a ravishing woman with her husband and son living in a small residence. She meets with Zhuang at her home when he is looking for Ah-can's sister. Ah-can is pleased to

chat with Zhuang for a long while and she is captivated by his literary talent. While Zhuang debauches her, Ah-can never resists his masculine virility. In depicting their sexual scenes, both of them enjoy the erotic pleasure and learn from all the erotic classics and porn videos for various sexual feats. Zhuang can enter into an Other world to luxuriate in extreme calm and sensuality. Ah-can represents a timid female subject that enthusiastically devotes her body and her life to Zhuang.

For Niu Yueqing, she is a gracious and conservative woman. She is satisfied with the present living circumstance with Zhuang Zhidie and his literary celebrity. Niu represents a traditional image of Chinese female subservient to help her husband in family and in business. In business, she assists Zhuang to manage his bookstore for better sales. In family, she is a good wife to handle all trivial matters and lets his husband has nutrient dinners. When they both agonize with the libel suit, Niu Yueqing tries to use all the ways she know to settle the suit. Nevertheless, she cannot arouse Zhuang's sexual desire in order to have harmonious sexual life. When Zhuang asks Niu to change a position for sexual intercourse, Niu cries out that he has gone mad. Niu views the sorts of positions and games in sex are morbid or immoral that she cannot accept Zhuang's request. She rather shouted out, "you treat me as a whore." It further intensifies Zhuang's shame of his sexual impotence. Later on, when she discovers the affair between Zhuang and Tang, she is aggrieved by Zhuang's disloyalty and adultery. She rather doubts

about why Zhuang has become another guy that she cannot understand. Niu Yueqing even feels perplexing when she knows about a wanton nun who has had abortion. She questions herself, "In the world what is reality? What make people still believe, worship or entrust?"⁵ Niu is so disappointed with Zhuang Zhidie that she even doubts her sense of reality. In modern age, people are likely to cover their phoniness. Thus, Niu also begins to go to beauty salon to receive treatment and to wear make-up. Ironically, after the beauty treatment, Niu's mother does not recognize Niu Yueqing again. At mid-night, Mrs. Niu always touches Niu's nose to see whether it is still on her face. A blurred distinction between "authenticity" and "inauthenticity" has already confused many people in modern age.

With the author's in-depth observation, Jia Pingwa has explained the title of his novel in a metaphysical sense:

"The city of Xian has been the capital of twelve dynasties in Chinese history. Although it has long declined and has by now become a backward place, pride and smugness about the past not faded in people's minds: the result of inferior-superior mindset, a cynical wisdom arising from helplessness, an anguish from embarrassment. This cultural mindset of the Xian people is extremely typical. In a sense, Xian is the abandoned capital of China, China the abandoned capital of the world, and our earth the abandoned capital of the universe. Writing about Xian mentality is writing about the Chinese mentality in general."⁶

In the fiction, the author tries to capture "a general mentality" of most Chinese in the 1990s. In a modernized era, many Chinese have been transformed to become instrumental to achieve

⁵ Jia, 1993:495.

⁶ Quotation from Zha, 1995:134.

attainable means and ends. Many Chinese have to disenchant themselves from the old-fashioned values and life patterns. Compared with other developed countries, China still remains backward and uncivilized in regards to living standards as well as political institutions. What they feel superior to others is their long traditional culture and civilization. However, they simultaneously feel embarrassed by their inability to breakthrough all present limitations to be more modernized.

Nevertheless, people are largely unconscious to perceive the implicit dilemma of traditional culture or civilization, which still has tremendous influence on one's value and beliefs systems. Even though we create culture or civilization, it inversely limits or controls individual's development. Obviously, the traditional values, religious practices, and intellectuals' aesthetics are profoundly embedded in most Chinese's mindsets. Zhuang Zhidie in 'Feidu' always gladly admires the traditional crafts, paintings as well as the "ghost songs" with ancient Chinese musical instrument. When he meets with uncertainties, he asks his friend to use traditional fortune telling to foretell the results. In addition, since Liuyue's facial appearance has resemblance to an ancient princess from a painting, most people superstitiously claim that Liuyue is associated with this princess before she was born. Meng Yunfang (Zhuang Zhidie's friend) becomes blind after he read a superstitious writing. He regards that it is a sanction from God or Heaven. Unquestionably, Zhuang Zhidie and other protagonists

have never fully stepped into the twentieth century. Most male person still luxuriate in appreciating women with traditional aesthetic. In Zhuang's eyes, women are objects of male sensibilities and pleasure. With respects to female beauty, Zhuang always associates with classics' aesthetic standard to view Tang Waner's attractiveness. In sexual life, he tends to follow the Chinese classic of debauchery. It is exactly an attitude of all the old Chinese Mandarin gentlemen of the last two thousand years. Female subject are inevitably affected by the concepts of polygamy or mistress. All fictional characters overtly live in an iron cage, in which no one can escape from the restrictions of traditional culture and civilization.⁷

It is worth noting that Zhuang Zhidie is also in quest of the meaning of human existence in 'Feidu'. Once, Jia Pingwa continues to explain his aim in writing for this fiction:

"I wrote about how Chinese people eat, drink, shit, piss and sleep — common things, plain language, realist techniques. But there is a metaphysical level: I painted a China both real and symbolic, in a specific historical moment. This is something I've thought about doing for many years. I wanted to find a way to convey in depth how the Chinese existence feels."⁸

In writing the story of Zhuang Zhidie, Jia Pingwa reveals a paradoxical feeling in his agony and helplessness. Zhuang often asks himself: "who am I?" Although he is a famous writer in

⁷ Similarly, Mannheim has mentioned that social group may share or recognize with the vital cultural meanings. Without exception, the intellectuals in 'Feidu' all fascinate with the traditional values and beliefs. This reflects their behind ideology.

⁸ Quotation from Zha, 1995:162-163.

Xijing, he is anguished with his fame and his social status. Most of the times, his pent-up emotions and frustrations come from his being a celebrity. He once tells Zhou Min about his trouble, "when I become more reputable, I always lose my temper."⁹ Zhuang is different from the other three prominent friends since he is always conscious of his own limitations. It is apparent that his enormous fame gives him both pressure and privilege. On one hand, the entire city worships him and he can obtain special privilege from different people. On the other hand, many people rely on his reputable fame in order to take advantages. Everyone expects to associate with Zhuang's literary fame, and not Zhuang Zhidie himself. Under such circumstance, Zhuang becomes extremely alienated from his name and his role. Although he is alert to such problem, he cannot set himself free. Obviously, Zhuang perceives the importance of his fame which has given him special privileges in society. In society, he has no money and no power, but only his literary celebrity. However, his fame is being used as political propaganda, business advertisement or profit makings. His creativity and autonomy is concurrently limited by others' instrumental ends. Though Zhuang leaves himself alone in the countryside to write fictions, he is disturbed by others too. Most ironically, Zhuang seeks for an informal help from official's arrangement to have a place for cultural discussion. Without Zhuang's literary fame, he cannot benefit from either the official or others' assistance. Consequently, he is ever disquieted with his fame: "although I

⁹ Jia, 1993:15.

hate the suffering my fame brings, I cannot consider being without fame."¹⁰

Zhuang Zhidie also agonizes with his powerlessness. Though he is good-hearted and sympathizes with others, he cannot have any practical or effective actions to resolve their problems. When he knows of editor Zhong's story, he writes letters in Zhong's lover's name to encourage him. But, it only makes Zhong miss his lover more. Besides, Zhuang never blames Zhou Min's selfishness when he exaggerated Zhuang's past romantic liaison. Zhuang Zhidie was quite sympathetic to Zhou's reason to be famous. He even writes to Jing Xueyin for sincere apology after she has initiated the suit. His good intention only aggravates the problems. As a result, he additionally suffers great pain from Zhong's death and Jing's judicial appeal.

In order to probe his personal existence, he opens his private sphere in sex. Through sexual adventures, he successfully searches out his way to escape from the distressing reality. Jia Pingwa once said, "[Zhuang Zhidie is] with no power, no money, no influence, sex is the only thing [Zhuang] can escape to from this hollow life."¹¹ Eroticism, in Zhuang's mind, is the most effective way to extend beyond the everyday limits. Borrowing from Weber's words, eroticism becomes "a gate into the most irrational and thereby real kernel of life, as compared with the mechanism of rationalization." It is a primary source to be

¹⁰ Jia, 1993:126.

¹¹ Quotation from Zha, 1995:150.

"inner-worldly salvation from the rational."¹² At first, after making love with Tang Waner, he gains back his confidence from failures with Niu Yueqing. He even feels vigorous and revived to conceptualize his new ideas in fictional writing. Afterwards, Zhuang becomes uncontrollable in sexual perversity. Sex adventures only pave his way to final destruction. However, he not only destroys himself, but also destroys Tang Waner, Liuyue and Niu Yueqing. In the end, Liuyue has a lamentation to Zhuang:

"you create me and Tang Waner to be a new woman; make us live courageously and confidently. But you eventually destroy us. You also annihilate your image, reputation; annihilate Niu Yueqing and your home."¹³

Liuyue and Tang Waner simply represent moths which fly towards a source of bright life (symbolically recognized as Zhuang Zhidie). They seek for a new life with immense courage and grand hope. But, this source of life is also a formidable source of death. Zhuang is incapable of bringing either fortune or happiness to them. With a tragic end, Zhuang cannot save Tang Waner from her brutal husband. Liuyue is forced to accept the marriage with mayor's crippled son. Niu Yueqing becomes confounded with Zhuang and modern Chinese life. Paradoxically, Zhuang is also a victim who tries to escape from this world as well as to search for his own individual existence. But "he sinks into [sex], can't pull himself out. He destroys others as well as himself - it's sick."¹⁴ His sexual perversity have directed him to a perpetual destruction. In the end of the fiction, Zhuang determines to

¹² Quotation from Scaff, 1989:108.

¹³ Jia, 1993:460.

¹⁴ Quotation from Zha, 1995:150.

abandon his literary fame which has been censured or has become a joke to the public. He said, "I do not write, I give up my fame."¹⁵ Ultimately, he obtains nothing and flees away from Xijing.

Other protagonists in 'Feidu' also indulge in materialistic world. Urban life in Xijing is rotten and perverse in every way. A picture of its pervasive hypocrisy and corruption, its superstitious beliefs, its prurient repression, and its stagnant powers can be precisely revealed in the fiction. In particular, the corruption and the new social hierarchy of nineties China has been exposed in the novel by a prophetic old man, who collects and sells garbage. People are deeply influenced by an ethos of making money and an engagement of power politics. For the other three prominent friends, they inevitably wallow in luxury and run their lucrative businesses with unhappy endings. Kung Jingyuan commits suicide since he detests the money which has destroyed him and his son. "Although it is easy to earn money, money destroys my life and my son."¹⁶ Wang Ximian was prosecuted by police because he produced a number of fake paintings. Yuen Zhifei is beaten heavily by the hooligans. Ironically, his sightless eyes are replaced by a dog's eyes in a surgery. It is cynical that a cow can have humanist quality to think when most of the individuals fail to concern themselves with their lives and values. Mrs. Niu (Niu Yueqing's mother) can always talk with the ghosts and has contact with the "Otherly world." The

¹⁵ Jia, 1993:518.

¹⁶ See Jia, 1993:415-416.

author's mythical realism shows a blurred boundary between life and death. Under such circumstance, the failure of the individuals is their incapability in questioning or searching out their basic human values and the ultimate concern in the world. They become spiritless and decadent in modern age. Eventually, none of them can escape from the past cultural restrictions nor the present materialistic lives. However, it is much pitiable that they are never conscious of their indignant conditions.

In sum, Zhuang Zhidie's decadent mentality is due to his initial self-consciousness and his failure in self-salvation from his crisis. It is Jia's great success to exhibit the intellectual's spiritual journey in the current context of modern China.

'Baiye' (White Night):

"*Baiye*" is Jia Pingwa's second fiction about urban life in nineties China. It is the author's attempt to depict a group of protagonists in their ordinary everyday lives and unsettling inner worlds. With distinct social backgrounds, ordinary people, without exceptions, search for their own goals during their life times. In the fiction, Jia Pingwa has created the characters of intellectuals, cultural elite, opera actors, police, entrepreneurs, official cadres, artists and fashion models. Jia Pingwa has expatiated on how the protagonists agonize over their personal or social problems and with their tragic endings.

Among other protagonists, Jia Pingwa focuses on the love story of Yubai and Yelang. Yubai is a thirty years old lady who is well-educated in Chinese literature and arts. She symbolically represents an image of cultural elite in Chinese society. Superficially, her social life is similar to other common people. But the author particularly sketches out her preferences for traditional culture and artistic creation. In passages of the fiction, Yubai is shown to be fond of Chinese poetry, songs, ancient musical instrument, "Song Ci" and Buddhist writings. When she is at home, she often listens to music of Jiang Baishi's "ci" and read about the Diamond Sutra. Besides, she learns from one old the woman art of folk paper cuttings and later on she creates another form of cloth cutting by herself. With her intellectual background, Yubai is a self-respecting woman who may distinguish herself from the vulgarity of tastes and manners.

For her apparent weakness, Yubai is emotionally inhibited with her age such that she is lacking in confidence to love Yelang. At the beginning, Yubai at first sight falls in love with Yelang. With her intellectual interests, Yubai is able to share her views or ideas in aspects of the traditional culture and civilization with Yelang only. Apart from Yelang, she finds it difficult to meet another person to share her insights or interests. Thereafter, she often considers having an affair with Yelang. However, being in her early thirties, she

inevitably compares herself with other young and charming ladies, and she shy away from Yelang. As a result, she becomes more emotionally anguished and she often waits for Yelang's expression. When she does not receive any message from Yelang, she then separates herself from the outside world and goes into her artistic world. In the artistic world, it is her private mental space, and she fully takes her own initiative to create. She even creates another form of cutting style and one company willingly collects her products for public sales. In the end, she cannot marry Yelang and she remains in her private artistic world for her own subjective creations.

For Yelang, his physical appearance is always portrayed metaphorically as a horse. But, his character actually resembles that of an untamed horse which is unrestricted from the entrenched orders and the suppressions from authorities. Jia Pingwa intends to create Yelang as a modern knight errant. Yelang likes to assist the helpless and detests the corrupt officials or businessmen. Obviously, he is affected by the traditional folk culture with its heavy ethical values. At the beginning of the fiction, he makes love with Yanming. Originally, he supposes that Yanming is chaste. He is very proud of his sexual conquest of virgin. He wants his neighbors to know about his love affair with a pure and virginal lady in the city. It is quite important to a man who possesses nothing in a world. The author also implies that the city is filled with a lot of vulgarity and immorality. Afterwards, Yelang discovers that he

is deceived by Yanming and he feels extremely disappointed. In spite of Yanming's explanation, he does not believe her honesty and chastity.

In addition, Yelang is always over-shadowed by his father's past experiences. His father is a peasant with a hunchback, and is repeatedly repressed by the hardships of life and the exploitative rural cadres. Yelang always perceives a sense of lamentation from his father (even though he has passed away for years) and he desires to set free the restrictions of society. On the one hand, he becomes more rebellious against corrupt officials or entrepreneurs. On the other hand, he searches for his idealized female subject for love. Consequently, Yubai's presence fascinates him very much.

In the fiction, Yelang is an actor of an opera which particularly plays with the "ghost drama." Originally, Yelang is an assistant of one powerful official, Zhu Yihe. When Zhu gets sick and everyone leaves him alone, only Yelang is chivalrously looking after him. With his past political affiliation, Yelang always uses his informal influence and connections to settle or revolve his friends' problems. Once, his friends Wu Qingpu and Zhouyun requested his help for obtaining official approval of their restaurant license through informal channel. When they are ready for the restaurant's opening, Yelang also succeeds in inviting the vice-mayor to attend the opening ceremony. In other people's eyes, Yelang is a knight errant who relieves other's

suffering and hardship. Since he dislikes stagnant powers and hypocrisy, he may intentionally make troubles with them. For instance, a senior official of the cultural department is provoked by rumor spread by Yelang. He has left a message on all the staff's pagers about this official's hypocrisy. Thereafter, Yelang has planned to make trouble with him again. The official's huge income and corruption has been exposed to the central government and the public by Yelang. This leads to an investigation by the central authority. In addition, Yelang once meets with Ning Hongxiang who has eagerly invited Yelang's opera to perform in his hometown. Yelang knows about his intention to show off his wealth. Thereby, Yelang asks for an expensive sum for the performance expenditure. All these reveal Yelang's defiance, desires for overturning the repressive powers and unmasking the socially accepted hypocrisy.

For his love affair, Yelang is caught between two women: Yubai and Yanming. In his mind, Yubai is more attractive than Yanming because of her artistic talent and a common sharing in traditional culture. On the other hand, Yelang is captivated by Yanming's ravishing appearance and body shape. The two female subjects can be interpreted as a distinction between "body" and "spirit." Yelang cannot possess these two women simultaneously and he must make a choice between them. For Yubai, Yelang directly considers their cultural gap: whether they can get along well in the future; whether he can adapt with the new lifestyle after marriage. Certainly, he feels inferior with Yubai's high

social status and cultural background. But, he is unwilling to give up Yuibai. He even says to himself, "Although I come from lower class, why can't I love an idealized woman in my life?"¹⁷ In the end, Yelang is determined to marry Yanming because she is pregnant with his baby. He is responsible for looking after her and providing her with a family shelter. Yubai is thereby forced to give up her love with Yelang.

Though Yanming gets married with Yelang, she is forced to leave him eventually. After their baby girl is born, Yelang wonders why the baby does not look like either him or Yanming. Once again, he doubts Yanming's chastity and honesty. However, Yanming has concealed a secret why her baby girl looks unpleasant and does not resemble them. Originally, Yanming herself is an ugly lady and she cannot accept others' teasing so that she has cosmetic surgery in Shanghai. In the past, no one knows this secret and she becomes a successful fashion model in Xijing. Her physical body and appearances have captivated many males. Therefore, even though Yelang is her husband, she cannot tell him the truth. It is because Yelang is inexhaustibly subject to the traditional concept of masculine attitude, seeking for a female with physical beauty. If Yelang knows her secret, he will dislike her further. In a masculine society, a female is still an object of a male's pleasure and sensation. In such circumstance, Yanming determines to divorce Yelang. By her artificial beauty, she is confident to be a popular fashion model

¹⁷ Jia, 1995:175.

and she brings her baby to Shanghai for cosmetic surgery. As a woman, Yanming firstly perceives the importance of a human's physical beauty over the inner life's values. But, Yanming's concept is attributed by her past unhappy experience and she is also a victim of the male dominated hierarchy in Chinese society.

Wang Kuan, Yelang's close friend, is a righteous and dutiful police. He grew up in the Mao's era and was encouraged to learn from the model of "Lei Feng." In his mind, a police should be devoted to serve the party, the police department and the people. Thus, he is exceedingly hard-working against the crimes and the corruption in society. Most likely he spends all his times to investigate and to arrest the criminals. His wife is unpleasant with Wang's seriousness because he always comes home at midnight and completely ignores family life. Apart from his devotion, his "Lei Feng" spirit is not welcomed by other people in modern age. Once he meets a young girl and her baby, who beg him for money in the street. He is benevolent to ask her whether she needs his aid though he has no money. The girl asks for a train ticket to go back to her hometown. Wang Kuan then takes her to the train station and write a paper to the train officer, guaranteeing a free ticket. In fact, he is a good man who passionately helps others with his great effort. But, it is also his weakness that others may use him to involve in illegal affairs. A few days later, Wang Kuan is fired by the police department. It is because the girl whom asked for his help is a criminal. She brought the baby from the city to the countryside

for selling. Wang Kuan is blamed for his uncritical mindset to assist this criminal for transportation. His good-hearted and accountable personality, which he learnt from "Lei Feng", is regarded as "blind" and "lacking in flexibility" in present age. Owing to Wang's termination, his wife divorces him and he suffers from serious illness. By Wang's story, the author implicitly reveals that the old-fashioned values or ideologies is always inappropriate at the present. In modern age, people do not engage in any pursuit of ideals again and "heroism" has gone. What engages people's interest? It is an instrumental concern which stresses on the effective means and attainable ends. Every moment is spent in calculating gains and losses.

In the urban city, many Chinese begin to engage in doing private business to improve their living standards. With technological knowledge and expert training, intellectuals are no exception to establish their own enterprises or consultant firms for profit makings. In the fiction, though Wu Qingpu is reluctant to leave his study, he promises Zhouyun, his lover, to manage the restaurant's business. Qingpu is eager to do whatever Zhouyun requests. In Zhouyun's concept, running a business is a prevailing channel to earn lucrative incomes and intellectual study is impractical and valueless in the market economy. Thus, Zhouyun always urges Qingpu to give up his work in the cultural department. In spite of Qingpu's sacrifice, he cannot get married with Zhouyun. Zhouyun ultimately decides to leave him when she met a rich merchant. She prefers to be a mistress for

better materialistic life and successes. Qingpu also abandons his business and joins his cultural research in rural areas again. He always yearns for Zhouyun and he never blames her. In the end, Qingpu is killed by the bees in the countryside and Zhouyun becomes emotionally disturbed. To a degree, Jia tries to arouse the readers' interests to share with the characters' subjective feelings from their unpleasant experiences that may be common in urban life.

All in all, the author in 'Baiye' has portrayed a picture of the confounding inner world of ordinary people living in the city. The rise of market economy in China is marked as a new start to many Chinese. People are either affected by the ethos of money-making and consumption culture in subtle ways. At the same time, it is also a collision of the old and the new values, and materialistic and spiritual desires. Through the depiction of everyday life, the pairs of male and females are distressing with their loves, their jobs, and their businesses. Under such circumstance, individuals are more conscious of what they are really seeking for in their lives. Some protagonists in fiction may engage in money-makings while they give up their families and lovers. Someone may choose an alternative for materialistic desires, abandoning the spiritual quest. Everyone is free to seek for ideals, whether on materialistic or humanist grounds. Meanwhile, individuals are self-responsible in taking their risks, they are only subordinated to their own selves.

Besides, some of the fictional characters are still fascinated with the traditional culture, even though they are modern men. In regard to Yelang, Yubai and Wang Kuan, all of them prefer to enjoy the cultural legacy and idealistic values. Sometimes, Yelang feels annoyed with the modernized ambience, crowded residences and even urban lifestyle. Yubai is nearly a cultural recluse from the vulgar and complicated social world. She enjoys her artistic creation and excludes herself from others' disturbance. Though Wang Kung loses his wife and job, he never abandons his belief to be a right-minded person. To a certain extent, Jia expects that some of the cultural legacy can be restored in our age.

Simultaneously, it is more reflexive to see how traditional values still have immense influence on ordinary people.¹⁸ Without doubt, Yelang is heavily affected by the traditional ethical values for upholding female subservient character in relations to female's chastity and honesty. The concept of masculine domination is still commonly shared by many Chinese male. Yelang may be inferior to have love with Yubai because of her cultural background and social status. He is confused whether he can extend beyond all invisible pressures to devote to her. Conversely, he feels comfortable to get along well with Yanming because they both come from the lower class. In fact, it is a prevalent attitude of male's self-esteem. Owing to such traditional influences, Yelang is annoyed and doubtful to

¹⁸ Goldmann's idea on significant structure of literary texts and society is adopted in this part of analysis again.

determine between Yubai and Yanming. When Yanming is pregnant, Yelang is forced by Wang Kung to take care of her and her baby. He is reluctant to give up Yubai, but he cannot leave Yanming alone. As a result, Yelang puts himself into a dilemma. In addition, Yelang's traditional concept also becomes other's burden. Since he is puzzled with his baby's ugly appearance, he again doubts about Yanming's honesty and chastity, and he demands a divorce. Despite of getting divorce, Yanming still conceals her secret. It is because she understands females are still under the masculine domination and she should protect her ravishing image before all males. Thus, she eventually brings her baby to Shanghai for her new career development.

In their tragic endings, all fictional characters become ever more unsettled with their experiences. Jia Pingwa tries to concentrate on the individuals' subjective feelings and consciousness towards their everyday lives. This allows readers to focus on the issues of "individual's lifeworld" and "individual's predicaments." Jia thus prompts his readers to have in-depth reflections on their daily lives.

Jia Pingwa's Reconstruction of Self:

Jia Pingwa, in recent years, has reflected upon the foundation of Chinese culture as well as the individual's self existence. The current predicaments of many Chinese, including the intellectuals and the ordinary people, is Jia's great

concern. Jia's fictions are his very attempts to reconstruct his "self." In the past, intellectual discourse has been dominated by the "official talk."¹⁹ Most Chinese intellectuals have no internal resources to fortify their sense of self and to justify their individual existence. By 'Feidu' and 'Baiye', Jia's words encouraged readers to rethink about their existence in the modern world.

In 'Feidu', the question of "who am I?" always pushes Zhuang Zhidie to full self-consciousness. Apart from his literary fame, how can Zhuang Zhidie sense or justify his authentic self? After the bankrupt of political ideals, the Chinese individuals have become more self-awared than before. Generally speaking, Jia Pingwa has also turned to "inward looking" to reestablish his sense of self-consciousness. When Zhuang Zhidie rethinks his family life, social relationship and career, he feels extremely annoyed. He neither finds happiness nor satisfaction in such social institutions, but rather emotional inhibition. All these social institutions are Zhuang's great burden so that he must escape from them. In his own way, Zhuang begins his self-salvation in sex. In sexual life, Zhuang can perceive his individual existence. Though he has destroyed himself and his women, it is Zhuang's own choice to reestablish a sense of self. Obviously, Zhuang prefers to restore his subjective existence and his emotional feeling in such a calm ambience. It is his way to go beyond the disturbances of the

¹⁹ See Leo Lee, 1991 and Wang, 1994.

objective reality. What remains important in the modern world? In Jia Pingwa's mind, it is not money and power, but rather a quest of oneself.

On the other hand, all fictional characters, in the story of 'Baiye', have reconstructed their own value criteria to justify what is "worth" or "valueless." Some protagonists accept that money, power and consumption are symbols of wealth, autonomy and modernity. Thus, they engage in money making and expanding the individual's social networks. Other protagonists, however, choose to retain their idealistic visions. Yelang, Wang Kuan and Yubui are the ones who support traditional values. Through the depiction of protagonists' inner dilemmas when value conflicts existed, this exactly reflects the increased self-awareness of Chinese ordinary people.

Moreover, by Jia's personal observation, a long-cultivation of traditional culture still has immense influence in modern men's minds. Many Chinese people are in modern times deeply affected by both the feudal and communist ideologies in relations to their ethics, the concepts of the mandarin, the mythical folk religions or cults as well as Chinese arts or literature. While many Chinese people are proud of their long-established culture and civilization, in fact they are imprisoned by this cultural iron cage.²⁰ Compared with other developed countries, most Chinese intellectuals and people have high self-esteem and they

²⁰ See Xiao Xialin, 1993:44.

will never give up their honored symbol - tradition. At the same time, individuals always have value conflicts associated with the dilemma of tradition and modernity. It is the author's intention to explore the location of Chinese culture in the context of modernity. Through the description of the fictional characters' internal tension from the collision of both traditional and modern values, the readers are pushed into a broader horizon of modernity. A space for "self-expression" not only exists in an objective social life, but it also exists in the broader horizon of cultural sphere.

Jia Pingwa's current fictions provide the reading public a chance to rethink oneself's location in the face of modernity. In this a changing society, individuals need to have new cultural identity for their new roles and value justifications. In the formation of the cultural public sphere, Jia introduces the reflexive cultural questions in relations to the western philosophy, the problem of the collision of tradition and modernity, and the process of the individual's self-realization as well. All these fundamentally go beyond the monopoly of communist ideology in contemporary China. The establishment of "self" is also essential to the reading community. In the past, individual's private sphere cannot exist because of the subtle and direct intervention of the Communist Party. Due to the emergence of social autonomy in the reform era, the individuals would possibly retain their own private sphere far away from the authority. Thus, a process of self-reconstruction is perceived

as a means to enhance the individual's mental resistance. The official culture may not be identified as the sole value reference by the public again. An enlarged cultural space, as indicated also in Jia Pingwa's fiction, gives the readers a deeper meaning of modernity in modern China. In short, Jia Pingwa's work constitutes the alternative value of "self-searching" in the realm of cultural public sphere.

Conclusion:

To anchor a dynamic between the public sphere and writer, Jia Pingwa provides a realm of cultural reflection for the Chinese readers. As introduced before, Jia Pingwa has a more truthful description of contemporary China, the collision of traditional and modern values. The individuals possibly agonize with the conflicts of traditional values and modern instrumental practices. It is also a problem for individual to achieve a balance between these two extremes. Most importantly, Jia Pingwa's depiction encourages the readers to be more self-conscious of their own subjective existence and self-judgment. A process of self-reflection and self-realization is really an individual's spiritual liberation from the corrupted culture official in the current world of China. Through such a cultural reflection, the reach of political ideology to the social lives is probably lessened. It is a cultural power to exceed beyond the interruption of politics.

Chapter 6:

Conclusion - The Generation of Alternative Values

A democratic character of public sphere and civil society, as introduced at the outset, is essentially the cultivation of public culture for enhanced autonomy and emancipatory practices. With regards to public sphere, Habermas has laid his stress on cultural communication which is the basis for a cohesive community. Through cultural communication in society, common values and beliefs can be articulated and circulated by various means of public media. The present study of Chinese contemporary writers and their fiction creation is expected to shed light on their intervention in the formation of public sphere in today's China.

Literature and Public Sphere:

In studying a writer, a crucial relationship between literature and public sphere needs to be highlighted. As mentioned earlier, the public sphere of lifeworld is a fundamental basis for value articulation and circulation in society. Compared with other cultural media, literature is able to arouse the readers' subjective consciousness to the transmitted values and beliefs.

With regard to literature, the author specifically takes up novel to explicate its relation with the formation of public

sphere. It is because the form and the content of novel more closely correspond to social reality than other arts or cultural media.¹ Novel is bound up with particular moments in the history of society. In other words, novel writing can have an extensive frame of time and space for creation. Furthermore, novel involves the objective social world and the writer's subjective consciousness. On the one hand, a novelist may start with real social life description. On the other hand, a novelist can analyze and interpret the social meanings behind the reality. As such, a novelist firstly owes his strong observation to social phenomena and his personal attitude emerges through his writing and the style of composition. Novelists thus search for a perception of social life and an expression of their sense towards the social reality. To a larger extent, a novelist proffers his personal values and meanings on an issue within specific historical and social contexts.²

As illustrated by Habermas' study, the psychological novel in 18th century Western Europe is an attempt to achieve the exchange of intersubjectivity between writers and readers. Most prominently, both writers and readers were inexhaustibly conscious of freedom, love and cultivation of human values. They strongly believed that individual's values could not be disregarded and later they appealed to the constitutional legislation for human rights protection. The new rise of psychological novel constitutes a space for intersubjective

¹ Such as newspapers, journals, television shows and etc.

² See Zeraffa, 1972:39.

communication, in which people can share mutual values and question common concerns. Habermas has demonstrated a mutual relationship between authors, novels and readers that gives the emergence of intersubjective communication.

In fact, novel encourages its readers to be more reflexive and critical to their familiar world. It stimulates the readers to think of the social meanings or vital values behind our reality or in our life. Under such circumstance, the formation of public sphere can be established on novel of literature that can disseminate and cultivate the democratic culture to its public readers. For the democratic vision, the writers can put the values of human genuine freedoms, in terms of expression, speech, association, thought, assembly as well as human rights, into the fictional world. Novel may retread the readers' minds, hearts and characters from the entrenched social orders and values.

Havel's Idea of "Living Within Truth":

In his article entitled "The Power of the Powerless", Havel mentioned that the communist ideology has offered "human beings the illusions of an identity, of dignity, and morality while making it easier for them to part with them."³ People become automatically obedient towards the commands or directives of the communist system. The communist systems have often disengaged

³ Havel, 1989:42.

themselves from reality and have recreated a world of appearances. Worse still, the communist state depends on the power structure that individuals on all levels of power hierarchy are increasingly being pushed aside by anonymous power rituals. Consequently, "the automatic operation of a power structure thus dehumanized and made anonymous is a feature of the fundamental automation of this system."⁴ Individuals are thus living in ideological pseudo-reality or in a lie.

Havel has answered with a stress on "human identity" and "aims of life." Individuals should firstly identify with their inherent values in relation to humanity's rightful dignity, moral integrity, and self expression. Havel encourages individuals to live within the "truth" which accompanies human consciousness, conscience and responsibility. It is a rediscovery of "authentic self" and needs to be alienated from living in a lie. Havel says:

"In the post-totalitarian system, therefore, living within the truth has more than a mere existential dimension (returning humanity to its inherent nature), or a noetic dimension (revealing reality for others). It also has an unambiguous political dimension. If the main pillar of the system is living a lie, then it is not surprising that the fundamental threat to it is living in truth. This is why it must be suppressed more severely than anything else."⁵

The aims of life are essentially a way to undermine the aims of system (communist anonymous power). Individuals are suggested to seek out their own authentic existence.

⁴ Havel, 1989:49.

⁵ Havel, 1989:56-57.

In the Maoist era, the Chinese people and intellectuals also lived within a lie. Most of them have developed illusions with Mao's personal charisma in pursuit of socialist ideals. Then, many Chinese became awakened from the lesson of the Cultural Revolution and they have gradually settled in the midst of prosperous economic reforms. The social life of the nineteen-eighties in China geared towards plurality, diversity and autonomy. Some intellectuals believed that China was possibly on a way towards democratic development. However, to a certain extent, such a democratic development is only confined in aspects of economic reforms and little efforts and effects are found in institutional or legal reforms. In the case of the 1989 student movement, we need to understand that the political suppression came from a central authority wielding anonymous power which has been established during the reform era. This anonymous power is perceived as inhumane and cruel that it has completely ignored the students' discourses and even their lives. Under such a context, whose efforts are able to fight against such an authority?

Cultural Communication of Writers in China:

With firsthand experience from past political turbulence, most Chinese writers have transformed themselves and have disengaged from Chinese literary orthodoxy and the ideological dialogue. The contemporary Chinese literary world tends to perform a sense of demystification towards the official Party or

feudal Chinese culture. This great change possibly enables the development of literary public sphere in China with an enhancement of democratic vision.

The works of Wang Shuo, Mo Yan and Jia Pingwa have shown that all of them have carved out their own space for creativity. Though they have contrasted subject concerns and fictional languages, they are mutually complementary in constructing a utopian symbol corresponding to the social reality of China. To a certain degree, these writers have achieved a radical demystification of communist and traditional ideologies.

I. Wang Shuo and the Public Sphere:

In a realm of literary public sphere, Wang Shuo has interpreted the concepts of genuine freedom, autonomy as well as equality to his readers. To have freedom, one should negate all social meanings of traditional and official culture. His language is full of cynicism, mockery and humor. By his hippy irreverence, an individual cannot possibly entrust on any ideals in either political or social grounds again. Wang Shuo feels compelling and thus voices for total emancipation. In order to set oneself free, individuals should be active in destroying all entrenched orders. This approach may be regarded as a "soft-core destruction" in cultural meanings that Wang Shuo has relinquished the orthodox doctrines and has reestablished the new value system. An emphasis on "equality" between human beings in Wang

Shuo's fiction has threatened the hierarchical rules and paternalism in China. The new Chinese generation strongly recognizes the "in-between equality" and "human rights" that cannot be deprived by authoritarian rules. Also, a notion of individualism is particularly shared by both the writer and his readers who are in their twenties. In this aspect, the generation of the eighties has a consensus on individual's judgment and self interests. They are more enthusiastic in their own social activities and keep their distance from public concerns. This reveals a world view of the Other Cultural Generation. The youth has demanded for an individual space which allows them to do- what they like. The freedoms to play music, to read literature, to create arts, to study as well as to earn money are understood to be human's freedom and thus as essentially the same as the freedom to express, the freedom to write or the freedom to defend oneself in political or social interests. It is a powerful realization that freedom is indivisible from human beings. The Chinese youth may come to stand up for themselves and for genuine freedoms. Wang Shuo further makes his readers self-consciously exclude themselves far away from the party-controlled dimensions and restore their own independent space. Wang Shuo, in the public sphere, has established a realm of resistant sphere in opposition to the party-state.

After the 1989 Tiananmen Incidence, most Beijing youth take Wang Shuo's resistant fictional characters or languages as a

model to tease the political or social absurdity. Young Chinese may identify with the rebel characters who fight against conformity, uniformity and discipline of the communist ideology. Wang Shuo's styled language such as 'fan' (annoyed, pissed off, etc.) and 'shi'r' (thing, matter, event) are always adopted as common vehicle to express their frustrations. In fact, Wang Shuo has provided a place for his young readers to release their repressed emotions. Though they cannot have an opened confrontation to the party-state, they search for their own ways that go far beyond political controls. In contemporary Beijing, artistic dissents can be easily found in pop culture such as paintings, rock music, cultural T-shirts, films and Wang Shuo's novels. All of them attempt to transform central sacred values to profane ones. As a consequence, Wang Shuo and other dissent artists have further removed the central ideology away from the individuals' mindset and reinvented new sets of values.

Wang Shuo has demystified the elitism which is embedded in Chinese everyday life. The author very often disdains the "intellectuals", "orthodox literature", "education", "existing social orders", "political ideals", and "outmoded values." In Wang Shuo's eyes, all of these mean nothing. They are remarked as the tools of communist authority to regulate people's everyday life. In Foucaultian sense, it is rather a "power/politics" to control and to constrain individuals' freedoms. In such a context, Wang Shuo's radical critique represents a human struggle for genuine freedom and a fight against authoritarian systems.

The author's fictional languages and characters can be perceived as the means to expose the world realpolitik: its production, distribution, circulation and function to reading public. Wang Shuo's writing may work in a similar way to the Eastern European writers who have reflected upon the absurdity of post-totalitarian systems.⁶ Wang Shuo's literary performance further calls for individual's reflection from social life.

II. Mo Yan and the Public Sphere:

For Mo Yan, his portrait has sought for the vital values in relations to human's infinite devotion, endurance, dignity, desires for love and happiness. All these are inherent in human life. In regard to the literary public sphere, Mo Yan lets his readers become alert of their inherent values that are the important elements to fight against the communist powers. His fictional characters are more transcended to exceed beyond the communist ideology and to seek independent sphere for individual's real liberation.

As mentioned above, Mo Yan has initiated the human subjective consciousness in his novels. By his presentation, the author emphasizes the individuals' personal efforts to protect or to sustain their own lives during times of national torrents or political turbulence. Although the objective

⁶ For examples, Havel's play has expressed the absurdity of language in Czechoslovak.

worlds in fiction are always portrayed as dark, cruel, and repressive, Mo Yan's protagonists are still living vigorously. It is because the absurdity of reality only stimulates human life force to resist, to confront. Mo Yan intends to stress the importance of subjective vision that is invaluable and indispensable in the struggles against social or political constraints.

By the description of his hometown, Mo Yan has exhibited the image of a life full of primitive energy and strength. Mo Yan was born in China in the sixties and he witnessed the dissolution of the communist ideology. But, how can he recreate the past that is so remote from his life experience? Convincingly, the natural life in Mo Yan's fiction is his object of subversion, which originates from the fragmentation of communist ideology. In other words, Mo Yan's natural life world is constructed in opposition to the communist object. Although there is no return to the past, Mo Yan reconstitutes the vital life values which are utopian symbols to negate the communist ideology in modern times.

Again, Mo Yan's negation is revealed in the traditional sexual hierarchy through the illegitimate love between Grandfather and Grandmother, Gao Ma and Jinju, and mother and her lover. His contempt of feudal ethics and social institutions is shown in the glorification of an individual's rebelling forces. In his fiction, most characters have

challenged the social structures or marital institutions. The author has exposed the backwardness of Chinese culture and that it is a kind of long-cultivated influence in restricting modern Chinese. Such a cultural decay has been further put into the social and political hierarchy in communist regime. Individuals are demanded to serve the communist cause or the strict discipline by the Party. In fact, it is characterized as Chinese "patriarchy." But, Mo Yan has created his protagonists to rebel for their own personal sake ultimately. For instance, Grandmother's independence is apparently to enjoy her sexual freedom. Mother's adultery is to protect herself from the family's scorn. Gao Ma and Jinju strongly desire for their own love and future fortune. Mo Yan's fictional characters are thus created in contradiction to socialist realism: individual genuine freedom is a subject to oneself, not for others nor a fulfillment to official directives. Obviously, Mo Yan's individualism stresses on human genuine freedom that must be emancipated from communist ideology.

III. Jia Pingwa and the Public Sphere:

With regards to Jia Pingwa, his current writing intends to quest for "self." Under a context of the collision of traditional and modern value systems, individuals may be more self-conscious to a problem of value conflict. Jia Pingwa's description of inner-worlds and everyday life of individuals allows his readers to restore "a modern mind of the West to

undertake philosophical investigation into traditional Chinese culture."⁷ Jia Pingwa's intervention in the literary public sphere has provided the larger entity to his readers, trying to transform themselves into a state of modernity. In other words, Jia Pingwa has exhibited a new view of the Chinese culture as no longer identifiable with the party-state. As a consequence, it widens the yawning gap between a sphere of social life and the party-controlled dimensions.

Jia Pingwa in 'Feidu' has revealed the problem that most modern men may suffer from and it is human alienation. It is contrasted from Marx's idea on capitalist production which leads to alienation. With respects to Western existentialism, the rise of rationalization and sciences has led to the deprivation of subjective feelings and authentic self. Borrowing from Habermas, it is a consequence of colonialization of human's lifeworld.⁸ Individuals are thus forced to fit into the requirements of external money and power systems. It further dehumanizes subjective feelings and personalities when one is repressed by such anonymous systems. Zhuang Zhidie in 'Feidu' has also suffered from his literary fame and he always asks "who am I?" Apart from his fame, what can make him feel his subjective existence? When he is at the age of forty, he only possess his fame only. However, Zhang's celebrity gives him compelling feelings. It is because a number of people

⁷ Quotation from Tsai, 1989:19.

⁸ See Habermas, 1994:444.

always disturbs him that he cannot have his private sphere. It is not surprising that individuals are always dominated by external institutions such as family, money, power, social status and even secondary groups. As a result, he begins his way to escape from the constraints of objective world. Without power, money and influence, Zhuang only indulges in sexual adventures. Borrowed from Weber's words, Zhuang attempts to reenchant in his inner-world where he can feel his subjective existence.

Zhuang Zhidie's personal experience may be very common in modern China. Jia Pingwa's concern is his desire to realize a fundamental question that everyone should consider: "who am I?" The process of searching for one's self is also the process of enhancing steadily one's self-consciousness.⁹ Jia Pingwa thus encourages his public readers to resort to individual eternal existence in the current context of China. In Jia's mind, it is a transcendental truth that everyone should engage in locating oneself in his or her specific terrain. In fact, Jia Pingwa has departed from the official culture which demands blind obedience, rather than carving out a sense of authentic self and a genuine freedom of humanity.

In addition, Jia Pingwa has shown an individual's inner lifeworld with paradoxical feelings. In today's China, conventional values and common practices still have immense

⁹ See Tsai, 1989.

influences on people's everyday life. Simultaneously, modern China is affected by Western values or beliefs in various aspects of economic life. Many Chinese have been transformed by the ethos of money making and the consumer culture in numerous ways. In the collision of traditional and modern value systems, individuals may easily feel annoy. Superficially, it is a conflict of two value systems. But a great problem is hidden behind all Chinese mindset. Many Chinese have never stepped into the modern era and they are still captivated by the traditions. Worse still, many people have regarded their long-established culture as their glorification when they compare China with other modern countries. It reflects a common problem that most Chinese are high self-esteem.

Under such context, Jia Pingwa has particularly captured the mentalities of Chinese writers, cultural elite, officials, entrepreneurs, workers, fashion models as well as journalists in his writings. Jia Pingwa has profoundly revealed the pent-up emotions and frustration of individuals when they are in the process of searching for self. Without regard to different social backgrounds, Jia Pingwa, his protagonists and even all Chinese people agonize with how to run away from traditional predominance.¹⁰ It is also a crucial point to debunk the linkage of communist ideology and feudal values.

¹⁰ See Jia Pingwa, 1993.

A Relationship of the Writers and the Public Sphere:

For the formation of literary public sphere, Wang Shuo, Mo Yan as well as Jia Pingwa have stimulated their public readers to carve out a human inner lifeworld and an authentic self. When the aims of life are being enhanced, the reading community has transformed to be more self-conscious of the suppressions of communist system. Owing to the emerging of the literary public sphere, an alternative value or social sentiment towards the relationship of individual and state is gradually generated. The public readers are always reminded to rethink their own independence and freedom in society. Writer, in fact, is an agent to motivate other people to pursue Havel's principle of "living within the truth" and this is a basic "dissent attitude" in undermining the anonymous power.

Most importantly, the Chinese writers have indirectly contributed the literary public sphere an imaginary space and a possibility for life. In reality, the political absurdity urges the writers in creating and shaping their ideal and imaginable worlds. This results in exploring the imaginable spheres or other possibilities to weaken the legitimacy of the Chinese communist ideology.

Edward Shils, in his classic essay named "Center and Periphery," mentions that the center of society functions as a

central zone of values, symbols and beliefs that govern its members.¹¹

"The existence of a central value system rests, in a fundamental way, on the need which human beings have for incorporation into something which transcends and transfigures their concrete individual existence. They have a need to be in contact with symbols of an order which is larger in its dimensions than their own bodies and more central in the 'ultimate' structure of reality than is their routine everyday life."¹²

The central zone of values should ideally enhance the "personal communion" with one another and should reach "a certain level of individuation."¹³ Edward Shils believes that the central values should fulfill a need of human quality and not to suppress individuals into the patterns of behavior.

With reference to Edward Shils and Havel, the Chinese writers in the realm of literary public sphere have been reinventing their new value and beliefs in the periphery. This marginal zone probably opens a new direction for democratic vision and it becomes a counterpart to the political centers. By the works of Wang Shuo, Mo Yan and Jia Pingwa, they have developed and disseminated the importance of human values, the emancipation from communist or traditional ideologies, and the quest for authentic self. The writers have reconstituted the human identity and individual will of "living within the truth" as the everyday life's resistance from the influences of

¹¹ Shils, 1975:3.

¹² Shils, 1975:7.

¹³ Shils, 1975:7.

communist ideology. In turn, they exceedingly intensify the tension between the aims of life and the aims of system.

Conclusion:

After the shock of 1989 Incidence, it can be a new start for Chinese writers to perceive what is the genuine freedoms for human beings and the overwhelming power structure of central China. Li Zehou has suggested that Chinese intellectuals and students should turn their minds toward enlightenment and away from the blind passion in national salvation.¹⁴ Once, Li Zehou said:

"after May 4th, in the democratic movement, the struggle for national salvation replaced the introduction of Enlightenment, the fundamental democratic mechanisms were not effectively understood, and each time the democratic movement had to start again at zero. Drawing the lessons of history, we must place the mission of introducing Enlightenment and promotion of fundamental democratic mechanisms at the center of our preoccupation."¹⁵

The introduction of enlightenment and the promotion of democratic mechanisms seem to be a fundamental step in establishing a democratic culture in China. Correspondingly, the changing landscape of contemporary Chinese fiction represents the writers' reflections and their unwillingness to subordinate to central authority as an ideological transformation of the literary intellectuals.

¹⁴ See Calhoun, 1994:219.

¹⁵ See Calhoun, 1994:219.

Anchoring the dynamic of the writers and the public sphere, we can observe that the Chinese writers have contributed the new interpretations of freedom and resistant attitude. Significantly, the realm of literary public sphere has provided the cohesive reading community to share with the alternative values. Meanwhile, the circulation of alternative values, which arising from the literary public sphere, probably paves the road for the cultivation of democratic culture in contemporary China.

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