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NARRATIVE OF MODERN CHINESE MASCULINITY IN HA JIN'S FICTION

By

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BA in English Education, Guangxi Normal University, 2001

MA in Contemporary English and Linguistics, University of Reading, UK, 2005

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the

College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Division of Humanities

University of Louisville

Louisville, Kentucky

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A dissertation approved on

July 5th 2012

by the following dissertation committee

Li Zeng, Dissertation Director

Annette Allen

Manuel Medina

Patrick Pranke

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated
to my family

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I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my mentor, Professor Li Zeng, for his guidance, support and inspiration. I consider myself one of the luckiest of people to have found such a mentor as him who has both intellectual brilliance and generosity of spirit. The spirit and wisdom I have learned from him are bound to benefit the rest of my life.

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patient listener whenever I feel frustrated. With their help, I am learning, slowly but surely, to be myself.

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Words suddenly go powerless when it comes to my dearest parents Su Jianji and Mo Tailun and siblings Su Lemin and Su Leyu. To them, especially to my brother Leyu Su who is battling against cancer, I dedicate this humble achievement.

ABSTRACT

NARRATIVE OF MODERN CHINESE MASCULINITY IN HA JIN'S FICTION

Lezhou Su

July 5th 2012

This dissertation consists of readings of three selected novels by Ha Jin—*Waiting*, *The Crazy*, and *A Free Life*. These novels cover three historical periods of Contemporary China under the rule of the Communist Party in sequence—the Mao's era (1949-1976), post-Mao era (1976-1989) and post-Tiananmen Square Incident era (1989 onwards). The readings are predominated with gender issues in the literary works, particularly with the construction and representation of contemporary Chinese masculinity. Drawing mainly on the Kam Louie's theory which pins down traditional Chinese masculinity in terms of *wen* (literary power) and *wu* (physical power)—the two concepts deeply entrenched in Confucianism, the dissertation explores how *wen* and *wu* qualities continuously define contemporary Chinese manhood in the novels. Because the characters of the selected novels mainly are intellectuals, the emphasis of my analysis is on *wen* masculinity represented by this community. In terms of literary theories, the dissertation adopts mainly the Structuralism

perspective, exploring dualities underlying the texts, which include, heroes vs. anti-heroes, nationalism vs. humanism. Apart from emphasizing the cultural continuity in the construction of Chinese masculinity, the dissertation also attempts to reveal the transformations of Chinese manhood in the broader context of the socio-political environment of contemporary China.

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INTRODUCTION

*For the rest of the afternoon, whenever free, Lin thought about the rape. The more he thought, the angrier he grew with himself. He realized that GengYang had taken advantage of his inability to develop his relationship with Manna. If he had married her, or if they had been engaged, that devil wouldn't have known so much about her or been given the opportunity to perpetrate the crime. Obviously his indecisiveness had opened the door to the wolf. Manna was right that he was responsible for the rape too, at least partially. How he hated himself! He was a man incapable of protecting his woman and irresolute in taking action. "Such a wimp!" he cursed himself in an undertone and clutched at his hair (H. Jin *Waiting* 193).*

The quotation is from Ha Jin's novel *Waiting*. Like many of his other stories, this novel is dominated with men's issues, depicting how Chinese men living in Mao and post-Mao eras cope with such issues as love, power, sex, nation state, and beyond. The glimpse of his works reveals that they dramatize various types of crisis and predicaments in which Chinese men, whether at home or overseas, are tragically trapped. Under his pen are such characters as a doctor being trapped in a loveless marriage, an amateur artist fighting for justice with the government, a professor ranting about his suffering, a Chinese immigrant struggling to settle down in the U.S.

The crisis and predicaments in which Ha Jin's male characters are trapped are, I believe, representative among Chinese men. And I felt compelled to study this representation in his fictional works as a way to offer a unique perspective from which I can explore the meaning of my life as a man,¹ but perhaps even more importantly, to perceive the relevant yet broader culture of contemporary China. In my research, I have found that gender issues in Ha Jin's works have not attracted sufficient attention. Some of the previous studies have touched upon these issues but no studies have extensively explored representations of Chinese men in his works. Because of this, and since my research interest gravitated into gender and masculinity, the major task assigned to this study is to explore Ha Jin's representation of masculinity of Chinese in Mao and post-Mao eras and Chinese immigrants in a transnational context.

Although I have read Ha Jin's fictional works intensively and extensively by now, my acquaintance with them began only after I arrived in the U.S. a few years ago.² Once I was introduced to Ha Jin and his works, my unquenchable curiosity was ignited immediately. I was first struck by his incredible literary achievement. As a Chinese-born immigrant who began English-learning in his adulthood and arrived at the U.S. aged almost 30, Ha Jin writes in English as a second language and his writing has swept major American literary awards. Anyone familiar with theories on the second language learning and acquisition must know that Ha Jin had made something impossible possible. He has

¹ I have embraced the faith that the ultimate purpose of best education is to know oneself. It is this faith that landed me five years ago on the Ph. D project in Humanities, which commenced a lifelong clarification of my personal philosophy.

² My past ignorance of Ha Jin was due to the fact that his voice had almost been smothered in China by the government. The ban was on the ground of politics, as his novels were accused of demonizing his fellow men and his homeland.

emerged as a major Chinese-born writer “into the Pantheon of late 20th-century American literature” (Geyh).³ He is the author of the widely acclaimed novel *Waiting* (1999), which won the PEN/Faulkner Award and the National Book Award; *War Trash* (2004), which again won the PEN/Faulkner Award; *In the Pond* (2000); *The Crazy* (2002); He is also a prolific short story writer. His story collection *Ocean of Words* (1996) won the PEN/Hemingway Award. His *Under the Red Flag* (1997) was the winner of the Flannery O’Connor Award for Short Fiction while *The Bridegroom* (2000) was the winner of the Asian American Literary Award. To my knowledge his achievements are unprecedented among the immigrant writers from Mainland China.

As I began to read his works extensively, I was delighted to notice that his works fit in well with my prospective dissertation. The gender-related issues that figure in his novels are the very ones with which I have been preoccupied. No doubt his novels produce absolute resonance and vibration in me. Thus, I have decided to focus on his works in my dissertation as a way to deepen understanding of myself, of Chinese men, and the world.

A. Biographical Sketch of Ha Jin

Ha Jin, whose real name is Xuefei Jin, was born into an army family in northeastern China in 1956. He came of age during the Culture Revolution (1966-1976)⁴. That period was the most tumultuous in Mao’s regime when

³ In one interview with Paula E. Geyb, he says, “Deep down, I do yearn to belong to American literature” (138). In another separate interview with Shan, he expressed his preference of identifying himself as a Chinese American Writer. Nonetheless, he says he will not mind if he is referred as an “overseas Chinese writer, a Chinese writer in exile, a writer of the Chinese diaspora” etc.(Shan 154)

⁴ The Culture Revolution was a massive political movement launched by Mao. He did it to regain his personal power by eliminating his rivals in the Party leadership. It later developed into a nationwide chaos with catastrophic repercussions. I will discuss it in details in the next section under the heading “Historical Context”.

schools throughout the mainland were closed. Thus Jin received quite a little formal education in childhood. At the age of fourteen, Jin started his five-year service at the People's Liberation Army (PLA) during which he was involved in the war against the former Soviet Union in 1969.⁵ It was in the army that he read many classics of Russian literature, which exerted major influence on his writing two decades later. As he claims:

Mainly I learned from them [the Russian writers] the pathos of life. No matter how comic Gogol is, his stories are tragic. As for Chekhov, the tragic sense of life is the core of his work. Even beauty in his work is intensified by tragic feelings. Tolstoy is a giant with unsurpassable energy. His style is honest, straightforward and simple. Those qualities I cherish. Above all, because the world I describe is closer to the world they presented, I feel more attached to their works (Geyh 134).

Being discharged, Jin worked as a telegraph operator for a couple of years, and it was then he started learning English on radio. When universities were reopened in the late 1970s after the Culture Revolution, Jin went to Heilongjiang University and eventually earned his bachelor degree in English and American literature in 1981. He continued his education and three years later received his M.A. in the same major from Shandong University.

Leaving his wife and his son in 1985, he set off alone for the U.S to pursue the doctorate in poetry at Brandeis. He would have intended to return to his former job at Shandong University as a researcher in American literature. The

⁵ The military confrontation between Soviet and Chinese forces at Ussuri was caused by border disputes which were headache revived from the unequal treaties between Tsarist Russia and Imperial China in the second half of 19th century.

Tianan-men Square Massacre in 1989⁶, however, made him abandon the plan. In retrospect, he says that political incident “is a painful experience. Though we didn’t undergo it personally in Beijing, it changed so many lives in the United States. It still hurts me because it has shaped my destiny” (Shan 143). After making arrangement to bring his family into the U.S, he started to make every endeavor to survive in the new land. Ha Jin started writing seriously just after the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre. Jin’s prodigious talent was first evident in poetry. He had his first book published in 1990 -- a book of poetry entitled *Between Silences: A Voice from China*.⁷ He received his PhD in literature from Brandeis in 1993 (Geyh 130). However the degree did not secure him an employment immediately. Unemployed, he decided to continue writing while doing some odd jobs for a living, because he says, “I thought if I kept writing, a few books later I might get a decent job”(ibid). He was right. After he published the second volume of poetry *Facing Shadows*⁸, he was hired as a professor of poetry by Emory University. Although teaching poetry, he shifted his interest to writing novels and short stories for which he has subsequently received more acclamation from critics.

These fictions and short stories have been set in China of the period from 1949 to 1989. Drawing inspiration from his personal experience there, the works were in Jin's attempt to record “memory of those hard facts which cannot be

⁶ In brief, it was a pro-democracy movement where students and intellectuals took to streets to demand political democracy, freedom of speech, and rule of law, protesting against official corruption. As it was developing into an unleashed political outcry, the Chinese government used fire to clear the protestors at Tiananmen Square. It is estimated that hundreds of students were shot dead in the brutal action.

⁷ The book is in Ha Jin's endeavor to give voice to “those unfortunate people who suffered, endured or perished at the bottom of life and who created the history and at the same time were fooled or ruined by it” (Silence 2).

⁸ As Ha Jin himself explained, “Those poems were written in the period of confusion and frustration.... In a way, the book marks my beginning to search for my bearings in the United States”(Shan 142), “Shadows in this case means darkness. In the wake of the Tiananmen massacre, I often had bad dreams, most of which took place in China. (Shan 143).

worn away by time” (Preface H. Jin *Between Silences : A Voice from China*). For Ha Jin, “to preserve is the key function of literature, which, to combat historical amnesia, must be predicated on the autonomy and integrity of literary works inviolable by time.” (H. Jin *The Writer as Migrant* 30). Apparently, Jin did not mean literature is equal to historical narrative. Indeed, it needs not only to preserve but also to polish history into art. Thus, “writer(s) should be not just a chronicler but also a shaper, an alchemist, of historical experiences”(ibid.).

When he was widely acclaimed for his writing about China, he abruptly decided to cease doing that any more and shifted to Chinese immigrants who arrived in the U.S in the post-Mao era. *A Free Life*, his first immigrant-themed novel (the only one to date), is story of naturalization of Chinese immigrant family. When asked why he decided to change, he said, “My heart is no longer there” (H. Jin *The Writer as Migrant* 28). Indeed, his shift in theme to overseas Chinese has marked a crucial change in his self-identity. Before this point of time, his emotional attachment to China had remained. This attachment motivated him to write to keep his memory in art. It was this attachment that also guaranteed a sense of belonging to and identification with Chinese, which in turn made him feel obliged to articulate for the people – especially the underprivileged. As he recalled: “When I began to write, I longed to return to China, and I saw my stay in the United States as a sojourn, so it felt almost natural for me to claim to be something of a spokesman for the unfortunate Chinese” (H. Jin *The Writer as Migrant* 4). Indeed, he assumed himself as a spokesman in writing his first book *Between Silence*.

However, as his time in the U.S passed by, he gradually outgrew his affiliation to China and increasingly identified himself as an independent individual and an immigrant that would never return.⁹ Accordingly, he went beyond spokespersonship, writing just for himself. As he claims, "In retrospect, I can see that my decision to leave contemporary China in my writing is a way to negate the role of the spokes-manship I used to envision for myself. I must learn to stand alone, as a writer" (H. Jin *The Writer as Migrant* 28). Metaphysically, his negation of spokesman marked his triumphal transcendence of nationalism and full embrace of his own humanities as an independent being.¹⁰ For Ha Jin, humanities are universal, beyond cultural and national boundaries and the purpose of literature is to preserve history (H. Jin *The Writer as Migrant* 30).

B. Previous Scholarship Review

a. Transcendence in Ha Jin's Fiction

Of the existing scholarships on Ha Jin's works, "transcendence" has been a key word. As a Chinese American writer often writing in cross-cultural perspectives, Ha Jin has placed tremendous emphasis on writing to transcend nation, culture and politics. He embraces universalism and transcendence in writing as a means to make his stories of China well accessible to American readership. Unlike other transnational writers, Ha Jin is not interested in writing to expose culture differences in this globalization era. Rather he has been strongly

⁹ He says, "Gradually I realized that it was impossible for me to return and I began to accept my situation as an immigrant" Te-hsing Shan, "In the Ocean of Words: An Interview with Ha Jin," *Tamkang Review* 38.2 (2008): 143.

¹⁰ In his article *Writing Otherwise than as a "Native Informant"* Ha Jin's Poetry, Zhou argues, "the speakers in Ha Jin's poems are concrete subjects interpellated by particular dominant ideologies at a specific historical moment, rather than representatives of cultural and racial difference" (281-2). This observation bespeaks the transcendence of culture and nation in his characters- a projection of the writer's own (effort of) transcendence.

concerned with the “truth that transcends borders and time”-- humanities (C. W. Liu 78). His writing is all “about humanity and human possibilities” which are common across societies rather than “about a particular society” or about a particular ideology (H. Jin “Individualism Arrives in China” 20). Although the majority of Jin’s novels are set against recent political events and Communist ideology in China, the harsh political reality serves only as a context in which Jin attempts to explore the complexity of humanity and individuals’ attitudes toward political events and stifling ideologies. It is in this context that “the humanities of the characters” are fully manifested (Geyh 135). And it is in this context that critics and scholars have fore-grounded his “transcendence.” Parascandola’s *Love and Sex in a Totalitarian Society: An Exploration of Ha Jin and George Orwell* attempts to read Ha Jin’s novel *Waiting*. The study explores in this novel how love and sex were smothered by the totalitarian society where the people endured emotional suffering, comparing it with George Orwell’s seminal work *1984* (38-39). According to Parascandola, the protagonist Lin Kong “seems to be a victim of both the new Maoist-tinged rules and the vestiges of the old Confucian system, being caught in the war between these often disparate worlds” (40). On the one hand, it is out of his own willingness, but of filial duty – part of the legacy of Confucianism that Li follows his parents’ arrangement to take Shuyu as his bride. It is no surprise that his marital life is not happy. On the other hand, the Communist Party’s rules forbid him to pursue the happiness approaching to him. After he gets acquainted with Manna to whom his affection has been growing, he decides to divorce. However, he cannot walk away from his marriage

immediately without his wife's consent. He has to wait eighteen years, the legal time required before a man can divorce without needing his wife's consent. For all those years, he and Manna maintain a semi-public romantic relationship which is unfortunately deprived of any physical intimacy by the Maoist-tinged rules.

Waiting does not concentrate on the Culture Revolution (1966-1976) but on the person, the inner life, the life of the soul and how that changes, how the emotional life is affected by the Revolution and Mao's dictatorship as a whole. In common with his many other fictions, *Waiting* "demonstrat[es] ... the complexity of human emotion [and individuality] which defies simplistic dogma [i.e. Marxism, Maoism]" (Wong 862). This humanistic value and emotion is universal, which is the message Ha Jin intends to deliver. Some scholars attempted to read Ha Jin's *Waiting* intertextually with Samuel Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*, pointing out the act of waiting in the former shares the same existential meaning and absurdity with that in the latter. Much as... the protagonist Lin seems to wait for the sake of waiting. Lin does not know what indeed he waits for. In the end, Lin finds what he waits for is not what he hopes for, and his waiting continues (Yang 136)

Unlike those critics who tend to read Jin's novels intertextually with the Western literature, other critics prefer to explore how Ha Jin's use of traditional Chinese culture for themes and symbols in depicting and reflecting on humanities. For example, Ge studies *A Tiger-Fighter Is Hard to Find*, collected in his anthology of short stories, *The Bridegroom* (H. Jin *The Bridegroom : Stories*). He reads the short story as an allegory reflecting "a profound tension felt in contemporary China – a tension between the nation's enriched cultural past and

an erratic present, between the traditional role of power and social obligations for men and their moral degeneration and political debilitation, and between a lingering cultural discourse of heroism and a social reality that becomes increasingly anti-heroic" (Ge 40).

Depicted in a classical Chinese novel *Outlaws of the Water Marsh*, the tiger-fighting story and its hero *Wu Song* symbolizes ancient Chinese heroism, much as Robinhood does in English culture. In modern Chinese history, "tiger-fighting was repeatedly evoked as a trope for an ethical/political/ideological cause valorized as just and righteous" (46). The Ha Jin story depicts the repeated failures in an attempt to shoot the tiger-fighting scene for a TV program, where the actor who plays the role of Wu Song in the television scene and is narcissistically obsessed with his virility ended up in mental disorder. As Ge argues, "The failure to duplicate the heroic stature of Wu Song on television suggests the death of heroism in the modern age," in other words, the failure symbolizes "moral infringement or infirmity of ordinary people, usually men, in contemporary China" (Ge 45). Although it is a story tinged with Chinese tradition, the theme of "heroism" is universal and transcends nation and culture. As Ge observes, "Indeed the discourse of heroism has become politically and ideologically overcharged not only in China, but in the West as well...The quest for heroism, in China as in the West, should not start with the prowess of killing a vermin but with the cultivation of one's moral and psychological being"(53-54).

In writing, Ha Jin's transcendence is also embodied in his subjectivity as a writer. Believing that he is first and foremost an independent, individual self, he

“refuses to commit himself completely either to the culture he was born into or to the one he has adopted. Instead, he deliberately lets his perspective hover in-between, identifying with and distancing himself from either side” (Ge 53). The distance to either of the two cultures “enables him to abandon sentimentalism and personal sensation, both of which are the features of personal narratives honoring no specific ideology”¹¹ (Y. Zhou 154). As his subjectivity transcends cultural boundaries, the identity of characters under his pen is not constructed on the basis of cultural, racial and political stereotypes. Zhou analyzes Ha Jin’s poems, observing “the speakers in Ha Jin’s poems are concrete subjects interpellated by particular dominant ideologies at a specific historical moment, rather than representatives of cultural and racial difference” (Y. Zhou 281-2). For example, the protagonist Lin in *Waiting* was the victim of the totalitarian society under Mao’s rules. Regardless of cultural and racial factors, the tragedy that happened to Lin would happen to anyone in any other totalitarian society. As previously mentioned, Parascandola finds out Lin’s tragedy bears strong resemblance with that of the protagonist of George Orwell’s *1984*. Both protagonists endured emotional suffering in the societies dominated by totalitarianism. Zhou shares the similar point of view when discussing Ha Jin’s characters in his novels. “Set mostly in a political-intensive setting, his stories often transcend politics” in the sense that “His characters live with politics but not necessarily divided between the devoted and the resistant. Most of his characters are not involved in political persecution and are not persecuted in political movements. But their

¹¹ Ha Jin is neither elitist nor nativist. The former often idealizes the West while the latter feels strongly attached to homeland culture.

mentality and living strategy are typical of the political ideology of the Revolution” (Y. Zhou 155).

b. Cultural Transplantation and Translation

Instead of focusing on the humanism in Jin's stories, other critics have studied Jin's transcendence in terms of his writing strategies. They have found that Ha Jin makes cultural transplantation possible in his works by aptly presenting Western literature, and he is able to make Chinese culture accessible to the English-speaking readership.

Robert D. Sturr in his article, *The Presence of Walt Whitman In Ha Jin's Waiting*, analyzes Whitman's presence in *Waiting*, where Ha Jin presents Whitman and his poems as a voice of individualism. “[I]n resurrecting the legacy and voice of Whitman, Jin invokes a specter to haunt Lin and Manna. Whitman is more than an influence on *Waiting*; he appears as icon representing the pleasures of both free expression and privacy that were lost under the deadening influence of Maoist philosophy. The presence of Whitman is connected, then, to the primary theme that animates much of Jin's writing: the enormous price that ordinary individuals were forced to pay in order to maintain the communist vision of continuing political revolution and class warfare” (Sturr 2-3).

Waiting is not alone in evoking the legacy of Western culture. The above-mentioned short story *A Tiger-Fighter Is Hard to Find* provides another example in point. In the story, Ha Jin invokes the image of shark-fighting from the Hemingway's novel *The Old Man and the Sea* as a cultural adaption of tiger-fighting for his American readers. As the story depicts, when the actor prepares

for the shooting of the tiger-beating scene, the director gives him *The Old Man and the Sea* to read, saying "A man's not born to be defeated, not by a shark or a tiger"(Ge 53). By establishing congruity between the tiger-fighting story and the Hemingway's novel, Ha Jin makes accessible the qualities that the Chinese warrior (or tiger-fighter) *Wu Song* shared with the fisherman in *The Old Man and the Sea*: "human resilience and endurance and indomitable volition that enable both of them to survive in the ordeals"(Ge 53).

Seiwoong Oh examines comprehensively how Ha Jin's writings deliver to American monolingual readership in a non-intrusive way the culture backdrops that inform plot and characters. As Oh observes, on the lexical level Ha Jin strikes a good balance between accurate use of lexicons in representing Chinese culture and textual accessibility to American readership. Oh's analysis goes beyond lexicon to discourse level, finding that Ha Jin makes a successful effort to blend in an non-intrusive way cultural backdrops into texts such as interior monologue and the narrative, "thereby preserving aesthetic integrity of his prose" (Oh 422). In some occasions, as Oh also points out, Ha Jin intentionally leaves a bridgeable culture gap to force American readers to make a more cognitive effort in reading. Overall, the critics point out that his success in writing relies mainly on his creative use of English and his effort to make culture translatable.

c. Neo-Orientalism?

Ha Jin's embrace of universality and transcendence has stirred much debate over whether his works indeed are the discourse of Orientalism in the guise of transcendence. Some commentators have denounced that his novels are tinged

with neo-colonialism and pander to Western audiences and that Western audiences by demonizing China. Yiqing Liu of Beijing University charges that Ha Jin, in an attempt to advance his literary career, "curses his own compatriots and to become a tool used by the American media to vilify China," "emphasizing the backwardness of China," and "portraying the Chinese as ignorant and repressed"¹². Concurring with Liu, Ying Yan in her article *Ha Jin: A "Real" Follower of Neo-Orientalism* attempts to demonstrate how Ha Jin caters to Western readership's hunger for exotic culture and politics of China. The article aims to demonstrate in three aspects how Ha Jin served as accomplice to reinforce the negative stereotype of China already circulated among the West. Yan argues that in order to survive as a writer in the U.S, Ha Jin must please English readers by writing what English ears can take in terms of subjects, values and perspectives. Yan also argues Ha Jin's discursively self-colonializing discourses are located in the characters he portrays, some of whom are a shameless whore, a foot-binding woman and asexual or impotent men, etc. Through uglifying, feminilizing and objectifying the Chinese, Ha Jin satiates the appetite of American readers for an obscene peep into the exotic oriental culture. Finally, according to Yan, Ha Jin's neo-colonialism can be found in his creating plots at the cost of historical truth. Yan suggests while there is room for a writer's creativity in dealing with history, Ha Jin goes too far, thus consolidating the negative stereotype and misunderstanding of China held by the West (31-37).

There are many other critics who defend for Ha Jin, claiming Ha Jin does not

¹² For details, please see Eckholm, Erik. "After an Attack, Chinese Won't Print Expatriate's Nove". 2000. New York Times. March 01 2011. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2000/06/24/books/after-an-attack-chinese-won-t-print-expatriate-s-novel.html?pagewanted=2&src=pm>>.

fall into Orientalism, but on the contrary subverts Orientalism indeed. Apparently, this view is widely held by those critics who study how Jin's literary discourses transcend. Among them, Zhou's view seems to be representative. He says that "Ha Jin's writings ...offer an alternative, viable strategy for disrupting Orientalism and for challenging the status quo of power relations underlying representation" (275). Following Laclau's view of universalism that "[the] universal is an empty place, a void which can be filled only by the particular" ("identity," 2000, 58 / 275), Zhou argues that "Jin's representation of "universals" through the particulars of the Chinese is especially subversive" to the "monopoly of the white male as the signifier of the universal"(X. Zhou 13). Although Ha Jin's writing is about China, his attempts "to write about what transcends borders"(X. Zhou 275).

C. Significance of Studying Masculinity in Ha Jin' Fiction

As previously stated, my choice of Ha Jin's works as literary discourse for analysis is made on the basis of my sense and sensibility. To begin with, to study Ha Jin is largely a personal project. Amazed by his literary achievement first, I am curious to explore his English language about China. Such an exploration will teach me how to retain Chineseness to the maximum when describing China in English, which will be of great help in my prospective cross-cultural career. Most importantly, Ha Jin's writings are dominated with male characters who are struggling for a way out of crisis and predicaments they are trapped in, whether in China or the U.S. And to engage myself with such protagonists and men's issues will not only fulfill my personal outlook, but also perceive broader Chinese culture in contemporary China.

Equally important, to focus on Ha Jin aims to enrich the criticism of Asian American literature. Although there have been some previous research of his works, a survey of academic database shows that the studies on Ha Jin are relatively insufficient given his literary achievement. For example, the database of PhD dissertations show there are up to four projects which partly involve in Ha Jin's stories. There are some academic articles, which discuss Ha Jin's literary texts, but most of them analyze his novel *Waiting*. It seems that a project is needed to study his works extensively. Moreover, there has no book length project which explores his works exclusively. I hope my project will make up the ground. Insufficient research on Ha Jin's works is part of the broader picture that writers from Mainland China do not receive equal attention as those from other Chinese speaking areas such as Hong Kong and Taiwan in Asian American literary studies. This prejudice is probably the result of "American discrimination against Mainland Chinese" mainly due to "political and ideological differences"(Y. Zhou 15). My research on Ha Jin is expected to make contribution to diversity of Asian American literary criticism.

Finally, the significance of my selecting Ha Jin's works may be seen through explaining why I do not focus on Chinese writers back in China. In this era of multiculturalism, increasing migration, and the Internet, cultural phenomena "exceed the boundaries of any single national territory"(Berry and Farquhar 4). Given the spirit of era and my own academic background of English Culture Studies, a cross-cultural study of transnational characters in Ha Jin cannot be more appropriate. To study Ha Jin is such a project in which I can explore the

transnational dimension of Chinese cultural phenomena as a way to find out his subjectivity in the cross-cultural communication. This will provide a possible answer to the question that where we should stand when Chinese and American cultures meet. Here I would like to pin down further what “transnational” means in this project. In doing so, I will discuss my general response to the previous research on Ha Jin. In my dissertation, “transnational” is defined as different from “the rhetoric of universality and homogenization implied in the globalization.” The term implies the existence of differences between boundaries of nation and culture. A transnational project “forge[s] connections across national borders.” In a transnational space, “a variety of regional, national, and local specificities impact upon each other in various types of relationships ranging from synergy to contest”(Berry and Farquhar 5).

I appreciate Ha Jin’s belief in universality and effort to transcend nation and culture, which has been witnessed and demonstrated by the previous studies over again. Nonetheless, universality and transcendence cannot and should not deny the existence of a variety of specificities (i.e. Chinese and American cultural elements). Ha Jin writes for Western market. Thus in his novels certain Chineseness must be given up or appropriated in order to transform Chinese local specificities within the transnational. Ha Jin’s transcendence can be better understood as the result of successful appropriation and transformation of Chinese cultural specificities within a transnational space. In addition, the cultural transplantation in his works makes apt use of equivalents between Chinese and English-speaking culture. In my view, transcendence (or universality) is a higher

order while transnational is its basis. It is in treating Ha Jin's novels, in a cross-cultural perspective, as a transnational rather than a transcendental project that my study differs fundamentally from previous research.

D. Chapter Organization

Before I end this introduction, I shall briefly state how this dissertation is organized. The body of the dissertation will be organized into five chapters. The first two chapters, including this Introduction and Chapter One, focus on the background and theoretical frameworks within which the textual analyses in later chapters will be conducted. These two chapters start with a rationale and a discussion of the significance of the project in terms of gender studies, followed with a detailed account of the theories of Chinese masculinity to be drawn on later in describing the literary representation of Chinese men, using the notions of *wen-wu* (literary power versus physical power) indigenous to Chinese culture. Towards the end of this part of the dissertation, I will discuss the gender-related issues, especially men's issues in Mao and post-Mao eras from a historical perspective, given the historical setting of Ha Jin's novels.

For the next three chapters, each one will focus on one novel, discussing the literary representation of Chinese men in Ha Jin's art. The selected three novels for the three respective chapters are *Waiting*, *The Crazy*, and *A Free Life*. They are arranged in the dissertation in the chronological order in terms of story setting. Overall, the analyses in the analytical chapters are mainly framed within the Chinese notion of *wen-wu*. But, since the protagonists of the novels are male intellectuals, the analyses will sometimes or more incline to *wen* quality, which

has assumed supremacy over *wu* through most part of Chinese intellectual history.

Chapter Two examines Chinese masculinities in *Waiting*, a story set in the period from 1960s to 1980s about a doctor waiting eighteen years to be granted divorce without his wife's consent. The chapter examines in details the Confucian moral discourse emerging around Lin's attempted divorce in attempt to reveal the society's expectations for a man. It then applies *wen-wu* duality and Confucian ethnics to the analysis of the relationship between the protagonist of *Waiting* - a representative of *wen* masculinity and his antithesis in the novel. In addition, the chapter explores the grotesque bodies of the Party members to see how Ha Jin deconstructs the ideal *wu* image of the Party-the symbol of the ideal masculinity.

Chapter Three analyzes mainly *The Crazy*. Using the protagonist, a ranting professor, as an example, I will discuss the masculinity crisis of Chinese male intellectuals in the post-Mao era, which reflects the repercussion of the previous political movements, particularly the Culture Revolution (1966-1976). In doing this, I will examine the primary binary oppositions of the novel *The Crazy* -- the real versus the fantasy- as a way to expose what kind of masculinity crisis exists. Indeed, the destiny and suffering of the crazy professor represents the decline of Chinese intellectuals (or *wen* quality as part of ideal masculinity). This leads me to further exploration of how the 1980s socio-political environment of China impacts the construction of manhood. Finally, It attempts to explore the relationship between male intellectuals and the women to demonstrate how the novel uses the images of female characters to foreground the emasculated

status of men in the period.

Chapter Four studies how Ha Jin narrates Chinese masculinity in his novel *A Free Life*. This chapter will mainly explore what impacts his transnational writing experience has on the ways that the author constructs the male image of the Chinese intellectual in the novel. First I will analyze in what way the Beijing Student Demonstration Movement of 1989 emasculates Chinese in the 1990s, using the novel as literary evidence. Then, I will argue that the novel embraces individualism as a remedy to Chinese masculinity, redefining the ideal of Chinese intellectuals. To support this argument, I examine the narrative of the reconstruction of the protagonist's masculinity in a transnational context. As antithesis of the protagonist, three male characters, who are the protagonist's fellow Chinese artists and intellectuals, are examined to get a better understanding of transformations in masculinity construction in the 1990s' China. Finally, the chapter focuses on how Ha Jin represents the protagonist masculinity in terms of love and sexuality.

CHAPTER I

MASCULINITY: INVISIBLE AND UBIQUITOUS

Exploring masculinities in Chinese culture through literary representations by Ha Jin, this study involves gender studies which provides it with necessary perspectives. As David Savran remarks, gender issues are “the most sensitive barometer of culture”(8). Gender is often defined as a socio-historical construction of sex, the totality of certain qualities and roles being attributed to *and* internalised by males and females. Constructed by various social forces, it is a collection of roles, symbols, and behaviors attached to two incommensurable sexes. Gender is reproductive for it serves as an important organizing principle of one's life at the same time. As such, gender certainly does not only shape understandings of sex and sexuality, but also helps structure many other aspects of life, such as exercise of political power. Therefore it is necessary to position gender studies at the centre on the map of Chinese cultural studies or any Culture Studies, which is not the case yet to a large extent.

In analogy with the marginalized position of Gender Studies in the field of Cultural Studies is that of Men's Studies in Gender Studies, in which men's issues often find themselves marginalized and underexplored relatively to women's. Indeed, men's study is much younger, emerging in academic settings only since the 1970s as a critique and response to feminism. Despite the fact that it has gained momentum in recent years, masculinity research has not caught the

academic attention as much as men's role in societies deserves. Take the field of China studies as an example, Kam Louie laments that gender has long focused on women in China studies and there is a need to bring a balance to Chinese gender studies (Louie 2). Men's studies deserve our full attention, as we need to bear in mind societies remain patriarchal and shaped mainly "through men and their interests, their notions of manliness, and masculine micro and macro culture" (Nagel 243). In addition, men's studies contribute to deconstruct patriarchal cultures. Insufficient attention to men's issues is the result of nothing but the men's central, taken-for-granted position in the society in which men, as "bearers of a body-transparent personhood", are rarely questioned and challenged (Butler 9). To study men means to de-center men, and to relocate men as gendered, material entities, destroying the equation of men with universal human beings. In this regard, men's studies are in the interest not only of men but also of women. Indeed, it is women's studies that provide the context and assumptions for the current studies of masculinities, patronizing the growth of men's studies, as the feminists realize that it is in the interest of women to undertake men's study. I expect my study to help enhance masculinity studies' visibility in gender research, and in turn, to demonstrate that gender is a unique perspective from which to study culture as a whole.

A. From Masculinities to Chinese Masculinities

In terms of research on masculinity, natural science stands in opposition to social and cultural studies. The former champions essentialism and tends to study it from biological perspective. On the contrary, the latter holds

constructivism, stressing the central role of history and society in constructing the notion. As a project in Humanities, my study conceives masculinities as social and historical constructions, which refer to “a set of behaviors, attitudes, and conditions that are generally found in the men of an identifiable group... a general idea of what most people consider to be the masculine gender role... [and] a widespread notion as to what the gender role for men should be” (Clatterbaugh 3).

As masculinity is a construction in a given society, it must vary across cultures. In many ways, Chinese masculine image stands opposite to that in the West. Arnold Schwarzenegger would not have been a movie star if he had been born in China, because “While there is a macho tradition in China it is not the predominant one...in the Chinese case the cerebral male model tends to dominate that of the macho, brawny male” (Louie 8). In addition, there is a non-violence tendency in Chinese masculinity discourse, while “a proclivity to violence, a tendency towards physical rather than oral expression of thought... would... be important components of a Western male’s self-image” (ibid). As masculinity is a social prescription at particular point in time, it must change with time even in the same culture. For instance, Kimmel traces the development of manhood over the course of American history. His book *Manhood in America* demonstrates the change in American manhood that occurred around the Industrial Revolution of the mid-19th century. As he observes, before the revolution, manhood is rooted mainly in land ownership and personal pride of independence. In the post-revolution period, however, American men began to

prove their manliness through their economic success, as the result of the revolution (Kimmel *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*. 2nd).

Masculinity highlights “the diversity of identity among different groups of men”. (Kimmel *Men and Masculinities - a Social, Cultural, and Historical Encyclopedia* 503). That means masculinity should be in a plural form. Masculinities (rather than a masculinity) are at variance across groups of males. Masculinities among the groups coexist in constant reference to each other. R. W. Connell categorizes masculinities in a given society into the hegemonic, the subordinate and the marginalized; he argues, “these two types of relationship - hegemony, domination/ subordination and complicity on the one hand, marginalization/ authorization on the other - provide a framework in which we can analyze specific masculinities” (Connell 81). In the Chinese case, Kam Louie categorizes Chinese masculinities into *wen* (*literary power*) masculinity and *wu* (*physical power*) masculinity, where he argues that *wen* is regarded as superior over *wu* in most part of history. His theory I will return to for detailed discussion later. Masculinity is relational to femininity. Men construct their ideas of what it means to be men in constant reference to definitions of femininity. In America, what it means to be a man is to be unlike a woman. As Robert Brannon suggests, the hegemonic masculinity in the West means “No Sissy Stuff!” and “[m]asculinity is the relentless repudiation of the feminine” (Brannon 12).

Bearing in mind the definition and characteristics of masculinities presented above, I will expound ideas and theories of contemporary Chinese masculinity, and the scope and approach of my current research. In a traditional sense,

Chinese was mainly a concept of ethnicity, which refers to the people sharing Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism as the dominant ideologies and religions. In this study, "Chinese" refers to people inhabited in Mainland China and "contemporary Chinese" refer to the population reared under the regime of the Communist Party. My research scope will not cover the Chinese in and from Taiwan and Hong Kong, because I am particularly interested in exploring how the Communist politics constructs masculinity of Mainland Chinese, and how Chinese men are represented in the novels of an immigrant writer from the Mainland. Issues of masculinity can be approached from different disciplines from sociology to anthropology. This project is a literary study, which aims to explore how masculinities in China are represented and constructed in three novels by Hajin: *Waiting*, *The Crazy*, and *A Free Life*. Nonetheless, it does not rule out the possibility of drawing on the findings over this issue from other disciplines. On the contrary, the findings and views from such disciplines as sociology, anthropology, and history etc will be drawn upon when necessary to support the literary analysis, which is more text-oriented than theme-oriented, although my analysis shall be organized around sub-themes.

My close reading of texts is mainly conducted in the light of structuralism and its relevant theory. Specifically speaking, my analysis may particularly poke its nose to four possible aspects of texts summarized by Jonathan Culler: 1) the language, 2) narratology, 3) literary meaning, and 4) readers' role in producing literary meaning and effects (Culler 80-81). My analysis will selectively cover certain aspects of each novel. Overall, I will select textual aspects that are most

relevant to and that can be seamlessly incorporated into discussion of issues of masculinity. For example, in *Waiting*, the language used to describe Chinese governmental and judicial officials is relevant. They are invariably given grotesque treatment. Among them, a judge is short with 'fat hips', which 'swayed while the floor creaked under his feet' when he was striding 'away to the side hall, where the bathroom was' (H. Jin *Waiting* 13). The grotesque body as such is overtly symbolic, which can be interpreted as a critique of the authority and a way to deconstruct the sublime masculine image of the party.

Although the project focuses on Chinese masculinity - a project of Chinese studies, it is cross-cultural by nature. After all, it is written in English, mainly drawing on the theories about Chinese masculinities, while employing some Western theories sometimes and making reference to Western masculinities on some occasions. That is not to mention the literary evidence to be used is about China yet also written in English. From the cross-cultural perspective, the analysis hopes to serve as a bridge between Chinese and English-speaking cultures, targeting the particulars of Chinese manhood that are most likely to lead to misunderstandings and stereotypes on the part of the West. In response to Western gender discourse, the research provides an alternative perspective from which to think and interpret men, an alternative way to be a good man, and above all, a window through which to perceive a culture from a different cradle. One may perceive there is the binary opposition of Chinese Vs Western underlying the previous discussion. It is there only for convenience of discussion. Indeed, I do not want to establish this opposition, not as some scholars

embracing post-colonialism. In this era where postmodern and postcolonial are buzzwords, the binary opposition Chinese Vs Western needs to be deconstructed before anything else. In saying so, I do not deny the existence of hegemony of various Western discourses from academic to culture, nor the value of all those post-colonial efforts to deconstruct the hegemony. Of course, it should be appreciated that some scholars attempt to escape the influence of hegemonic discourses from the West in their academic works, establishing alternatives applicable exclusively to Chinese culture. Nevertheless, it seems that it remains to be necessary for us analysts always to be open-minded. We need to be constantly reminded that too much emphasis on particulars of Chinese culture may put us at the risk of going to the other extreme – to shut away those valuable academic ideas and theories without a second thought for no reason other than that they are from the West.

Although my research of Chinese masculinity is conducted mainly within a theoretical framework developed on notions entrenched in Chinese culture – as I will elaborate later, Western ideas about [Western] gender and masculinities will also be drawn upon when necessary, as a way to support my analysis on the one hand, and as a way to test the theories' validity in and applicability to non-Western context on the other. In fact, one of the basic ideas in my reading strategy is from Foucault, who proposes that gender and sexuality are culturally constructed and politically invested, that is, 'the set of effects produced in bodies, behaviors, and social relations by a certain deployment deriving from a complex political technology" (Foucault vol.1. 127). Enlightened by this, my analysis will

attempt to establish links between masculine symbols and political power structure in the texts, finding out how the structure of masculinity-linked symbols mirror the structure of social life. For another example, “the traffic in women”, a notion developed by Gayle Rubin, will provide a perspective from which to describe and interpret male bonds in such patriarchal societies as China (Rubin 157-210). This notion will direct my attention to the role of women in male bonding in attempt to find out how women are used as exchangeable property for cementing bonds between the men who possess them. Shuyu, the wife of the protagonist in *Waiting* is a perfect case in point, to which the “traffic” notion will be applied. Western masculinity research is flourishing while the research on Chinese masculinity is in a budding state. In the field of Chinese studies, serious examinations of men as gendered beings are beginning to be attempted. Almost all the monographs on this subject were published in the new millennium. Nonetheless, the research in the field has made some remarkable achievements for the past decade. In as short as one decade, this area has delightedly witnessed pioneering theoretical efforts and empirical studies. Among them, I select several representative works to focus on.

Sun Longji (Lung-kee Sun) studied male characters of the May Fourth literature¹³ in combination with sociological research conducted between the 1950s and 1970s, mostly in Taiwan, on the acculturation of Chinese men. He claims that these male characters have long suffered from a common phenomenon that is called wombnization. To put it another way, the umbilical

¹³ May Fourth Literature refers to the literature produced around the May Fourth Movement in 1919. The movement, sparked by the Beijing students' demonstration in protest against Chinese government weak response to the Treaty of Versailles, developed into a nationwide, cultural and political movement.

cord between men and their mothers is not severed. By saying this, Sun attempts to demonstrate the specific Chinese familial structure produces males' mental and psychological dependence on their mothers. It is particularly the case when compared to their Western counterparts. Sun suggests the dependence embodies the men's failure at the entry into the "symbolic" world in the Oedipus complex model. He argues that the lack of a complete separation as part of characteristics of Chinese male subjectivity often, as he found in Chinese literature of the period, makes them unable to deal successfully with heterosexual relationships. The close dependence of mother also makes boys hard to identify more strongly with the fathers, preventing them from growing into a man in a real sense. He concludes that Chinese men have to "dewombnize" themselves so as to become modernized, independent and masculine before China can be modernized and powerful. (Sun 112-13)

Sun's negative perception and critique of Chinese men ostensibly is rooted in Western discourse. For Sun, "modernization equals Westernization and represents the future of the Chinese" (Zhong 31). Thus a Western model for male acculturation, that is Freudian Oedipus complex, should be the right one for the Chinese males. As Sun assumes, it is because of Chinese male's failure at the complex that they are less mature, less independent, and thus inferior to the Western counterparts. What Sun is ultimately critical of is the feminine nature of Chinese masculinity as a result of men's failure in transcending their incestuous wish for the mother (ibid). However, in the era of post-colonialism, many scholars in Chinese studies tend to resist connecting perception of Chinese culture to

Western discourses. The scholars tend to emphasize that Chinese masculine discourse is specific to and reminiscent of the deeper structure of traditional Chinese culture, and what constitutes the configurations of modern/Western masculinity may not be the configurations of masculinity in China. As such, it is inappropriate to measure Chinese masculine ideals against the Western criterion for gender configurations. "Chinese masculinity has evolved in a historical and cultural context that required no inspiration and gained no benefit from comparison with the West"(Louie 148). The scholars also tend to debunk the stereotypes of Chinese males tinged with Orientalism, which perceive Chinese men among other oriental males as feminine to such a degree that they are 'penetrated, silenced, and possessed' (Said 207). In "Red Sorghum: Mixing Memory and Desire," Wang yuejin argues that Oedipus complex is not applicable to the case of Chinese masculinity. In Western gender discourse, masculinity symbolically is taken for a phallus--a master signifier, in contrast to which femininity is defined as a symbolic lack (Brannon 12). However, as Yeuji Wang argues, "Instead of being afflicted by castration anxiety, the problematic of the lack is quite reversed in the Chinese cultural context. It is a man who lacks"(35). Wang continues to suggest this lack is inherent in Chinese culture, proposing "a femininity complex" as "a more appropriate form of the unconscious in the Chinese psyche" (35). Unlike Sun, Wang is not critical of Chinese males by coining the term "feminine complex." Instead, the term registers a positive note in defense of Chinese men. To be a better man, it is *yin* that a man lacks (needs). This point of view finds its echo in Yiyan Wang's - another scholar also surnamed

Wang - claim that, "Masculinity comes to be equated with innate flaws, because it "lacks" femininity and needs to absorb yin (Yiyan Wang 44). In Chinese context, *yin* goes beyond the concept of 'feminine' in the Western gender discourse. It contains traits perceived as feminine in the Western gender discourse. It also refers to some such desirable traits in men as soberness and gentleness, which are clearly not regarded as girlish or womanly. An ideal Chinese male is expected to embrace certain *yin*, which usually refers the softness, gentleness, and soberness. These traits are generally more appreciated than physical power is. Indeed, a man with masculine traits only stands lower possibility of becoming a major player at the higher levels of the political hierarchy structure. Unlike masculinity discourse in the West, Chinese masculinity does not exclude some feminine traits.¹⁴

Apparently, Wang's argument makes reference to *yin-yang* - the fundamental duality of Daoism. In Chinese, *yin* and *yang* originally connoted shade and light. *Yin* is typically associated with feminine and *yang* with masculine. "However, *yin-yang* covers a much wider referent than the male / female dichotomy" (Song 12). Yin evokes anything weak, feminine, passive, dark or hidden. By contrast, *yang* refers to whatever is bright, strong, active, masculine, aggressive, virile etc. In fact *yin-yang* is the symbol of Chinese culture. *Yin-yang* do not "have a simple correlation to men and women" (Zhong 40). *Yin* and *yang* coexists, interdependent and complementary. Both men and women have *yin* and *yang* in them. The difference between male and female lies in the configuration of *yin-*

¹⁴ It should be noted that as a matter of fact the concept of femininity, originated in the Western discourse, does not have its equivalent in Chinese. Nor does the concept of masculinity in the same way. For convenient purpose, feminine and masculine in the current discussion are interchangeable with Chinese indigenous concepts of yin and yang, if not stated otherwise.

yang. A man's body is largely full of *yang qi* which means masculine energy while a woman is largely full of *yin qi* which means feminine energy. As such, the sexual intercourse can be understood as the process of *yin-yang* interaction, when male absorbs *yin* from female and vice versa. For the male, the ideal situation is one where he absorbs *yin* essence from the woman without losing his precious *yang* essence to her. It is *yin-yang* duality that Song Geng's book *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture* expand as "a fundamental paradigm to read the Chinese gender discourse"(Song 15). The study revolves around the construction and representation of Chinese masculinity in pre-modern China. Its focus, as the title suggests, is on masculinity manifested in the fragile gifted scholar in late imperial Chinese literature, which the author treats as a cultural practice. The fragile scholars have two distinctive qualities: delicate body and literary talent. Song's reading of the *yin/yang* discourse is primarily Foucaultian insofar as his research resolves around power politics and its subsequent determination of gender role by one's position in the social power network. That is to say, whether one is mainly *yin* or *yang* depends on his or her position in the power relationship, and has little to do with one's biological sex. A wife was seen as inferior to her husband, as *yin* was to *yang*. Similarly her husband as a subject was perceived as *yin* in relation to the *yang* of a ruler, and this was true even if both the subject and ruler in this dyadic relationship were male. Thus Song concludes that traditional Chinese masculinity is "more power-based than sex-based" (15). Song's reading of *yin-yang* from the perspective of political power might provide a good explanation of the effeminate

aspect of masculinity of fragile scholars. In traditional China, it was often these fragile scholars who were in power. By achieving high scores in the traditional civil exam, they worked their way to officialdom and became social elites. Although they were perceived as effeminate, for example with fragile bodies, by today Western standards, they were perceived as *yang* in relation to those brawny men at lower social stratum in pre-modern Chinese societies. As Chinese traditional societies were dominated by physically weak scholars, It is not difficult for us to arrive at the understanding that Chinese culture overall appreciates soft, talented scholars and the associated traits more than macho brawny males and physical strength related (Louie 8). Song's research again demonstrates this point of view that the configurations of modern/Western masculinity are not applicable to masculinity in China. As he argues,

“[T]he conceptional binaries of male/female and heterosexual/homosexual, which are central to the Western gender discourses and the signifying system as a whole, were largely absent in pre-modern China. ‘Gender’ meant something remarkably different in traditional Chinese culture and was characterized by its strong interaction with political discourse. Even the identities of male and female in the modern (Western) sense are an appropriation after colonialism and ‘modernization’ ”(Song 1-2).

Like Wang's research, Song's study is also in attempt to demonstrate the particular logics underlying the discourse of Chinese masculinity, justifying what is perceived “effeminacy” of Chinese masculinity of intellectuals. However,

Wang's research, mainly using Zhang Yimou's *Red Sorghum* as evidence, seems to be short of considering the historical dimension of Chinese masculine discourse. In contrast, Song's study places much more attention to the historical dimension of Chinese gender discourse, covering the historical periods in the pre-modern China.

B. Masculinities of *Wen* (literary power) and *Wu* (physical power)

Kam Louie's *Theorising Chinese Masculinity: Society and Gender in China*, is probably the most ambitious of all theoretical studies in this field, with its research span covering from ancient to contemporary China. Much as Song does, he holds the view Chinese masculinity should be theorized in a paradigm based on concepts entrenched in Chinese traditional culture. However, instead of using *yin-yang*, Kam Louie draws on the conceptions of *wen* (literary power) and *wu* (military prowess) as an analytical tool. Louie rejects *yin-yang* because, as he argues, "both men and women embrace both yin and yang", and thus using *yin-yang* "prohibits gender specificity" (Louie 10). Louie proposes *wen-wu* as a more appropriate paradigm because this scheme is applicable exclusively to men in Chinese culture. "Only when women have transformed themselves into men can they be productively discussed in terms of *wen* or *wu*." (Hong 176) Basically, what Louie argues is that an ideal Chinese man is the one who has both *wen* (literary power) and *wu* (physical power) in good balance. A less ideal man is the one with virtues of only either *wen* or *wu*. In order to exemplify what *wen* really means in the history of China, Louie analyzes the representations and personification of traditional and contemporary *wen* ideals in a selection of Chinese literature. He

focused particularly on *Caizi Jiaren* (gifted literates and beauties) romantic stories – a traditional genre that “revolves around the theme of [*Caizi*] winning the woman and passing the examinations” (Louie 15)¹⁵. In this genre, *caizi* as a hero has the talent of creating literary works such as poetry, who has those genteel, refined qualities that were associated with literary and artistic pursuits.

Although a *caizi* is represented as talented in literary pursuits, he does not represent the ideal *wen*, according to Louie, the ideal *wen* masculinity is represented by *junzi* (noble man). A *caizi* is “Not-yet-realized *junzi*” (Louie 61). Compared to *Junzi*, a *caizi* is lack of Confucianism education, which is at the core of *wen* masculinity. Thus, *caizi* does not master and exercise Confucian self-discipline over his desires, finding himself sentimental, unable to resist the temptation of women, and indulged with sexual gratification. In contrast, *Junzi* (noble men) is a man who uses Confucian texts as his moral compass for his day-to-day activities. Unlike *Caizi*, a *Junzi* guards against sentiment, especially the sexual kind, suppressing his love for a woman to demonstrate his success in moving along the path to scholarly self-control. It is often through self-control over his own desires, especially sexual desires, that *Junzi* demonstrates his strong moral fibers essential to *wen* masculinity.

Overall, Louie’s analysis of *wu* masculinity in Chinese gender discourse is a post-colonial response to the general misreading that Chinese *wu* heroes are asexual and free from romantic feelings whatsoever. Louie attempts to demonstrate love and sex issues of *wu* heroes do exist but implicitly in Chinese

¹⁵The *caizi jiaren* genre reached its peak in the Ming-Qing period (roughly 15th), its prototype extended back to the Han Dynasty (206 BC- 220 AD).

movies and literature; they are often invisible because they are “stitched over by a moral exterior” (Louie 23). For example, *Zhong* (loyalty) as part of Confucian ethics requires a man to serve best his country by engaging himself with noble causes. As such, traditional Chinese chivalric tales highlight how *wu* heroes devote themselves to their worthy causes in terms of characterization. At the same time, “love (and by implication sex) is downplayed or diluted (Louie 23), because Chinese culture consistently regards personal romance and sexuality as distractions and barriers standing in the way to fulfilling one’s ambition. Accordingly, *wu* heroes in Chinese literature are depicted as capable of resisting women’s temptation, free from Love and marriage. In this way, sexuality of *wu* heroes is politicalized in Chinese chivalric tales. In order to unravel the sexual aspect of *wu* masculinity largely ignored by other literary critics, Louie singles out for closer examination the *wu* characters from the popular fiction *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*The Three Kingdoms*)¹⁶. Louie placed particular attention to *Guanyu*¹⁷ - the icon of *wu* hero in Chinese culture. He observes that *Guanyu*’s physical tributes martial skills and sword are all manifestations of power and possess sexual significance. For instance, his red face immediately signifies a strong *yang* (male) essence. The sword he wields is known as the “green dragon sword”, which signifies the potency and invokes the dragon motif. Nevertheless, Louie is more concerned with issues of *guanyu*’s sexuality wrapped up by his

¹⁶ *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is a Chinese classic novel based on the historical events in the chaotic years near the end of Han Dynasty and the Three Kingdoms era between 3rd and 4th century. The story focuses mainly on the three power blocs that emerged from the remnants of the Han Dynasty, and would eventually form the three states of Shu Han, Cao Wei, and Eastern Wu.

¹⁷ Guanyu was a famous warrior serving under the warlord Liubei (who is also Guanyu’s sworn older brother). He played a crucial role in helping Liubei establish the kingdom of Shu Han. Later Guanyu was deified as a god and is still worshipped by many Chinese people today.

moral fibers. As Louie suggests, *Guanyu* is attracted sexually to the wife of *Liubei* his sworn elder brother, although his sexual desire is not stated explicitly in the novel. But *Guanyu* never translates this desire into action. Rather he suppresses it from bubbling up because his moral rectitude requires him to be loyal and faithful to his sworn elder brother *LiuBei*. For *Guanyu*, the adultery desire for his sister-in-law itself is an incestuous sin. When it is read politically, this desire signifies a surge to usurp the political power wielded by his sworn elder brother, representing an absolute disloyalty (Louie 37). Louie's queer reading of the emotional attachment among the three sworn brothers *Liubei*, *Guanyu* and *Zhangfei* is particularly interesting. *Liubei*, along with his sworn brothers *Guanyu* and *Zhangfei* swear allegiance to the Han Dynasty in the famous Oath of the Peach Garden and pledge to do their best for the country. The peach, especially the peach blossom, certainly has sexual connotations (Eberhard 227-28). Louie suggests the sexual overtone of the brotherhood is evident also in the brothers sharing bed and jealousy generated from the intensity of their relationship. On the whole, Louie reads the hierarchical relationship among the three brothers on a homosexual plane, claiming that, "the fact that the two younger brothers submit to Liu politically means they also play the submissive role homosexually" (36). *The Three Kingdoms* is not alone in eulogizing the affection between men in the landscape of Chinese literature. There have been many other stories, as Louie remarks, which "makes it clear that love between men, whether it be erotic or otherwise, is the only noble emotion. Heterosexuality is at best a distraction" (Louie 35). His analysis demonstrates that 'homosocial desire' in Eve Kosofsky

Sedgick's term is also found in Chinese male relationship, thus providing evidence of the concept's effectiveness outside a Western context.

While reading sexual dimension of the brotherhood as a possibility, Louie also examines the moral discourse involved in brotherhood, which is what Louie calls "moral exterior" wrapping up sexuality. Louie focuses particularly on *yi* (righteousness), which is the moral concept that governs the male relationship in Chinese culture, and of which the relationship of Liu Bei, Guan Yu, Zhang Fei is the epitome. Oath of the Peach Garden by the three sworn brothers, as mentioned earlier, is also known as "Forming *yi* in the Peach Garden." As a matter of fact, *yi* is the basic tenet of the entire novel, as suggested by the title which includes the character *yi*. What Louie is particularly interested is in how the men manage their brotherhoods between *yi* and *zhong* (loyalty). In Chinese culture, *yi* put emphasis on the reciprocity, egalitarianism and obligations between men. It is a more horizontal loyalty, which is different to *zhong* – a hierarchical loyalty between the ruler and the subject. That means tension is possible between *yi* and *zhong*, into which Louie takes a close look. These Confucian moral codes I will return to later on for a detailed discussion.

Masculinity varies diachronically throughout the history of any given society (Kimmel, Hearn and Connell 503). The case of China is no exception. The theory of *wen-wu* as a deep structure of Chinese masculine discourse does not imply that there is no variation in its ideal form across historical periods. It is what Louie's book tries to demonstrate that "*wen* and *wu* manifests itself in many different forms and carries many different meanings over space and time" (161).

With regards to *wen*, Louie argues Confucius as the *wen god* has enjoyed transformation from sage into teacher, and into businessman throughout China's history until the beginning of the 21st century. He points out the concept of *wen* masculinity has altered and begun to be symbolized by business wisdom since China initiated economic reforms thirty years ago. This change bears a clear trace of influence of Western culture. With regards to *wu*, Louie uses a study by Van Gulik as an example to demonstrate there was a change in Chinese attitudes towards physical activities (*wu*) by the end of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Van Gulik finds that during the Ming Dynasty *wu* masculinity was appreciated. "At that time athletes were still admired" (Gulik 294), and outdoor games received tremendous popularity among young people. However, since the beginning of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), "under the Manchu occupation the martial arts [had been] monopolized by the conquerors, and a reaction to the Chinese, and more especially the members of the literary class, [had begun] to consider physical exercise as vulgar and athletic prowess as suited only to the 'Ch'ing [Qing] barbarians'..." (296). In addition, Louie examines not only the *wu* icons in ancient China such as *Guanyu* from *The Three Kingdoms*, but also the contemporary Chinese *wu* icons from Contemporary Kungfu movies, namely Bruce Lee. By doing this, Louie locates continuity and change in this concept. As Louie notes of Bruce Lee movies, "[t]he Bruce Lee screen persona has all three characteristics of loyalty, righteousness, and mateship to justify him as a *wu* hero." He adds that, "Like the *wu* heroes in traditional narratives ... the Bruce Lee characters ... always attends to his social obligations first" (147). In Kungfu

literature and movies, patriotism (which embodies Confucian *zhong*) is more often than not an explicit theme of his movies. On the other hand, Louie detects how contemporary *wu* concept departs from that in the traditional discourse and appropriates from American masculinity. For example, Lee's display of his body "exudes much sexuality", which breaks with the traditional *wu* masculinity. Therefore, Lee's representation not only reasserts the traditional *wu* concept but also a modification "to suit the new hybrid culture of the diaspora Chinese." (Berry and Farquhar 201)

C. From *Wen-Wu* to Confucian Ethics

Wen-Wu is the matrix in which Louie theorizes ideal Chinese masculinity. Nonetheless, a discussion is needed of the concept *de*, which is behind or higher than *wen-wu*. Indeed, Confucianism encourages a man to develop his noble manhood of which *de* (Confucian codes) is the central mark. To achieve the end, *wen* and *wu* are the necessary means. The significance of cultivation of *wen* and *wu* lies more in finally achieving or fulfilling Confucian ethics. In this sense, Louie's effort to theorize masculinity in terms of *wen-wu* is to a large extent equal to the effort to theorize masculinity in terms of Confucian *de*. Indeed in many occasions, Louie explores or explains *wen* and *wu* concepts largely in the context of *de* (Confucian moral codes). For example, in discussing *wen* masculinity, Louie places emphasis on Confucian education and one's ability to exercise Confucian self-discipline over his desires as the mark of ideal *wen* masculinity. As he argues, *Caizi* (gifted literary men) does not represent ideal *wen* masculinity because *Caizi* does not follow Confucian codes in his day-to-day

activities, although *Caizi* is gifted in writing literary texts among other literary skills. Similarly, when exploring *wu*, Louie focuses on *guanyu* – the god of *wu* masculinity as an example. In this case study, he devotes much space to how *Guanyu* fulfills his Confucian moral duties in dealing with people around. An additional example is *Liubei* – the sworn elder brother of *Guanyu* in *The Three Kingdoms*. In terms of literary, military education and physical strength, *Liubei* is inferior to his subordinates such as *Guanyu*. What makes him to be the leader of *Guanyu* is his superiority in Confucian morality. Using these cases, Louie clearly articulates what makes a man an ideal is nothing but his moral excellence while his literary skills or physical power is at most the means whereby he fulfills his moral obligations. Louie's view finds its echo in Song's summary,

“In both *The Three Kingdoms* and *Water Margin*, physical strength and martial skills are never the decisive qualities in making a man the leader. It is their moral excellence that impresses their subordinates so much that they were willing to lay down their lives and fight for their leaders. These characters embody the highest-level of heroism in Chinese fictional representations.” (160)

In his book *Theorizing Chinese Masculinity*, Louie does discuss Confucian codes while examining the symbols and connotations of *wen* and *wu*. However, his discussion on *de* could be more concentrated. Given the core status of Confucian ethics in Chinese masculinity construction, I would like to give *de* a separate, adequate, and concentrated discussion here. It might be better if we tease Confucian morality from *wen* and *wu*, theorizing Chinese masculinity in a

tripartite consisting of literary power, physical power and Confucian ethics. In this tripartite, morality is the end on the top – the ultimate social expectations for men. *Wen* and *wu* are two different kinds of skills that serve as the means to that end. *Wen* is a literary skills—literature, music, archery, charioteering, writing and mathematics. *Wu* is physical power, involving martial arts. The two types of skills along cannot make ideal masculinity alone without moral constraints. Without Confucian morality, *wen* is only a boy's immature talent useless to the society while *wu* skills may turn out to be an evil force. In return, Confucian morality provides a guideline for the use of *wen* and *wu* skills. It is important for one to possess *wen* and *wu* skills. Nonetheless, it is more important for one to employ his *wen* and *wu* skills in the way that abides by Confucian ethics. His use of *wen-wu* skills should be justified by the Confucian moral codes. The Confucian emphasis on virtues reflects its secular preoccupation on the living people and world. However, "to argue, accordingly, the Confucius was exclusively concerned with the living person here and now in the manner of secular humanism is a gross mistake"(Tu "The Way, Learning, and Politics in Classical Confucian Humanism" 1). In Confucianism, virtue is also laden with cosmological significance, which demonstrates the anthropocosmic dimension of the philosophy. Indeed, Confucianism regards a man "not a mere creature but... a participant of the creative transformation of heaven and earth"(Tu "The Way, Learning, and Politics in Classical Confucian Humanism" 2). Thus, it is the ultimate value of human existence goes beyond life and death. The ultimate meaning of human existence is to participate in this transformative process, and

to understand the will of Heaven—the Way or the Mandate. To understand the Heaven is the ultimate goal that a man has to pursue. As the Confucian teaching reads, “The Master said, He who does not understand the will of Heaven cannot be regarded as gentleman”(Confucius and Waley). In a secular sense, fulfilling one’s virtue, as the result of self-cultivation in terms of *wen* and *wu*, means the full understanding of one’s own nature as a social being. In a cosmological sense, one’s fulfillment of virtue is a means to understanding the will of Heaven and a way to participate in the transformation process of the Heaven and Earth. This idea is a fundamental anthropocosmic assumption in Mencius’s moral metaphysics. As Mencius says,

For a man to give full realization to his heart is for him to understand his own nature, and a man who knows his own nature will know Heaven. By retaining his heart and nurturing his nature he is serving Heaven. Whether he is going to die young or to live to a ripe old age makes no difference to his steadfastness of purpose. It is through awaiting whatever is to befall him with a perfected character that he stands firm on his proper destiny (Mencius and Lau 8A:1).

This tripartite paradigm *wen-wu-de* requires a further clarification in order to understand fully what Confucian teaching is all about. This is an extremely broad topic that deserves a separate book-length discussion. Because of the limited space, I am here only to brief the basic ideas most relevant to my following analysis. I will offer more detailed discussion when my textual analysis requires later. Basically, the Confucian classics teach five cardinal relations in society,

called *wulun* (literally meaning “five human relations”). These are ruler-subject, father-son, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother, and friend-friend. Let the ruler be the ruler, the subject the subject, the father the father, the son the son” (Confucius and Lau 12.11). A nation is regarded as metaphorical extension of a family. And thus social hierarchy is modeled on family relationship. All relations are perceived as hierarchical, and as parallel to each other at least to some degree. For example the ruler-subject relationship is parallel with husband-wife relationship. “[T]he husband-wife bond had served as a metaphor for ruler-subject ties and a model for all political authority since the Warring States period (the fifth century to 221 B.C)” (Ko 5). In managing the cardinal relations, one is expected to follow the basic three codes – *xiao* (filial piety), *zhong* (loyalty), *yi* (appropriateness). The ruler-subject / husband-wife parallel explicitly highlights *zhong*, the value of loyalty. Father – son relationship is configured mainly by *xiao* (filial piety); the fundamental code for the relationship between brothers or friends is *yi* (appropriateness). In traditional context, filial piety is regarded as the fundamental Confucian virtue (Yao 203). It “characterizes the Confucian attitude towards the past and the Confucian efforts to associate descendants with the ancestors and parents” (Yao 202). Simply speaking, Filial piety obligates descendants to obey, serve, and glorify parents and ancestors, both living and dead. Obedience to parents is absolute in whatever occasions. Following this code, a man is supposed to act upon the wishes of parents, however wealthy and powerful he is outside home. According to Confucian classics, in the extreme case where a father commands his son to die, the son of filial piety had to kill

himself, and failure to do that would be regarded non-filial. In *Waiting*, It is out of filial piety the protagonist Lin married a food-binding girl he did not love. He did so as demanded by his parents. A son is also obligated to take care of the well being of parents, physical and psychological, to serve them in a pleasing manner. Finally, a descendant is expected to glorify parents, that is, to gain face for them by making achievements and engaging with noble causes for the people and the state. Not only do they need to serve and glorify living parents, they also need to serve and glory one's ancestors or deceased parents. One of the ways to do so is to sweep tombs of ancestors and worship them on altars. "In the *Book of Poetry* it states that a filial descendant would provide unceasing service to his ancestors, and for such filial piety the ancestors would confer blessings on him" (Legge 477). Loyalty is the dominant value in Chinese political culture throughout history. Modeled after filial piety, this virtue basically obligates a subject or a minister to do the same to his emperor as to his parents – to obey absolutely, serve and glorify whole-heartedly. Interestingly, In general, *Zhong* has primacy over *Xiao*. "If a conflict arose between *zhong* and *xiao* such that it was not possible to fulfill both, *xiao* would be sacrificed in deference to *zhong*" (Chu 46). However, Confucianism seems to stress loyalty should be reciprocal rather than one-way sacrifice on the part of subjects. In return for loyalty, "The ruler should employ his subject–ministers according to the rule of propriety/ritual (*li*)" (Lunyu, 3:19 quoted in Yao 35). As subject-emperor is parallel to husband-wife relation, wife is expected to serve her husband in the same way as a subject serves his emperor. "A loyal official does not serve two rulers, a faithful wife does not marry

a second husband" (Sima 2457).

In contemporary China, the value remains dominant in the political culture. As Chu suggests, "in the past, *zhong* meant loyalty to the emperor; in Mao's China, it meant loyalty to the Chairman, to the Party, and to the lofty ideals of communism"(47). *Yi* (appropriateness) is also one of central virtues in Confucian ethics. In *Confucius's Analects* we read: "For the gentleman it is righteousness that is supreme" (Confucius and Waley 17:23)¹⁸. *Yi* (Appropriateness) is a comparatively complicated notion because of its internal tension and its connotation indigenous to Chinese culture. As a Confucian code to abide by in dealing with brotherly relationship¹⁹, it involves hierarchical loyalty while emphasizing "the reciprocity and egalitarianism of the loyalty and obligations between men" (Louie 36). "Like filial piety and loyalty, brotherly relations in traditional law are hierarchical, revolving around older and younger brothers. Nonetheless, brotherhood is also [equal as] a customary and romantic code of friendship, heroism, and honor (but not kinship)" (Berry and Farquhar 143). Compared to the modern concept of friendship in the Western context, the relationship between sworn brothers in Chinese context has a strong emphasis on duties and obligations for each other. In this sense, sworn brotherhood labeled as *yi* bears resemblance to kinship, "stand[ing] on the border between friendship and kinship"(Jordan). The sworn brother relationship is not blood-tied, yet its firmness is no less than, in some cases even more than, that of kinship, involving

¹⁸ *yi*, translated as appropriateness, is also translated as "righteousness," "duty," or "morality", which means "what is suitable," or "what is appropriate."

¹⁹ The brotherly relationship under discussion mainly refers to the relationship between sworn brothers (the strangers taking an oath of brotherhood). In Chinese culture, it is an independent relationship outside, and sometimes in conflict with kinship family.

loyalty and obligation as kinship does. First, *yi* involves loyalty. It means a brother who is younger or lower in social status is loyal to his brother who is older in age or more powerful, as much as a subject is loyal to his emperor. This Confucian code finds its archetypical expression in the relationship between *Liubei* and *Guanyu* in the classic novel *The Three Kingdoms*. By projecting himself as the embodiment of *yi*, *Guanyu* is compelled to surrender himself to *Liubei* totally”(Louie 37). *Yi* means obligations. *Yi* is a personal honor or virtue, which a man demonstrates by fulfilling some kinds of materialistic obligation for his sworn brothers. For example, an older brother in the relationship is expected to offer financial help or patronage to younger ones; in return a younger brother is required to be loyal and submissive, sacrificing his interest and even his life when his older brother demands. Brotherly relationship based on *yi* has its strong emphasis on materialistic functions. In this sense it is different from modern concept of friendship. Men in this relationship based on *yi* establish a sort of alliance where they gain some economic, political benefits through mutual aids. In traditional China, the alliances among men “were key to success and survival for rich and poor, elite and commoner”(Mann). For instance, In China's late imperial culture, the civil service examinations which might lead men to government positions and the educational institutions that prepared men for the exams were exclusively male domains. In this exclusively male world, the emotional attachments or personal relationships they established undoubtedly would benefit their future career.

Male bonds may characterize a large social group or personal relationship

involving only two men. They are found everywhere in business circles, political alliance and underground triad throughout Chinese history. Whether it is one-to-one or a group relationship, “the men who practice it observe its exclusive nature”. (Louie 35). The materialistic function of brotherly relationship determines the hierarchical positions among the members involved. To be able to offer money or help in other forms as an older brother, one has to have money and power to start with. In this way, such factors as financial and political status may outweigh those of age and physical power in deciding who is an older brother and who is not. In the fiction *Water Margin*, *Chao Gai*²⁰ and *Song Jiang*²¹ eventually become the leaders (the oldest brother) of the *Liangshan* good fellows largely because they garnered reputation from their generosity in dispensing their wealth. In spite of the positive comments for friendship scattered around Confucian texts, friendship has been seen as a potential threat to the hierarchical structure. “So geared was the Confucian schema of social relations around the hierarchical needs of the state-family that equality in friendship was potentially subversive”²². The rebel gangs depicted in *Water Margin* is a case in point. One hundred and eight good fellows coming together from disparate backgrounds form a militant alliance to overthrow the government. In the Qing period, cliques of elite scholar-officials featured by brotherly relationship of *yi* invited a crack-down from the Qing emperors, because the emperors considered it as a

²⁰ Chaogai is a fictional character in *Water Margin*. He is considered as the founding father of the 108 outlaws' cause to deliver justice and defend the country.

²¹ As a main character in *Water Margin*, Song Jiang ranks 1st of the 108 Liangshan heroes

²² For detailed discussion, please see Norman Kutcher's "The Fifth Relationship: Dangerous Friendships in the Confucian Context", which argues that Confucian writers were generally wary of friendship partly because of its potential for creating equality in human relationship which is in conflict with Confucian's hierarchical ideology. His view finds its echo in the Forward (pp.xi) of Kimberly Ann Besio and Constantine Tung, *Three Kingdoms and Chinese Culture* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2007).

subversive and threatening force against authority (Mann).

The discussion above is largely situated in traditional context, in most cases, taking examples to support from Chinese classic literature of the pre-modern period. Nonetheless, these Confucians codes and concepts are still highly relevant to issues of contemporary Chinese gender discourses, although they may change in form or meaning. The literary evidence regarding this is abundant in Ha Jin's stories. As I will analyze in details, *Waiting* shows readers how Mao's regime incorporates Confucian ethics in the construction of Chinese masculinity and gender discourse as a whole in that era. But before that, to prepare a context for the textual analysis in the following chapters, I will now give a detailed historical account of gender discourse over the four decades since 1949, with its emphasis on the Culture Revolution (1966-1976) and the 1980s.

D. Socio-political Environment—a Broader Context

Overall, Mao's era was fraught with political class struggle, and campaigns for economic centralization and culture homogenization. Class struggle had been placed on the top of Mao's political agenda, which defined and encompassed activities in economic and cultural domains. As the main political ideology, the discourse of class defines all individuals according to class origin, manipulating activities in other social domains. On the whole, the "political doctrine of class struggle drew lines between the proletariat [i.e. peasants, workers, soldiers, cadres,] and potential enemies [i.e. landlords, bourgeois, rightist intellectuals, and capitalist roaders]"²³(Cui Introduction xii). Class served as the fundamental

²³ In China, "rightist" refers to those who embrace pragmatic, mild approach to socio-political problems, value western ideas such as freedom and democracy. In contrast, "left" usually refers to the line of Mao and

basis on which one's behavior and thinking was expected and judged (Lin 20). It was in this combat where the proletariat endeavored to purge or reform their enemies. In class struggles, new class-based hierarchical relationships were constructed, where proletariat or leftist elements (i.e. peasants, workers and soldiers) were located at the top.

Among the political campaigns, the Culture Revolution was the most remarkable (1966-1976) when class struggles were at its peak. The campaign launched by Mao mainly to liquidate his rivals within the Party. He called young students and workers (now called Red Guards) into the battle against Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping and their followers whom he denounced as capitalist roaders.²⁴ As chaos increased across the nation, intellectual elites were subjected to struggle session for alleged bourgeois values. The campaign targets extended to the Four Olds, (i.e. old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits). Red Guards defaced temples, monuments, and statues, burning books and smashing works of art. In this sense, class struggle is more than a war against proletariat enemies. It is also about nationalism and anti-imperialism. During the earlier period of Mao's regime, a mixed cultural heritage was left from previous regimes and abroad, which included "certain Western cultural products and artifacts coexisted with those from the Soviet Union, as well as those produced domestically by early-twentieth-century writers and artists or in the more

his diehard supporters, who pursued policies that mixed radical class struggle, authoritarianism and personal adulation of Mao, the Party dictatorship.

²⁴ The confrontation between Mao and Liu Shaoqi was traced back to the beginning of 1960s. At that time, Mao retired from daily state affairs and handed them over to Liu who was designated as the successor. Working with Deng Xiaoping, Liu adopted pragmatic approach to economy, focusing on light industry in an attempt to raise people's living standards. This approach triggered resentment from Mao. Finding his influence decreased within the Party, Mao decided to regain his power and influence outside the Party (among students). The students later became the Red Guards in the Cultural Revolution.

dogmatic and propaganda-prone post-1949 era” (Zhong 43). However, class struggles changed this cultural landscape. The diversity disappeared and cultures and ideologies are homogenized into the Communist culture. “[W]riting, film-making, and other artistic activities were overwhelmingly subordinated to the official doctrines of the party”(Chow 29). Liu Zaifu calls this phenomenon the extreme “socialist nationalization” which “demanded ...that spiritual culture, including the minds of individuals, be nationalized ” (Z. Liu 59). Class struggles victimized intellectuals and political activists. For the most part of Mao’s regime, intellectuals had difficult relationship with the CCP which conceived them as potential dissidents. In many films from Mao’s years, intellectuals were depicted as negative characters and “suspect in the eyes of the Maoist government” and those “in need of thought reform”¹²⁸ (B. Wang). In reality, the Anti-rightist movement was launched in 1957-58 when 552,877 people nationwide were denounced as Rightists and subsequently subjected to criticism, attack, demotion, or dismissal from office.²⁵ In the Cultural Revolution, intellectuals were notoriously dubbed as ‘Stink Ninth’, which virtually means they the most undesirable in the society.

On the economic front, the Chinese Communist Party (the CCP) embarked on restructuring industry and agriculture (at least in early 1950s and in some major aspects) on the model of the former Soviet Union. National economic projects were centralized and elevated by the party-state system. Large-scale factories were built and many metropolitan cities became the hub of heavy industry.

²⁵ Ma Yuping and Huang Yuchong, eds. *Zhongguo zuotian yu jintian, 1840-1987 nian guoqing shouce* (China’s Yesterday and Today: Handbook of National Conditions: 1840-1987) (Beijing: Jiefangjun Chubanshe, 1989,) p. 751.

Behind this endeavor was the CCP's (and the Chinese as a whole) strong desire to modernize the nation-state and demonstrate the superiority of the Socialism over the Capitalism. "In the 1950s, *Mao* was repeatedly quoted as saying that China should and would catch up with the United States and Great Britain in about fifteen years" (Zhong 44). In 1958, *Mao Zedong* launched China on an exceedingly ambitious project of reform called The Great Leap Forward. As the name indicated, it aimed to make China leap forward, quickening the transformation of China into a model socialist society.²⁶

a. Sex, Gender and Marriage Under Class Struggle

In the context of class struggle and socialist building, "the gender discourse is usually reduced to and subsumed in the grand discourse of class struggle and national liberation" (Lu 21). Overall, Mao's period saw the rise of *wu* masculinity and the decline of *wen* masculinity. During this period, CCP's propaganda contributed to the rise of *wu* masculinity. This masculinity, serving the interest of the CCP and socialist building, has three dimensions: socialist, collective, and physically powerful. I call it socialist-collective-masculine male identity. As gender discourse served political discourse dominated by class struggle, this type of identity was signified only by proletariat class (i.e. peasants, workers and soldiers). Chinese masculinity of the time was class-based and only those from proletariat class had the potential of achieving the ideal *wu* masculinity. Among the proletariat heroes propagandized by the CCP, Pavel Korchagin greatly influenced the individuals coming of age in the Mao's regime. Korchagin is a

²⁶ In the Great Leap Forward Movement, the CCP set unrealistic goal for industrial and agricultural output. The movement was a complete failure. In the aftermath, it is estimated three years of famine starved about 30 million.

protagonist of a Russian novel entitled the book *How the steel was tempered*, which depicts how the hero, a working-class boy, became a staunch communist, a steel-like man. *Lei Feng*, a soldier of People's Liberation Army of China, was another hero known to every household. Through the Mao's propaganda, he was deified as a national hero who was fully dedicated to Communism.

The hegemonic ideal masculinity was not only configured with class and political ideology. It also involved displacing one's subjectivity with one's collective identity. An ideal hero should be self-less while possessing an unyielding body in serving the interest of collective organization. Individuals were encouraged to be like "little screw", developing them into "steel-and-iron beings" that serve for the interest of the CCP (Zhong 45). Men were encouraged to acquire the above qualities, so were women. Embracing gender-equality policies, the Communist party "called on women to participate in the socialist revolution and socialist construction, and wrote and implemented policies for women to become active participants in the work-force" (Zhong 43). In response to this appeal from the CCP came the women's masculinization. Much as men did, women wore the gender-blind working uniform—the plain-colored loose-fitting clothes. To eliminate femininity, breast-binding practice caught on among women. "Iron Girl" which refer to those model girls who looked and acted manly. Apparently, this period experienced a strong trend of women masculinization. "Feminism, or any discussion of women's specific problems, was declared bourgeois; femininity, or any assertion of a specifically female identity, was denounced" (Honig 255). Women's masculinsation reached its peak during the

Culture Revolution (Baranovitch 108). Some women soldiers, wearing pants with leather belts, as well as cutting their hair short, were hot-tempered and participated in violence in what was called class struggle launched by Mao. Women's masculinization can be read as a denial of women as a gendered and sexual being in the context of class struggle ideology and a transformation of gender and sexuality into the subjectivity of class and nation. This was also well evident in the revolutionary movies and operas. Analyzing the gendered elements in the various versions of *The White-Haired Girl* (*Bai mao nu*), Meng Yue concludes that in the successive adaptation of the story of *The White-Haired Girl*,²⁷ there is gradual de-gendering and removal of sexual difference of the heroin, who is transformed from a "ghost" of the old society to a "master" of the new state, from an unlearned individual to an enlightened heroine. (Yue 119-22)

²⁸ "The dominant significance of the successive revision of Xi'er's image was to represent her as a subject of class struggle and its effects, and not of gender struggle and transformation" (Evans).

The practice of eliminating femininity was accompanied by the CCP's suppression of romantic love and sex, which the Party denounced as an immoral, decadent, individualistic bourgeois practice. Sexual expression and innuendo was a taboo and feminine traits were eliminated. During the Cultural Revolution, all-female casts went out of fashion and romantic themes succumbed to

²⁷ The White-haired Girl is a model revolutionary opera adapted on a 1940 folk story about a "white-haired goddess". In the folk-tale, a 17-year-old peasant girl is abducted by her landlord in payment of her father's debts. The landlord rapes her and makes her pregnant. Later, she escapes the landlord's attempt to kill her by running away and living in a cave where her hair turns white and locals believe she is a goddess. She lives in the cave nine years until an Eighth Route army officer liberates her.

²⁸ Shuqin Cui's book *Women Through the Lens-Gender and a Nation in a Century of Chinese Cinema* also expressed the point of view that gender aspect was drastically reduced in the later versions of *White Hair Girl*. See p 59.

propaganda featuring class struggle. Nonetheless, the suppression is simply the puritanical surface of the Communist culture. Sexuality could not be erased however high-handed the suppression is. In fact, the CCP wisely utilized the individuals' libido for its own political purpose. By means of art, the Party channeled the individual energy to socialist revolution, encouraging individuals to commit themselves to socialism revolutions. As Wang observes:

It is in the recycling of the individual's libidinal energy for revolutionary purpose, in the constant displacing of the individual's life and enjoyment into revolutionary experience, that we find politics working in close concert with aesthetics. This is a feature of Communist culture often neglected by dismissive observers and critics. I use "displacing" in its full psychoanalytical sense. To displace the individual's libidinal energy into politics and revolution does not necessarily mean replacing it with something completely different or getting rid of it. It can mean that politics acquires an experiential richness and intensity, assumes sexual connotations, becomes a full-blooded life world, and revolution affords personal satisfaction and fulfillment. (B. Wang 124)

One of the vivid manifestations of this elimination is model operas (*yang ban xi*) which were the only opera that was allowed to be performed in public. This type of opera is themed on revolutions, aiming to eulogize Mao's leadership and socialism. Heroes generally devote themselves totally to lofty revolutionary causes, and unlike ordinary people, purged away all personal desires. In some cases, the heroes' family members are not blood-tied. They become a family for

the common lofty mission of socialism. Heroines, wearing unisex military uniforms, act completely like men. Their public roles as social member engaging with a revolutionary cause are highlighted and their private roles largely underplayed or neglected. Another practice in eliminating sexuality is to gradually replace romance-themed songs popular in 1930s with the masculinized songs themed with socialism revolution and loyalty to Mao's thoughts.

b. Chinese Masculinity and Sexuality in Post-Mao Era

The post Mao era mainly refers to the period from the late 1970s to 1989, a decade marked by sweeping political, economic, and cultural changes. Politically, the late 1970s and early 1980s marked the end of the extremely tight control exercised in the preceding three decades by the Communist Party over Chinese society and culture. Under Deng Xiaoping's leadership, the CCP began to retreat from Mao's class struggle ideology and adopt pragmatic approach towards economic development. Economically, Deng initiated the "responsibility system"²⁹ to privatize agriculture and declared an 'open door' to foreign investment. In the mid-1980s, the state initiated efforts to privatize industry in the state sector. Price controls on small consumer items were removed, with prices determined by the market. Private economy began to develop. China was developing into an increasingly open, commercialized and contradictory society, where power is still in the hands of the Party.

A deep disillusionment prevailed among Chinese with the ideals upheld by the CCP, its teachings, and its power structure. In the cultural domains, there was a

²⁹ The 'Responsibility System' allows rural households to obtain land from collectives in return for contracting to meet a minimum target of production for sale to the state at fixed prices. Any surplus could be sold on the market. The system provided strong impetus to individuals and led to a much higher agriculture output.

strong reaction against past errors and radical experience of political movements marked with the erasure of humanities and individualities. As a cultural reflection, various forms of art including literature saw a revival of humanist and individualist perspective. The concerns of humanities in 1980s as a reaction against Mao's radical policies in the past are the most visible in gender and sexuality domain (Baranovitch 108). As a matter of fact, Chinese male intellectuals' desire to redefine themselves as free and autonomous subjects in the 1980s is a discursive manifestation of their masculinity crisis. Their crisis, manifested as a strong desire and unyielding quest for masculine identity, does not only derive from their "strong critical position against the CCP's ideology" (Zhong 41), but also from their concerns with "the fate of nation as a whole"(Lu 30). The masculinity crisis symbolizes the weakness of the nation, and the attempt to reconstruct masculinity is an expression of collective desire of Chinese artists and intellectuals for a rejuvenated China. As a manifestation, the literature in the 1980s, among other forms of art, was dominated with themes of love, gender, and sexuality. One of the representatives is the semi-autobiographical novel *Half of Man Is Woman* (Nanren de yiban shi nuren) written by Zhang Xianliang based on his lived experience in prisons and labor camp depicts dysfunctional masculine sexuality of Chinese men inflicted on political persecution. One of the most memorable statements in the novel is delivered by a castrated horse, who says to the narrator: "I even wonder if your entire intellectual community isn't emasculated. If even 10 percent among you were virile men, our country would never have come to this sorry state" (Zhang 129).

The critique of crippled masculinity led the Chinese thinkers to the reassertion of humanities and positive reconstruction of masculine identity. The “search for *nan zi han* (tough, rough and masculine)” was initiated as a cultural movement in elite and popular discourses. The film *Red Sorghum*, directed by Zhang Yimou, glorifies the rather crude masculinity embodied by the grandfather.³⁰ In music, Baranovitch reads the emergence of Chinese rock music in 1980s as the Chinese musicians effort to reconstruct Chinese manhood (118). In this cultural movement, the traditional preference for more delicate male heroes faded, as Wang yuejin suggests:

In the early 1980s, the speculation on the past, on our cultural history and on the structure of Chinese mentality led to a radical change in taste. The intelligentsia awakened to the ideological implications of feminization, while the average theatergoer became fascinated by the charisma of the icon of “tough guys” in Japanese and Western movies. Suddenly there was the excruciating realization of a fundamental “lack.” There was a “masculinity” anxiety, which culminated in a stage play: *In Search for Man*, The once popular, delicate and “creamy” male stars lost the audience’s favor: they even became despicable. (36-37).

The search-for-tough-men movement shaped the minds of the students who led the 1989 Democracy Movement in the years that preceded it, as well as during the movement itself. From a gender perspective, “[t]he desire to become masculine like the West was also one of the main driving forces behind the

³⁰ For more details, see *Mixing Memory and Desire: Red Sorghum A Chinese Version of Masculinity and Femininity*

demonstrations of 1989” (Baranovitch 139). This link between the movement and masculinity is well evident in the fact that “Having Nothing,” one of rock songs articulating masculinity, became the theme song of the protest all over China.

Overall, the political and cultural movements sweeping across 1980s’ China are radical response to Mao’s policies dominated by class struggles. Heavily influenced by Western culture, the decade saw the rise of humanism and individualism, which, roughly speaking, challenged not only socialism but also traditional culture represented by Confucianism. The question worth pursuing is to what extent the Confucian morality and *wen-wu* concepts have been changed in meaning, or even been displaced, by Western humanism and individualism. Such a question can be pursued through analyzing Chinese male identities, thoughts and behaviors. Ha Jin’s novels provide a perfect literary representation of Chinese men during this transformative period, which both the writer and his male characters experienced.

E. Summary

The previous parts concentrate on these aspects of the study. At the outset, I rationalize my project by expounding the significance of studies of Chinese masculinity. As my research is in the tradition of literary studies, the discussion moves on to the Structuralism - the main critical theory to employ in textual analysis. Nonetheless, the analysis is also open to other approaches when necessary. The textual study is more text-driven than theory-driven. The third aspect is mainly of theories on Chinese masculinities. Starting with the general definition of masculinity, it elaborates its main characteristics, which are stated or

implied in the definition. The discussion then narrows down to four theoretical studies specific to Chinese masculinity, which is the most important part of the chapter. More or less, they are all in response to the stigma that Chinese males are less masculine. The study by Sun Longxi is critical of Chinese male justifying the Chinese male's weakness with Oedipus complex as a theoretical model. Disagreeing with Sun, Wang Yuejin's study insists that Oedipus complex is not applicable to Chinese men. He proposes the concept of "femininity complex", arguing it is men (not women) who lacks. In Chinese culture, to become a better person, a man expected to embrace *yin* that they are lack of. As such, the notion of 'femininity complex' registers a very positive tone. Geng Song studies Chinese males' representation on pre-modern Chinese literature, employing *yin-yang* as an analytical tool. He argues that such binary oppositions as masculine/feminine and heterosexual/homosexual constructing Western masculinities are absent in the pre-modern Chinese societies. He concludes that Chinese masculinity is more power-based than sex-based. Kam Louie's research is the main theory I will employ in my analysis. His study theorizes Chinese masculinity with the paradigm of *wen-wu*, the concepts exclusive to Chinese men. His study makes an intriguing contribution to the field. Standing on the shoulder of his research, I make a small modification, theorizing Chinese masculinity with a tripartite model consisting of *de* (ethics), *wen*(literary power) and *wu* (physical power). Ethic is on the top, the core of Chinese masculinity. *Wen* and *wu* are the means to achieve ethics. In return, Confucian ethics finds its expression in *wen* and *wu*. As such, I suggest Chinese masculinity is more ethics-based. This theoretical concept of

“ethic-based” is in line with the concept of “power-based” Song proposes, yet might be applicable to a wider range of males than the latter. In traditional Chinese society, ethics and power may go along together. As noted earlier, only those who pass the Confucianism-oriented civil service exam and practice Confucian virtues in day-to-day activities may reach social power. In this sense, those with social power are those with high moral stand. Either power or moral rectitude can construct and symbolize his masculine identity. Nonetheless, we may ask how about those males who have moral rectitude but no power, i.e. those at lower stratum of the societies? It might be absurd to say they are not masculine in traditional gender discourse just because they have no social status. Indeed, their moral rectitude can construct their masculine identity. Of course, this is a separate issue and deserves a full discussion. It needs to be reiterated the concepts *wen* (literary power) *wu*(physical), *de* (morality) will constitute the main perspective from which to exam representations of Chinese males in Ha Jin’s stories. But it does not mean that the analysis is confined to it. Similarly, the analysis is open to any theories that can offer a convincing explanation for construction and representation of Chinese masculinity. Finally, in order to provide a historical context for the following textual analysis, the discussion comes to Chinese masculinity discourse since 1949 when the Communist Party took power.

In the following chapters, textual analysis will be conducted to exam the literary representations of Chinese masculinities, each chapter focusing on one novel by Ha Jin. The theories and the historical context discussed in this chapter

will provide guidance and perspectives for the analysis. The analysis attempts to answer these questions: 1) in what way the literary representations of contemporary Chinese masculinities are related to Chinese traditional masculine discourse; 2) what historical factors have brought about the departure of contemporary masculinity discourse from the tradition in Mao's and post-Mao's period; 3) how the representations are related to the author himself as a migrant writer writing in a transnational context? All three questions will form a thread running through the ensued analysis.

CHAPTER II

WAITING: MANHOOD SMOTHERED IN MAO'S REGIME

Of Ha Jin's novels, *Waiting* is probably the best acclaimed and the most examined in the circle of Chinese American literary critics. The story is set in a period between the early 1960s and the early 1980s covering the Cultural Revolution - the most turbulent historical period of China under the Communist rule. Its theme is of suppression of emotional life and by extension humanities in the totalitarian China under Mao's regime. The male protagonist Lin Kong was a doctor working at a military hospital located in the city of Muji. He lived in a city while his wife and daughter lived in a rural village. Every year he was home with them only on his twelve-day vacation. As a matter of fact, Lin's marriage was the consequence of his parents' arrangement. His wife Shuyu was obedient, devoted, selflessly serving Lin's family, a representative of good housewives in the eyes of Chinese men. Nonetheless, she was ignorant, illiterate and awkward-looking. She

“was a small, withered woman and looked much older than her age. Her thin arms and legs couldn't fill up her clothes, which were always baggy on her. In addition, she had bound feet and sometimes wore black puttees. Her dark hair was coiled into a severe bun on the back of her head, giving her a rather gaunt face. Her mouth was sunken, though her dark eyes were not bad-looking, like a pair of tadpoles. In every way the couple did

not match" (H. Jin *Waiting* 6).

Lin seemed to be emotionally paralyzed about his wife. "He didn't love her; nor did he dislike her. In a way he treated her like a cousin of sorts" (*Waiting* 9). He did not have sexual relations with his wife; the first and the last intercourse did produce his daughter Hua. As Lin Kong was working at the hospital, he found himself gradually involved in a relationship with Manna Wu-- one of his former students currently working as a nurse with him. A favored opinion of Lin grew in Manna when she was aware Lin was knowledgeable, caring and always ready to give help and advice. Reciprocally, Manna gained Lin's favored attention because she was an antithesis of Shuyu in every way. Manna's affection for Lin began after a military training session and grew to such an extent that Manna could not help but initiate the first private date. As the relationship flourished and Lin found his emotional attachment to Manna on the rise, Lin began to think of the possibility of re-wedding. As the narrator says, "his parents had died long ago, and their daughter Hua had graduated from middle school [...]. For better or worse, he should disentangle himself from this loveless marriage [to Shuyu]" (*Waiting* 9). Nonetheless, divorce was by no means easy at that time. For eighteen years, "Every summer Lin Kong returned to Goose Village to divorce his wife, Shuyu" and each time ended in failure (*Waiting* 1). After 18 years of waiting, Lin and Manna eventually married. Yet that is not the end. Ironically, the new marriage turned out to be far from happy. All of sudden, It dawned to Lin that he had never loved a woman wholeheartedly [Manna was no exception] and that he had always been the loved one. In the section, I discuss why the tragedy

happened by exploring the image and character of the protagonist Lin Kong.

A. Mixed Image of Traditional Scholar and Revolutionary Soldier

a. Wen-Wu in Lin

Lin possesses the qualities of *wen* masculinity (gentle, knowledgeable, amiable, quiet, soft) represented by literates of traditional China. He graduated from the military medical school in the early 1960s. Lin loves reading. His knowledge earned him positive comments from the people around, "People liked him, calling him Scholar or Bookworm"(31). When Shuyu was engaged to marry Lin, "Shuyu's parents did not ask for any gift or money and were pleased to marry her to him" (*Waiting* 8) because of Lin's academic achievement (*wen* quality) which conferred him some prestige, social status and prospective career. Manna used to be his student when trained as a nurse. It is his literary power, among other *wen* qualities, to which Manna gradually grew attached, "since she had never met a person who could read a book written in a foreign language" (*ibid.*). His physical features are reminiscent of the image of a traditional fragile scholar. Through Manna's eyes, for instance, Lin "looked quite young for his age"(*Waiting* 6). "His face was smooth and handsome with a pair of black-rimmed glasses on his straight nose"(*ibid.*). His glasses made him look urbane and knowledgeable"(31). He "often ate in a fussy manner like a woman doing needlework"(32). He "had long-boned hands, the fingers lean and apparently dexterous"(*Waiting* 33), and "always spoke amiably to everybody"(*ibid.*). It is interesting to note that the words describing Lin are such as fussy, smooth and dexterous, etc, leaving a womanly impression of Lin on the readers. His

personality is characterized as quiet, which is embodied in the tranquil scene on his favorite bookplate inside his books. As Manna found, in the woodcut plate “was an engraving of a thatched cottage, partly surrounded by a railing and shaded by two trees with luxuriant crowns, five birds soaring in the distance by the peak of a hill, and the setting sun casting down its last rays” (33). On the whole, Lin’s appearance recalls the image of the fragile male in the scholar-beauty romance definitely lacking the macho masculinity in the Western context. However, it was these fragile physical traits, closely connected to his *wen* qualities, which defined his masculinity. Manna never put Lin’s manhood into question because of these physical features.

Although looking fragile and quiet, he has capability of controlling and concealing negative feelings in him, which is a strong assertion of his masculinity in Chinese culture. His self-control over his negative feelings is best illustrated in his dealing with his brother-in-law Bensheng. From the very beginning, Lin had been well aware Bensheng used various tricks to prevent Lin from getting divorced successfully. Bensheng made her sister Shuyu change her mind at the last moment in the court, employing someone else to publish an article in a local newspaper to denounce and defame Lin for his attempted divorce. He even organized a gang of the villagers (i.e. the buddies of his brother-in-law) to stand outside of the courthouse and prepared to make a scene in case that Lin was granted a divorce. His tricks made Lin feel nasty, but Lin never showed animosity to Bensheng. Lin did not fear Bensheng. His constraint response could mainly be attributed to his benevolence (i.e. kind-heartedness and soft-heartedness). For

example, Lin “had decided not to speak to Bensheng again, but somehow he had forgotten his decision. Now he and Bensheng seemed to have remained in-laws. If only he could have put on a hard face. If only he could have cut all his ties with that crafty man” (133). Lin’s constraint response was also based on his judgment on an intellectual level. Lin knew that open animosity to Bensheng would not have the issue resolved but on the contrary would be consequential and exacerbate the situation. The way Lin approached Bensheng is a best illustration of “the Chinese mentality: the belief in internal stillness and passivity as a positive way to appropriate external reality and the belief that ‘the soft and lithe’ can conquer ‘the solid and strong’”(Yeujin Wang 35). That is why Lin immediately gave up pressing for a divorce to pacify his brother because he knew Bengshen would cause trouble to his leader and friend Ransu, when Bengshen declared to go to talk with the army leaders personally about Lin’s attempted divorce. Lin’s self-restraint quality also finds its expression in his life of sexual abstinence. The first reason behind his abstinence was his wife, who did not attract him sexually at all, and with whom he made love only once to make her pregnant, to say nothing of the fact that the couple lived apart. Lin’s college construed his abstinence as a virtue, for which he was called “model monk”. This label valorizes Lin’s self-control over sexual desires as the mark of traditional Confucian rectitude and of his masculinity as a *Junzi* (a noble man).

Indeed, Lin Kong’s surname Kong is the same as that of Confucius in Chinese (Confucius is pronounced Zi Kong in Chinese), which indicates Lin is the incarnation of Confucianism. The novel is replete with Lin’s actions epitomizing

filial piety (Xiao), loyalty (Zhong) and righteousness (Yi). For instance, it is out of filial piety that Lin Kong took a bride. With his mother pleading on her deathbed, Lin reluctantly agrees to marry Shuyu. Similarly, he is loyal to the Party, which is signified by his being “so engrossed in completing an article on the topic of becoming ‘Red and Expert’” that he forgot buying the Tower Candy³¹ for his brother’s son (*Waiting* 127). “Red and Expert” was a catch-on word in Mao’s era. “Red” means politics, while “expert” means economic or technological expertise. The phrase captures one of Mao’s directives during the Cultural Revolution, which was “education must serve proletarian politics and be combined with productive labor”(He 66). Being engrossing in writing such a topic suggests he was preoccupied with devoting his body and mind to the Party. His loyalty is also illustrated in his consenting to giving up Manan upon Commissar Wei’s demand. When this high ranking Party official, the personification of the Party, asked the hospital administration to arrange for him to meet a suitable woman as a candidate of his new wife, the administration considered recommending Manna. When Lin was asked privately by Ran Su (who was Lin’s friend as well as his superior) if he would be fine with the decision, Lin said, “Perhaps this will do her good. If Commissar Wei agrees to marry her, that will be fine with me” (136). Although the possible reasons for Lin’s not holding on to Manna were many, loyalty must be one of them, which takes the form of obedience. Lin’s giving up also earned him compliment from Ran Su, who said, “You’re a kindhearted man, Lin. Few men would give up their woman so willingly. Some would go berserk if

³¹ Tower Candy is the name of a kind of pill to get rid of roundworms in a belly.

such a thing happened to them" (*Waiting* 136). This positive comment speaks to Lin's big-heartedness, which is at core of Chinese masculinity. Apart from following Confucian codes of filial piety and loyalty, Lin also abides by the Confucian code of appropriateness (*yi*) which is best illustrated in his dealing with Ransu, his superior as well as his friend. For example, when Ran asked Lin to make the promise not to have adulterous affair with Manna, Lin did it, and later kept this promise by declining Manna's advance in a rendezvous. When Haiyan, the best friend of Manna, learned this, she was surprised and said, "Hmm, I didn't know Lin Kong was such a loyal friend". In Chinese eyes, Lin's decline demonstrates his loyalty as a subordinate and trustworthy as a friend. In Chinese culture, these two virtues are also called loyalty-appropriateness (*zhongyi*) and trustworthiness-appropriateness (*xinyi*), respectively (Yu 32).

There are also some *wu* symbols associated with Lin. The story is set in a military hospital where Lin is not only a doctor but a revolutionary soldier. The military background signifies *wu*. Lin loves reading, but unlike his historical, cultural and literary predecessors who are interested in poetry and writing, Lin reads books mainly on medicine and politics, wars, all of which are associated with *wu* masculinity as opposed to sentimental poetry and literature. As we read, "On his shelves were about two hundred books — *Song of Youth*, *Cement*, *The History of International Communism*, *War and Peace*, *The Guerrilla Detachment on the Railroad*, *White Nights*, *Lenin: World's First Nuclear-Powered Ice-Breaker*, and so forth"(32). These books suggest his bellicosity as a talented communist scholar as well as a revolutionary soldier with a very different outlook and

knowledge structure.

b. Deconstructive Reading of Wen-Wu in Lin

Positive *wen-wu* qualities as Lin represents, Lin's manhood is called into question from a different perspective. First, around his sexual abstinence is a ring of his innocence and naivety about sex and woman. As the narrator describes, "For many years he had often heard other men talk about having a wet dream and wondered what it was like. Before his marriage, he had even doubted his manhood, because unlike other men who were crazy about women, he had never fallen in love with a woman" (*Waiting* 73). Because of his innocence, he was ill at ease whenever other men bragged about their virility and desires for women in front of him. For instance, when talking with Geng Yang – a representative of *wu* masculinity in the novel, Lin was uncomfortable with Geng's unrestrained way of talking about women because he "could say little because he didn't know how to talk about women. He couldn't help wondering why his roommate [Geng Yang] was so knowledgeable about female charms" (164). At the same time, his naiveness and kind-heartedness precludes him from seeing through Geng Yang's vileness. It is his lack of power and life experience of which Geng Yang took advantage and succeeded in perpetrating the rape to his girlfriend Manna. Although the acquaintance rape plainly reveals the vileness and maliciousness of Geng, through depicting it Ha Jin's main intention seems to emphasize Lin's weakness and passivity which symbolize his emasculation rather than to denounce the perpetrator. In one way, the rape suggests Geng Yang's masculinity triumph over Lin's and a negation of Lin's masculinity, which

is signified in Geng Yang's remarks about the size of his genital. "I saw his dick when we bathed together in the bathhouse. I've wondered ever since if he's a bisexual" (*Waiting* 179). Lin's emasculation was further confirmed in his self-loathing inner monologue indicating self-denial of his manhood.

"For the rest of the afternoon, whenever free, Lin thought about the rape. The more he thought, the angrier he grew with himself. He realized that Geng Yang had taken advantage of his inability to develop his relationship with Manna. If he had married her, or if they had been engaged, that devil wouldn't have known so much about her or been given the opportunity to perpetrate the crime. Obviously his indecisiveness had opened the door to the wolf. Manna was right that he was responsible for the rape too, at least partially. How he hated himself! He was a man incapable of protecting his woman and irresolute in taking action. "Such a wimp!" he cursed himself in an undertone and clutched at his hair" (193).

Clearly, this inner monologue speaks of Lin's lack of capability, decisiveness, and resoluteness, which all points to Lin's faults in personality held accountable for the raping incident. Lin's faults in personality represent his emasculation; and the occurrence of raping represents the tragic nature of the entire novel plot. It is Lin's own lack that mainly make a tragedy of the story. On the other hand, Gangyang's tough image illustrated some *wu* qualities. Although Geng Yang was depicted as a vile perpetrator of raping, Ha Jin seems to hint that the *wu* qualities embodied in Geng Yang are what Lin is lacking. The qualities are complementary to Lin's personality to become a perfect man. Much as Manna, Lin once held

favorable opinion of Geng Yang, as we read in the text, "Lin was somehow fond of this man, who was so different from any- one he knew, straightforward and carefree. What is more, Geng Yang seemed to always speak his mind.[...]Geng Yang was a man full of certainty and capable of decisive action, a real go-getter.

Lin's masculinity was further challenged when we closely examine what might be behind his self-control as a central mark of Chinese ideal masculinity³². First, behind his self-control over his sexual desire for Manna was hidden Lin's passiveness and lack of passion as a lover. To a large extent, it was because Manna initiated actions that their relationship began to develop. Their first date was made possible by Manna who invited him to a movie. It is no surprise that Lin finally realized "he had never loved a woman wholeheartedly and that he had always been the loved one" (251). In addition, after their marriage came into reality, "Manna's passion often unnerved Lin. He was afraid of being unable to meet her expectation" (245). Not only did Lin not initiate actions to put the relationship forward, but also he was even ready to discontinue it in some circumstances. As mentioned earlier, when Lin was asked what he thought of the hospital decision to choose Manna as a candidate for Commissar's Wei's wife, he said it was fine with him and he could let Manna go. This decision might be unlikely to have something to do with his nobility of spirit, but might be highly linked to his guilt for his extramarital affair, pessimistic attitude towards the relationship and his sense of powerlessness as opposed to the high-ranking official Wei. Although his marriage with Shuyu was loveless and against his will,

³² From the evidence presented at many points, Louie makes it clear that self-control is a remarkable quality of both the literary and martial male types encompassed by the *wen-wu* matrix (Louie 61,66).

he saw the extramarital affair with Manna as an unforgivable sin, which was against the Confucian codes of loyalty and filial piety. This led him to question his masculinity. On top of it, given the power of Wei, Lin was aware of the impossibility of competing for Manna with Wei because Wei was a powerful high-ranking official. As Ran said in the novel, "it's inappropriate for any one of us to tell Commissar Wei what to do. Even our Party Committee can't do that" (*Waiting* 136). It was doomed to be a failure if Lin engaged in the rivalry. His inability to hold Manna indeed is symbolized in earlier part of novel, when he had a wet dream in which he copulated with a woman and then, "A skein of ducks flew past, calling wildly. Their harsh cries made his arms shudder a little; he held her tightly, like a man incapable of swimming gripping a life buoy in the ocean"(73).

Apart from Lin's passivity, lack of passion, and powerlessness, fear lurks behind his self-control. In Mao's era, possible punishments in the totalitarian society contribute to the formation of self-control on the part of individuals who wanted to survive. To discuss this, let's start with how Louie particularly stressed the significance of self-control in the political realm. As he aptly summarizes, "Self-control is thus a fundamental prerequisite for control over others... it is a necessary criterion for gaining political power, as well as moral and spiritual superiority. Self-control seems to be universally hailed as a leadership quality" (92). However, in *Waiting* there is no sign that suggests Lin's self-control is driven by his (potential) desire to control others, to gain political influence, moral or spiritual superiority. It seems that Louie's view of the self-control embodied in noble men in traditional China does not apply to Lin's case. If we examine it

closely, the difference of Lin's self-control from that of Junzi's self-control in imperial China lies in the incentives that contribute to the formation of self-disciplinary behaviors. In the case of Junzi in imperial China, the incentive is positive, as Song puts it:

the predominant instruments used to achieve discipline were not punishment, but the prestige and privileges of the gentry class bestowed upon the students when they passed the examinations and the repetition of Confucian education for those who failed. The dignified identity of the educated elite thus created an incentive for being disciplined. It was through the 'civilized' education and examination systems that power had control over both the men's mind and body (84).

In the case of Lin, the incentive to achieve his discipline was the threat posed by forms of punishment. He was extremely cautious about his action for fear of serious punishment that would ruin his life.

'Risk' is the word," he said thoughtfully. "It's too big a risk to take. We shouldn't do this."

"Why?"

"Didn't we promise Ran Su not to break any rule? This would get him into trouble too. I'm a married man; if the secret is out, we'll be dealt with as criminals, don't you think?"

"I don't care."

"Don't lose your head, Manna. Think about this: just a moment's pleasure will ruin our lives for good " (*Waiting* 68).

Lin did not exaggerate the possible consequences to be produced by “just a moment’s pleasure”. But what possible consequences the illicit relationship might result in? A nurse and her boyfriend (who was a doctor) set an example. Because the nurse became pregnant by her boyfriend, they violated the hospital rule that hospital that “two comrades of different sex, unless married or engaged, must not be together outside the compound” (16). As a result, they were both expelled from the army, which means denial of access to many social resources. The man became a village doctor, his residential status would be changed to rural status, which in turn means the loss of benefits and privileges that urbanites had. Similarly, the girl, being sent to the cannery factory, had to engage in manual job with lower salary and less welfare while her class status changed from “cadre” to “worker”. The benefit granted to a worker in a factory was smaller than that to a cadre working for government and military institutions. Even their offspring would be affected in the future, for example, their children would not get access to good education because of the family background. Where children were born largely determined their chances of educational success. Children born in countryside have been much less likely to be successful in education than those in cities. Especially in Mao’s regime when state-planned economy was implemented, it was the state authority solely that distributed resources and determined one’s benefit, privileges and social welfare through institutions such as work unit, education and residence system (hu kou). Thus, one’s well being was at the mercy of the authority. One’s work unit determines the place of one’s residential registration, which in turn determines one’s and even his family

members' access to benefits, welfare, and resources. Overall, the distribution structure favors the urbanites (those with urban hu kou) far over rural residents in such ways as education, housing, and eating, among others.³³ Lin was successfully subjugated to Mao's rules with deterrent effects, which were internalized into a form of self-control. When any ideas that may breach norms and laws flashed into his mind, the self-control would work and produce guilt in him. Once he dreamed of polygamy, when "[h]e saw himself sitting at the head of a long dining table and eating with all seven young women and the old woman too. No, the old woman turned out to be his wife Shuyu.... He remembered that in the Old China some rich men had several wives. How lucky those landowners and capitalists must have been, wallowing in polygamous bliss" (42-3). This vision produced a sense of guilt in him shortly. "He shook his head and the vision disappeared. 'You're sick,' he said to himself. He felt slightly disgusted by his envying those reactionary men, who ought to be condemned as social parasites"(43). Clearly, this is how his sickness about himself and his sexuality was produced in him.

The above analysis is kind of deconstructive reading of *wen-wu* and by extension the Confucianism represented by the protagonist. The reading demonstrates that the masculinity represented by Lin has irreconcilably contradictory meanings. On the one hand, Lin can be read as an image of noble man who use Confucian teachings as his moral compass. On the other hand, it is the same teachings that disempower him, causing his self-denial, self-doubt,

³³ The Chinese government has established and maintained a hukou, or household registration system since 1958, establishing class order dividing the population into urban and rural households. One's Hukou is closely linked or determined by one's work unit. One's sound education would help one have a job in a good, urban unit, and in turn have his Hukou status changed.

sense of guilt, inhibiting him from taking firm and decisive actions, and above all emasculating himself. Behind his morally appropriate actions are his powerlessness, impotence, fear and helplessness as a male subject. Lin's self-control, his obedience to the Party's order, and his attempt to live with social expectations towards such a revolutionary soldier as him finally developed a kind of indecisiveness in dealing with the mutual attachment between him and Manna. He represents an individual, whose individual desires were smothered and displaced by the traditional morality and the will of authority. He is "a victim of both the new Maoist-tinged rules and the vestiges of the old Confucian system, being caught in the war between these often disparate worlds" (Parascandola 40). This begs a question of how it happened. In the following sections, I explore Confucian moral discourse in Mao's era and Mao's operation of power in order to glean in what way they make the tragedy possible.

B. Lingering Confucian Discourses around Marriage in Mao's Era

The majority of the novel consisted of Lin's multiple attempts to divorce, though none of them succeeded, in the years between 1963 and 1981. The judge refused to grant Lin's divorce, citing the army hospitals' rule that an officer could not end his marriage without his wife's consent only after eighteen years' separation. However, a closer reading of the novel reveals that Shuyu, a foot-bound and illiterate country-wife, was not the real barrier to divorce. What were really in the way were the traditional and political forces behind Shuyu, which was represented by the relatives, the judge and even the neighbor villagers. For these characters, Lin's attempt to divorce was more a moral issue than a legal

one. They denounced Lin's request as immoral and unacceptable, as indicated by the judge made to Lin in court.

"Comrade Lin Kong, you are a revolutionary officer and should be a model for us civilians. What kind of a model have you become? A man who doesn't care for his family and loves the new and loathes the old-fickle in heart and unfaithful in words and deeds. Your wife served your family like a donkey at the millstone. After all these years, the grinding is done, and you want to get rid of her. This is immoral and dishonorable, absolutely intolerable. Tell me, do you have a conscience or not? Do you deserve your green uniform and the red star on your cap? " (*Waiting* 12).

The judge's remarks could be read as a moral trial. It was more on the ground of Confucian ethics than on the ground of legal regulations. He questioned Lin's conscientious consciousness (*liangxin*), which has been at the center of Chinese moral discourse. He described Lin's attempt to divorce as "immoral, dishonorable, and absolutely intolerable"- a sin against Confucian moral code of *Ren* (Benevolence) and *Zhong* (loyalty). By asking the rhetorical question "Do you deserve your green uniform and the red star on your cap", the judge implies that acting on these Confucian moral principles (i.e. benevolence, loyalty, and righteousness) is also what a revolutionary officer is expected to do. The judge's reproach illustrates how Confucian ethics were incorporated into the political discourse of the Communist party.

It should be noted that the Mao's gender-equality political discourse negated some of traditional moral discourse about women. For example, the judge's

reproach suggests a subtle change between Mao's regime and traditional societies in the Confucian definition of loyalty. "Relationships of loyalty... are only applicable between men" in traditional Chinese society; and a man had been obligated to be loyal only to his ruler (Louie 35). He had no such obligation to his wife because the polygamy was legal in imperial China. Mao's China renounced polygamy in the effort to achieve gender-equality and lift women from inferior position in patriarchal society³⁴. In this grand gender discourse, a man is expected to be loyal to his wife as his wife to him. Beside the judge, Shuyu's brother Bengshen also spoke against Lin in the court, explaining the unfairness that she suffered in the marriage, saying, "He [Lin] can't treat a human being, his wife, like an overcoat—once he has worn it out, he dumps it "(*Waiting* 12). Here we also notice a change in the discourse on women between the imperial China and China under Mao's rule. In traditional moral discourse, treating women like an overcoat had not been problematic. The 'overcoat' metaphor appeared in *the Three Kingdoms*. The protagonist Liubei (the hero of *the Three Kingdoms*)³⁵ says: "Brothers are like one's own arms and legs, while wives are like clothes. When clothes are worn out, they can be patched up. When one loses an arm or a leg, it cannot be replaced" (Cited in M. W. Huang *Negotiating Masculinities in Late Imperial China* 132). As Song observers, "Liu Bei ... never put women in an important place. ...The clothes/limb rhetoric clearly indicates that women were treated as the Other and brothers part of the Self in the traditional society"(160).

³⁴ "The Marriage Law of 1950 ... did contain articles to establish a marriage system based on freedom, monogamy and equality between man and woman, protecting the lawful rights and interests of women, children and old people". see Neil J. Diamant, "Re-Examining the Impact of the 1950 Marriage Law: State Improvisation, Local Initiative and Rural Family Change," *The China Quarterly* 161 (2000).

³⁵ See Chapter one for brief introduction of *the Three Kingdoms*.

As Huang observes “A man’s attitude toward his wife / wives is often believed to be an important index to his masculinity...The readiness to desert or even sacrifice one’s wife for the sake of friends or sworn brothers is often considered a measure of a hero’s true manhood”(M. W. Huang *Negotiating Masculinities in Late Imperial China* 131). Yet in Mao’s era, things began to change. Treating women like a man’s property was no longer correct morally and politically, because it apparently was contradictory with Maoist ideology, which placed emphasis on the equality between men and women. Even Lin’s biological elder brother Ren did not side with him over this issue.

“Brother, you should’ve talked to me before going to the court with Shuyu,”

Ren said, ...

“This is my personal matter,” Lin said tersely.

“But our parents chose Shuyu for you. Shouldn’t you respect their wish?”

“It’s their wish that messed up my life.”

“Why so?” Ren dragged on his pipe, ... he added, “A man ought to have a conscience. I can’t see where Shuyu is not worthy of you. She’s given everything to our family. We should take —”

“Like I said, this is my personal matter.”

“Maybe not. A divorce will affect everybody in our family. Kids in my village have already started calling your nephews names, saying, ‘Your uncle has two wives,’ or, ‘Your uncle is a womanizer.’ How can you say a divorce is just your own affair?” (*Waiting* 128).

The focus of the contention between Lin and Ren is on whether divorce is a

personal matter. Ren insisted that it was not Lin's personal matter; instead it was the matter of the whole family. In Ren's logic, the marriage is their parents' wish; thus to terminate the marital bond is to disrespect the parents, a non-filial act. In addition, the divorce would bring dishonor and disgrace to all family members including the children. Ren's view that the bond of marriage goes beyond the couple was deeply entrenched in Chinese traditional culture represented by Confucianism. Such an observation finds its full expression in the *Book of Rites*: "Marriage is the happy union of two families of different names, with a view, in the upward way, to perform ritual duties to the ancestors and, in the downward way, to secure the continuance of the family line. Therefore the gentleman sets a great value upon it".³⁶ Indeed, Confucianism attaches great value to the institution of family, regarding it as the foundation of society, and emphasizing its irreplaceable role in maintaining social order and controlling sex. In that sense, the welfare of the family contributes to the overall welfare of the society, and vice versa. According to Confucianism, harmonious family relationships are believed to be crucial for a harmonious society and a peaceful state (Yao 181). Thus divorce is condemned as immoral, as a shame not only on the couple but also on the family, and ultimately an enemy to social stability. That is why even the whole village to which Lin's family belongs turned up outside the court and prepared to make a scene if Lin was granted the divorce. As one protestor indicates, "A woman shouldn't be allowed to divorce either, or else there'll be disorder everywhere. The order of the world is rooted in every family, as Confucius said "

³⁶ "Liji, Chapter 42, p. 791. The English version is mainly as translated by James Legge in *Li Chi, Book of Rites* (New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1967), with minor modifications.

(*Waiting* 123). Similarly, the emotional attachment between Lin and Manna was regarded as the threat to the marriage, thus the relationship between them was condemned in public, although it had support from their close friends in private. Family also played a critical role in controlling sex in traditional society where any sexual affairs between men and women out of wedlock were oppressed and condemned as lewdness. It is well articulated in a Chinese saying that lewdness is both the worst and the source of all vice. To prevent lewdness, a clear moral cordon was drawn between men and women:

Male and female should not sit together (in the same apartment), nor have the same stand or rack for their clothes, nor use the same towel or comb, nor let their hands touch in giving and receiving (Song 95).

C. Mao's Appropriation of Confucian Moral Discourse

The presence of Confucian moral discourse around the divorce in Mao's era is only part of a larger picture of Mao's appropriation of Confucianism in the manipulation of political power. Focusing on this broader context, this section explores how Confucianism is appropriated to serve the operation of the political power. As Confucianism is closely related to Chinese masculinity, the discussion naturally involves in the construction of ideal masculinity, and also how this construction was made possible through smothering men's individual desires. Lin's traditional marriage with Shuyu reminds us of the existence of Confucian patriarchy, which the Communist party succeeded with its own version. As Stacey claims, in this new 'public patriarchy', "Communist party leaders assume the paternal role, integral to its civil society" (Stacey 227). One of the key

dimensions for the Party version is “the state supervision over personal life” (Stacey 228). In the novel, we reader see many cases of the infringement of state power on individuals’ private domains. The rule that mentioned earlier is an example, which dictated, “two comrades of different sex, unless married or engaged, must not be together outside the compound”. In Mao’s era, the romantic love relationship between two individuals must have received approval from the authority before it became legitimate. Like rulers in the past, Mao placed an enormous emphasis on *zhong*, as the traditional system had done. In imperial China, *zhong* meant loyalty to the emperor; in Mao’s China, it meant loyalty to the Chairman, to the Party, and to the lofty ideals of communism. As a result, body was written and disciplined by the concept. The following passage explains how loyalty was encoded in Mao’s era.

At the end of December, for the first time Lin was not elected a model officer. Some people complained about his lifestyle. One officer reported that Lin once had not stood at attention like others when the national anthem was broadcast, even though they had been in the bathhouse, all naked in the pool. A section chief remarked that Lin shouldn’t keep his hair so long and parted right down the middle. The hairstyle made him look like a petty intellectual, like those in the movies. Why couldn’t he have his hair cropped short like others? What made him so special? His college diploma ? Then how come the other three college graduates in the hospital didn’t bother so much about their hairstyles? How come one of them didn’t mind having his head shaved bald? (61).

The attack from his fellows is about his life style, which was absurdly politicalized. They called into question Lin's loyalty and dedication to the authority by accusing him of standing naked at the bathroom with no attention paid to the national anthem. His hairstyle was also interpreted as a politically charged sign. His hair long and parted right down the middle was the signifier of the rightists – who belong to a category of dissidents and enemy of socialists including petty intellectuals, capitalists. In his fellow staff eyes, Lin's lifestyle problem lay less in hairstyle than in his relationship with Manna. This relationship was regarded as illicit – a kind of imitation of “the lifestyle of the exploiting class” (125). In this sense, it was a betrayal of Mao's gender policies, which aimed to suppress romantic love and displace it with revolutionary romanticism.

The above reproach also suggests the presence of “surveillance, control, political conformity, and ideological correctness at the lowest level of the polity”(Schoppa 108)³⁷. Surveillance and control is ubiquitous in the hospital, which itself is a form of intrusion of private life. In the closely-knit totalitarian society, “the State is so intrusive. If the self is a system of signs, all the signs that constitute the self are under public scrutiny”(B. Huang 262). Surveillance pervaded into individuals' life in public and private, and into body and soul. Interested in whether Lin is actually having sexual relations with his wife, Lin's colleagues at the hospital “stayed outside at the window and the door, eager to

³⁷ “Members of the work unit oversaw essential aspects of daily life, such as administering housing and medical care facilities, dispersing ration coupons, and mediating marriage dispute. From the 1950s into the 1980s, they had directed mobilization of the populace in political campaigns, and they had managed surveillance and control. (108) R. Keith Schoppa, The Columbia Guide to Modern Chinese History, Columbia Guides to Asian History (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).”

find out whether the couple slept in the same bed. They stuck their ears to the key hold and the window screen. But the room was as quiet as if uninhabited" (*Waiting* 211). In Mao's era (and even today), self-criticism in political studies is another way to have one's state of mind controlled. When we read, "At political studies Lin often felt that people expected to hear more from him about his inmost thoughts, as though he were supposed to make a self criticism" (*Waiting* 61). The practice of self-criticism in political study sessions bears much resemblance of the widespread practice of confession in Western societies as discussed by Foucault in his work *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. The confession is central to Foucault's understanding of the workings of power. Foucault describes how "Western societies have established the confession as one of the main rituals we rely on for the production of truth"(Foucault 56). Western societies have become obsessed with "the infinite task of extracting from the depths of oneself, in between the words, a truth which the very form of the confession holds out like a shimmering mirage"(Foucault 59). Back in Mao's era, political studies were an occasion where everybody developed the habit of criticizing him- or herself, confessing character weaknesses and improper thoughts. It was also part of routine to report private thoughts to party organizations by writing diaries of self-examination and self-condemnation. Like the confession, self-criticism has the effect of modifying the person making the self-criticism. Whether by way of being unburdened or being forgiven for one's errors and sins, self-criticism works directly on the person who criticizes himself. In Chinese context, the practice of self-criticism or self-examination has its root in

Confucian thoughts. Zengzi, a disciple of Confucius famous for his conscientiousness, said, "Every day I examine myself on these three points: in acting on behalf of others, have I always been loyal to their interests? In intercourse with my friends, have I always been true to my word? Have I failed to repeat [keep in memory] the precepts that have been handed down to me?"(Confucius and Waley 1:4). Self-examination and inward exploration are necessary for one to gain true knowledge and to be a sage. In discussing political studies during Mao's regime, Ban Wang placed emphasis on how self-criticism or self-denial finally contributes to the power of authority by working with the concepts of superego, aggression, and masochism. In Wang's analysis, self-criticism is seen as a masochistic aggression against oneself. As a result of self-criticism, one "learn[s] to hate him - or herself for the slightest deviation from the party line and watch over his or her mind with utmost vigilance" (222). As self-criticism transforms the soul, the new superego representing the party ideologies will prompt the "voluntary cooperation" in the process of indoctrination. Self-criticism makes us feel a sense of guilt, inflicting pains and cruelty on us. Yet it motivates individuals to correct, to improve, and to reform oneself. In the process of self-transformation, one is striving to reach the collective ideal, which can generate an uplifting pleasure, a pleasure in strenuous endeavor towards the ideal. Also pertinent to the discussion of political studies is how language, through self-confession, constructs a narrative of moral self. As Huang said, "the confession concerns not so much what happened as it does the performative power of language – how discourse shapes and defines us" (227). In recounting

the sins committed, one is constructing a self in accordance with the discursive stricture of Maoist moral discourse. In this sense, confession is more about self-transforming language than events that happened in reality.

Apart from supervision, surveillance and self-criticism, the Communist party also attempted to create the revolutionary models on which individuals were exhorted to emulate them. As the political discourse was dominated by class struggles, the model came from the proletariat class, which consisted of workers, peasants and soldiers. In creating and promoting the heroes, three strategies were employed by the CCP. The first is to mystify an individual from a real life. A good example is Lei Feng a soldier of People's Liberation Army of China, who is known to every household in China through the CCP's relentless propagandas. The CCP also employed figures from fiction to promote the CCP's ideal hero. Pavel Korchagin is an example. He is the protagonist of novel *How the Steel was Tempered* from former Soviet Union, in which Korchagin was depicted as an ideal Communist on whom the generation was exhorted to model. Leifeng and Korchagin were both deified as the masculine icon of the Communist culture featured by an undefeatable body, being asexual, selfless, loyal and wholeheartedly devoted to socialist revolution. The third way the CCP engaged in propagating an ideal hero image for Chinese male is to launch campaigns at various administrative levels to select models. This practice was even carried out in primary schools.

Selecting models is part of the CCP's effort to promote the ideal image of worker-peasant-soldier. As Anagnost observes, this ritual of selecting models is

“to discriminate between those who fulfill the requirements of the model and those who do not” (135). By doing so the party exerted its ideological authority and leadership at the local levels. Such a practice was not the invention of Mao but deeply rooted in Chinese traditional philosophy of Confucianism. It “accords well with the “Confucian philosophy of education [which] is the notion of education by example” (Ames and Huai-nan 4). In *Waiting*, Lin had been elected as a model officer until his relationship with Manna began. It was because of his “model” status that made Lin additionally visible as a representative of the ideal ideological image of the Party. As a model, Lin had to bear additional pressure to live up to high expectations from the people around in fear of any deviation or failure from the idea which was considered disgraceful. In turn, this contributed to his self of guilt after he began to be emotionally attached to Manna.

D. Structuring *Wen* in Meshwork of Other Types of Masculinities

In this section, I examine the manhood of other male characters in *Waiting* in relation to the *wen* epithets of Lin Kong. In addition, I discuss how Confucian moral codes govern the male bonding between them and Lin in the era of Mao’s regime, as male bonding became an important means for performing their masculinity.

a. Brother-in-law Relationship

Lin and Bensheng were formed through the marriage of Lin with Shuyu. This triangle relationship serves as a good illustration of the theory of “the traffic in women” developed by Gayle Rubin³⁸. In the occasions when Lin and Bensheng

³⁸ See Gayle Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex,” Toward an Anthropology of Women, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975).

deal with each other, there is always a presence of Shuyu, visible or invisible. Shuyu served Lin's family well as a faithful wife. Her faithful service led Bensheng to such mentality that Lin owes favor and gratitude to him as Shuyu's brother. Thus, in Bensheng's eyes, it is within Lin's obligation to give him help. "Reciprocity, which was always an important component in Chinese conceptualization of friendship, is largely an act of fulfilling one's social obligations"(M. W. Huang "Male Friendship in Ming China: An Introduction" 11). He asked Lin to lend him some money as if he had asked his own sister Shuyu. "Without looking at the money, Bensheng put it into his pants pocket. 'I'll pay it back to Shuyu, all right?' " (*Waiting* 89). Bensheng regards his sister Shuyu and his nephew Hua as his property. Because of this mentality, Bensheng highly expected to receive sort of compensation from Lin, such as Lin's property to give away when Lin sold his house in the village. When he found Lin did not do as he expected, he was so outraged as to denounce Lin as "an ungrateful worm!"(*Waiting* 230). Bensheng adamantly opposed the divorce. He spoke in the court on half of Shuyu, turning "the whole village against him [Lin] and spread the rumor that Lin had committed bigamy, taking a concubine in the city". He threatened to retaliate if the divorce was granted. He treated the divorce in the way as if it was his own divorce where he was putting himself in the position of Shuyu. What he did seemed to demonstrate Sedgwick observation that "in achieve a relation of mastery to other men", a man has to pass through the stage where he "temporally risk or assume, a feminized status"(Sedgwick 51). As a matter of fact, Bensheng's demeanors fully demonstrate that he was a typical

small person. "Confucianism" defined xiaoren (small man, mean man) as opposed to Junzi.

"The contrast between a junzi and a xiaoren (a small man) is the contrast between a person of virtue and a mean or vulgar person. This contrast is manifest in all areas of life. In terms of a psychological character, the former is broad-minded while the latter is partisan (Lunyu,2:14). In terms of behaviour, the former always aims at what is righteous while the latter understands only what is profitable (Lunyu,4:16). Internally the former is calm and at ease while the latter is full of distress and ill at ease (Lunyu,7:36). In personal relations, the former only makes demands upon oneself, while the latter makes demands upon others (Lunyu,15:20)" (Yao 215).³⁹

Bensheng fits well the description of xiaoren(a small man). He placed profits over righteousness. To this, his profession of accountant first alludes. He was doing small business, in which money was his only concern. To bring more cash from selling piglets, he sewed up their butt-holes with flaxen thread to make them weigh more. His greediness was explicitly articulated in Hua's comments on him, "Greedy. He has nothing but money on his mind. He even adds water to soy sauce and vinegar in his store" (*Waiting* 231). In Chinese texts, Junzi (noble man) who abides by Confucian moral codes is regarded as masculine. On the contrary, xiaoren (small man) who does not abide by Confucian moral codes is often put in

³⁹ Listed below is the English translation of the original texts, from Confucius and Arthur Waley, The Analects of Confucius (London: Allen & Unwin, 1938). The Master said, "A gentleman can see a question from all sides without bias. The small man is biased and can see a question only from one side" 2:14 (p 91). The Master said, "A gentleman takes as much trouble to discover what is right as lesser men take to discover what will pay" 4:16 (p105). The Master said, "A true gentleman is calm and at ease; the Small Man is fretful and ill at ease" 7:36 (p.131). The Master said, "The demands that a gentleman makes are upon himself; those that a small man makes are upon others" 15:20 (p197).

a feminine or emasculated status. Bensheng is portrayed as emasculated. His feminine trait is also embodied in his backstabbing Lin. In Chinese culture, such a practice is categorized as *yin*. His emasculated status is further alluded to by the fact that he was childless.

b. Comradeship in Mao's Era

In *Waiting*, Ran Su the vice-director of the hospital's Political Department "had been on good terms with Lin, because they both loved books and often talked about novels" (*Waiting* 58). Lin has a private library of prohibited foreign books, which were shared by Ran Su and some other colleagues. The private relationship reminds us of the one between two traditional literary men and this reading club reminds us of the traditional societies of literates such as shishe (poem society), wenshe (literary club), and jianghui (assemblies of philosophical debate) in history of China. In history, China had a tradition of censoring and cracking down societies of literates because they were deemed potentially dangerous and subversive to the regimes as a possible source of heresy. Outside Chinese context, it has been the case too. In France, it was the salon which represented a subversive countercultural effort. The relationship between Lin and Ran was subversive because it was the forbidden books they share the interest into that served as the catalyst of the bonding. The spiritual purification movement launched by the Party was reminiscent of the effort of rulers in Chinese history to confiscate and burn the books deemed as heresy⁴⁰. Thanks to

⁴⁰ Chinese history abounds in facts of destroyed library collections. The emperor Qin Shi Huang ordered the burning of all books in 213 B.C. except those that dealt with agriculture, medicine, or prophecy in order to protect his newly united empire from the perceived dangers of literary works. Fernando Báez and Alfred J. Mac Adam, *A Universal History of the Destruction of Books : From Ancient Sumer to Modern Iraq* (New York: Atlas & Co. : Distributed to the trade by W.W. Norton, 2008).

Ran's notifying Lin in advance, Lin hid the books and avoid them being forfeited.

In terms of male bonding in China, Jiyuan Yu noticed a potential tension between the two Confucian codes of trustworthiness and loyalty, as Yu observes, "However, trustworthiness and loyalty could be in tension under certain circumstances: to be loyal, one sometimes has to violate trustworthiness, and vice versa. What is the guiding principle in order to do the appropriate thing under such a circumstance? Confucianism does not say" (Yu 32). This tension is clearly seen in Ran-Lin's case. Apparently, there is an internal tension between loyalty (*zhong*) and righterousness (*yi*) on the part of Ran. On the one hand, as a Party official as well as superior of Lin, Ran should be loyal to the authority. On the other hand, as Lin's brother-like friend - he addresses Lin as "brother" in private, Ran is expected to be trustworthy and righteous for Lin. Thus, the question of how Ran handle the situation where the two Confucian moral codes are in conflict is interesting to explore. It is found that in general Ran prioritize *Yi* over *Zhong*. Besides updating Lin with the information about book confiscating movement, Ran also privately did Lin a big favor by writing for him the divorce recommendation letter. When the gossip about the "abnormal" relationship between Lin and Manna went around, he began to "investigate" the case on behalf of the Party. He summoned Lin to his office one winter afternoon and warned Lin that Lin is developing a dangerous relationship with Manna, which may lead him into trouble, asking Lin to promise not to have extramarital affairs with Manna. The way Ran treated Lin serves a good example to illustrate Perry's view, which is "The designation "brother" implied intimate obligations of mutual

aid and loyalty that superseded officially sanctioned relationships" (J.Perry and Dillon 280).

c. Lin and Gengyang—Wen VS Wu.

Geng Yang, as a representative of *wu* masculinity of revolutionary soldiers, is the most masculine figure in the novel. As an underling of the high-ranking official Wei, his masculine traits impressed Manna at the first glance. Manna noticed his stern face, powerful hands, heavy build, pistol, bullets, which all symbolize *wu* masculinity. Compared to Lin, Geng seemed to be more attractive to Manna, as she reflected,

"In many ways he was more like a man to her, strong, straight-forward, fearless, and even coarse" She wished that Lin could be a little more like him, or that the two men could exchange some of their traits so that both their characters would be more balanced. Lin was too much of a gentleman, good-tempered and studious, with little manly passion"(176).

Manna's view indeed reflects the emphasis the *wen-wu* theory on the possession both *wen* and *wu quality* for an ideal man. Her appreciation of Geng over Lin also reflected that *wu* masculinity assumed superiority over *wen* in the period, as Louie observed *wu* masculinity rose while *wen* declined in Mao's era (48). Equally, Lin appreciated Geng Yang manhood. They got acquainted with each other when they were hospitalized in the same ward for tuberculosis. Their relationship developed first because of their shared interest in Chinese chivalric novels, which is the very symbol of traditional Chinese *wu* masculinity. When they were together, Geng Yang articulated his masculinity also by using sex

banter. As Jankowiak observes, "For men, sexual banter often serves as a means to convey, however momentary, a sense of "brotherhood" or male bonding"(366). However, Lin treated Geng Yang as sort of elder brother, not because Geng Yang is older than Lin, but because Lin thought Geng Yang was more like a guide to him in dealing with love and family. Thus, he was eager to seek advice from him about the divorce. The masculine traits that Geng Yang revealed are "straightforward, carefree, a man full of certainty and capable of decisive action, a real go-getter". These qualities were what Lin was short of and eager to possess. Geng Yang also demonstrated his *wu* masculinity in drinking. In their first eating out, Geng Yang lifted a huge mug of beer while Lin raised his smaller mug containing merely hot water. This is a contrast between Geng Yang's *wu* masculinity and Lin's *wen* masculinity. As Wang observes, "drinking is closely associated in Chinese texts with the attainment of masculinity" (Yeujin Wang 38). Drinking represents *wu* masculinity, as it will lead to a kind of masculine courage and defiance that could not possibly evinced in sobriety which characterizes *wen* masculinity.⁴¹

Ironically, it is this trusted friend that had raped Manna before Lin and Manna married. Geng Yang drank a half bottle of wine before coaxing Manna into his apartment. The good impression Manna had of him certainly threw her off guard so that he succeeded in carrying out the scheme. More ironically, Geng Yang got away with the crime. The reason behind it was that Manna dared not report to the police because she was afraid nobody would believe her. In addition, Lin could

⁴¹ Wu Song, as a *wu* hero in the Chinese classic novel, *Outlaws of the Marsh*, has been a household name in China for his tiger-killing story. This story (along with the hero) serves as a good example of how drinking is related to masculinity in the Chinese context. It was in his state of drunkenness that he killed a man-eating tiger in a mountain.

do nothing either, except for directing hatred to himself and seeking Chinese medicines to help Manna recover physically. Geng Yang later became a successful businessman in the post-Mao era, enjoying so much fortune and publicity. It seems Geng Yang's success might be allegorically read as the circumstances of the post-Mao China. On the one hand, Geng represents who dares to make ground-breaking effort in economic reforms, deflowering the virginity of the economy. On the other hand, he also represents the moral decline and legal loophole as the cost of economic reforms. Indeed, in post-Mao era, people who rose to wealth often did so by morally transgressing and exploiting legal loopholes.

E. Grotesque Bodies of the Party

The dominant discourse of Mao' era highlighted revolutionary romanticism at the expense of individual senses, feelings and other biological needs. Correspondingly, an ideal *wu* masculinity in Mao's era was constructed, represented by the image of worker-peasant-soldier (i.e. a proletariat) who is tall, imposing, perfect versions (gao, da, quan), devoting himself to socialist nation build-up while forgetting his body rooted in biological needs and drives. However, this ideal *wu* image of a proletariat was deconstructed in *Waiting*. As found in the novel, most images of the Party officials are depicted in direct opposite to the ideal *wu* image. In other words, these images are characterized with short, ugly, and driven by biological desires including sexual desires. The depiction of grotesque images (in opposite to ideal *wu* image of Mao's era) becomes a strategy of irony and satire for cultural criticism.

In the novel, we encounter judges who have oversized body, rotund, short, and corpulent. Such a grotesque body ridicules the police uniform in which the body is and which symbolizes the state authority. They have disfigured faces. One judge makes his face before he speaks, the other has buck teeth and no neck, and “peered at the couple with one eye open and the other shut, as though aiming like a gun”(120). His face is greasy, that “reminded Lin of the clay statue of a local god in the Divine Horse Shrine west of Goose Village”(ibid). When a judge walks, “[h]is fat hips swayed while the floor creaked under his feet. His cap still perched on the desk” (13). His walking manner speaks to inflexibility, rigidness, and stupid. He strode away to the bathroom, which debases the “solemn” figure into a body associated with biological needs and waste. Similarly, another judge behaves in a vulgar way, pointing at Lin with his right forefingers while using his left hand picking a wart under his nostril. Overall these images, short, disfigured, and associated with urine, shit, bodily fluids and vulgar manner, stand opposite to the heroic figures carved out in Mao’s era who are tall, steel-like, handsome, spiritually lofty, and nothing to do with biological needs. Through these grotesque images, the writer ridicules the Mao’s politics as a body which is corpulent and corrupted.

The bodily assault on the characters is another type of grotesque. When Lin and Ran talked about whether to recommend Manna as a candidate to Commissar Wei who was asking the hospital to seek a wife for him, Lin accidentally sat on a yellow mushroom, which stained his pants. Apparently, the stain carries the overtone that the matter is annoying. The bodily assault is also

well illustrated by the horrible and even incurable diseases the characters suffer. The hero Lin and the most masculine soldier Geng Yang were hospitalized for tuberculosis, which represented a social and culture epidemic in Mao's era. Similarly, The commissar Wang died of hepatitis. Revolutionaries, and party leaders are driven by sexual desires and lust, involved in sex scandals and rumors, which contradicts the political gender discourse featuring suppression of sex. A sex rumor about Haiyan, the nurse who works with Manna, had it that she went to bed with Vice-Director Chiu of the hospital in exchange for her employment as a nurse, though she had never gone to a nursing school as other nurses. Readers are stunned with sex violence, which is well illustrated by the rape Geng Yang, the masculine soldier who used to be associate of the Commissar Wei, perpetrates to Manna. The general of a field army, Commander Pengfan Hong was a sex beast. He "changed wives every three or four years because he was too savage in bed for a regular woman to last longer than that. Every one of his wives would fall ill within a year of the wedding and soon die of kidney disease. Again and again the Party arranged a new wife for him, but after the deaths of several women he was finally persuaded to marry a large Russian woman, the only one who remained unbroken after living with him for seven years"(151). The party leaders are also crowded with minor characters mentally deranged, schizophrenic. The wife of Ran Su (the hospital's Party Secretary) is a good example. Since their son was drowned, her wife has suffered from dementia. "It was rumored that Ran Su had to give his wife all the money left in his wallet every night; otherwise she would curse his ancestors without stopping,

or smash dishes and bowls, or wail like a child, or turn on him with a steel poker”(196).

What Ha Jin ridicules in grotesque way is not only individual party members but also the juristic and political systems they represent. The ridicule of the whole system finds its best expression in the writer's depicting the history of the buildings and constructions that belong to and are used by the Party. The solemn places now inhabited by party members are associated with sex and disgraceful past. As the narrator says, "The army hotel was at the west end of Glory Street, an area that used to be a red-light district. It occupied a black brick building that fifty years ago had been a Japanese brothel whose owner wouldn't take Russian rubles, which were in circulation together with Chinese yuan at the time" (141). The color of red is a pun. Before the communist rule, it was red-district area, which referred to a place where prostitutes and whoremongers frequented. Now the color of red signifies Mao's regime, and is transformed the place into an army hotel where the Party officials represented interview the candidate to be his wife. The juxtaposition seems to reveal the affinity of brothel with the army, of the prostitutes with the women soldiers coming to the military hotel. As the prostitutes served their clients, the girls coming to the military hotel are ready to serve the army officers like Commissar Wei.

F. Summary

As we mentioned in the first chapter, Mao's era is featured with the suppression of love and sexuality. The suppression is in effort to re-channel Libido to revolutionary romanticism. It is part of a larger picture of suppression of

individualities. One is forced to give up his individual identity and personal desires to follow the Party line and become part of the huge machine of the Party. In this sense, Chinese men in that period were mentally castrated. *Waiting* is the good example. It shows how such a stifling society smothered personal love and emotions. As the protagonist, Lin is almost an asexual man and has no desire to love. He is emotionally dead and waiting was only a nature order to him. Lin is a tragic figure in the sense he has lost all sense of himself and had no rebellious spirit. Lin was trained to follow the Party order so much so that he was afraid to deviate from it. He is the victim as well as the accomplice of the Party's rule. Only to this tragic figure can waiting for eighteen years happen. On a closer examination, Lin's tragic personality- being passive, self-restraint, obedient, etc. - is not only the result of Mao's rule, but also deeply rooted in Chinese culture represented by Confucianism. Thus, He is not only the victim of Mao's era but also the Confucianism's. Apparently, behind Lin's image as the victim is the author's ideological critique against Maoism and traditional Confucianism. In contrast, humanism and individualism representing a liberal voice are cast in a positive light. For example, by describing amusingly Lin's bewilderment about Whitman and his poetry, the narrator conveys his ideological inclination for liberalism represented by Whitman's works.

The chapter also examines in details the Confucian moral discourse emerging around Lin's attempted discourse. The discussion reveals the society's expectations that a man has to live with in a Confucian context. It also demonstrates Confucianism still defined Chinese mindset even in Mao's era

which saw huge effort to replace traditional ideologies like Confucianism with radical socialism discourse. A close examination of Mao's propaganda mechanism further illustrates the strategies that Mao used to smother individual personal desires in indoctrination: Party orders (outside legal systems), political studies, and model building. These strategies were largely rooted in Confucian ideas. Mao's era is featured with iconoclastic attack on Chinese traditions, especially the Confucianism. Thus, we might believe the regime represents a radical break from Chinese tradition in culture. However, the literary analysis reveals there was a strong cultural continuity between the era and China's past. The chapter also uses *wen-wu* duality and Confucian ethnics to examine other male characters and their relations to Lin. Lin, as a representative of Confucian *wen* masculinity (i.e. the noble man), has two antithesis in the novel. Bengshen is the one. He is a small man in Confucian moral context, who seeks profit only in his life. Geng Yang was another antithesis. He was the representative *wu* masculinity. He possesses some qualities that Lin is in short of. The existence of the character Geng Yang highlights Lin's smothered manhood.

The sexual and love puritanism as part of Mao's discourse was hypocritical. As seen in the novel, those Party members in power are not subjected to this puritanism. Abusing their power, they were free to divorce and marry again, indulging themselves in love affairs. Through depicting grotesque bodies of the Party members, Ha Jin deconstructs the ideal male image the Party propagandized, mocking the political system and debunking its hypocrisy. In doing so, the narrator expresses his radical attitude against the whole political

system. As Philip Thomson observes, the grotesque is presently viewed as a *fundamentally ambivalent thing, as a clash of opposites*, and hence, in some forms at least, as an approximate expression of the problematic nature of existence. It is no accident that the grotesque mode in art and literature tends to be prevalent in societies and eras marked by strife, radical changes or disorientation (11).

CHAPTER III

THE CRAZED: WEN MASCULINITY CRISIS IN THE 1980S

Rarely in the history of Chinese culture have the Chinese male identity and the relevant masculinity issues been serious concerns as were in the 1980s. In a response to the historical traumas and socio-political changes of the time, there was a widespread anxiety, senses of powerlessness and marginalization found among Chinese males. The masculinity crisis is followed by a culture movement which aims to remasculize the nation. Masculinity in crisis in the 1980s, first of all, was mainly a problem among Chinese male intellectuals as a circle. It is they who sensed the crisis on their part and brought the related issues to the fore. It was they who played an active role in developing effort to remasculize the nation into a cultural movement. As Chinese intellectuals represented *wen* masculinity, the crisis in the community can be called *wen* masculinity crisis. Thus our discussion starts with characteristics of the community: social roles, self-understanding and existential condition in both traditional and modern Chinese society.

A. Literature, Intellectual, and Politics in Mao and Post-Mao Eras

As a social construct, contemporary Chinese intellectuals mainly refer to those who have received higher education. In Chinese perception, Chinese intellectuals, especially the intellectuals in Humanities or Liberal Arts are reminiscent of traditional literati. Throughout China's history, Chinese

intellectuals (literates) have constituted the shaping force of society. Their power derives from the Confucianism, according to which "it is the critical and creative intellectual, and not the political ruler, who represents, advocates and holds to truth and social justice" (He 165). Much as traditional literati, contemporary Chinese intellectuals share the ambitions which "include a commitment to public service (if not exactly to politics), with a tendency to define service to the state in terms of service to the people, [and willingness] to act spokesmen for the [subalterns]" (Peter R. Moody 1141). It is because of their critical stance that the community has historically been subjected to monitor as "a potential threat" to authorities (Ogden 112). That was the case in Mao's era, when Chinese intellectuals and the Communist Party did not have an easy relationship to start with. From the outset of the Party coming into power, Chinese intellectuals as a community were usually associated with dissidents that were hard to indoctrinate and did not deserve trust. They were categorized as a class inferior to the proletariat worker-peasant-soldier class. Throughout most part of Mao's leadership, this class was the target of political movements, among which the anti-rightist movement in 1957 is an example. Within a few months, more than three hundred thousand intellectuals lost careers and titles, were jailed, or were sent to labor camps or to do heavy labor in the countryside. Some committed suicide. Most were not rehabilitated until 1979, many of those posthumously. During the same period, intellectuals were notoriously known as "stinking ninth class" of society, some way behind criminals, prostitutes and vagrants in a peasant-led pecking order. The suffering and torture inflicted on intellectuals

were one of dominant themes in the novels of 1980s. In terms of characterization, the central position of talented scholars—as in the traditional literary genre of scholar-beauty romance—were seriously challenged. The novels were dominated with the subjects of intellectuals who, because of the political oppression in Mao's era, became “marginal figures or individuals who existed on or exiled themselves to the fringes of society: paranoid individuals, mentally and physically deformed beings, good-for-nothing antiheroes, or ‘social dregs’ such as hooligans (liu mang)” (Zhong 92).⁴² Overall, the regimentation and mental “castration” inflicted on Chinese men, particularly male intellectuals, caused the emasculation of Chinese men in post-Mao era.

The early 1980s saw a radical negation of the de-humanized rule of the previous regime, which was marked by the return of humanism. The return was marked by strong stress on love, sexuality and other gender issues in literature and artistic works. The return of humanities demonstrated their rising subjectivity on the part of intellectuals. They were making “a self-conscious effort to redefine the intellectual self as an autonomous, self-determining, self-regulating and free subject” (Z. Liu 31-2). Underpinned by Western democratic ideas i.e. individualism, Chinese intellectuals began to engage in a struggle for independence from the Party. One of the representative activists was Fang Lizhi, then a professor and the vice president of the Chinese University of Science and

⁴² For example, Yu Hua's “The Year 1986” is about a history teacher specializing in the penal system of imperial China. Arrested and tortured in the Cultural Revolution, he returned to the town he used to live in 1986, too mad to be recognized by the people around. He fantasizes about slaughtering the population, but instead inflicts on him various ‘feudal’ tortures including castration. The semi-autobiographical novel *Half of Man Is Woman* (Nanren de yiban shi nuren) written by Zhang xianliang is another one. Based on the writer's lived experience in prisons and labor camps, it depicts dysfunctional masculine sexuality of Chinese men inflicted by political persecution.

Technology in Hefei. He advocated the independence of knowledge and that the university should be an independent ideological center. He also called on intellectuals to be independent of the working class and to establish their own identity. Speaking at a couple of universities in 1986, He declared that "it is up to the intellectuals as a class, with their sense of social responsibility, their consciousness about democracy and their initiative to strive for their rights" (qtd.in Goldman 40)⁴³. The government responded quickly by taking stern actions. In the same year, a campaign called "anti-bourgeois liberalization" (fandui zichanjieji ziyouhua) was launched. Resolute and hawkish actions followed, which include ousting Hu Yaobang⁴⁴ and expelling those influential dissidents from the party. In the meantime, actions were taken to suppress student demonstrations that were spreading. All these anticipated the Tian'anmen Square Demonstration in 1989, which formally marked the abortion of pro-democratic movement of the decade as a result of the government's military crackdown. Baranovitch gives a gendered reading to the relationship between the government and China's intellectuals during the decade, which is as follows:

the challenge of the 1980s was like a wife challenging her husband or, more generally, like an attempt of the effeminate subject to claim ownership over or challenge the masculinity or authority of his(/her) ruler. The June 4 brutal and total suppression of the democracy movement, however, crushed these claims for masculinity, which many demonstrators articulated through mere participation in the movement. Through this total

⁴³ See a transcript of Fang Lizhi's speech was reprinted in the Washington Post, 18 January 1987.p C4

⁴⁴ When a series of widespread student protests occurred across China in 1987, Hu was blamed for his laxness and his own bourgeois thoughts that allowed the protests to break out. He was forced to resign as Party General Secretary.

suppression, the government restored traditional order and power relations, reasserting its own power and masculinity, and denying it to those who challenged it. (141)

His observation bespeaks two points. 1) Chinese intellectuals (literates) had been in a feminine position compared to their masculine roles in the traditional order; 2) Western ideas such as democracy and independence produced their frustration with their feminine position and masculine desire to assert their power. Their anxiety and desire are two sides of the same coin. The suppression of the government aimed to bring the intellectuals back to their feminine position, causing further anxieties among Chinese male intellectuals.

As Mao's ideology was negated, there emerged "a deep and prevalent disillusionment among many Chinese with the ideals upheld by the CCP, in teaching, and its power structure"(Zhong 90). This faith vacuum was increasingly filled in by economic pragmatism, hedonism and consumerism, which rose with economic reforms and exposure to the Western influence. Correspondingly in the gender domain, Chinese perception of an ideal man changed. The worker-peasant-soldier men, who used to be ideals in Mao's era, were ideals no more. Business wisdom and capabilities of making money became new criteria by which men were evaluated. Masculinity began to be identified with "earnings and career success" (Farrer 16). Chinese popular culture teemed with new images of successful businessmen while the image of traditional literary man was challenged. As we will see later, how Consumerism culture impacts on Chinese masculinity is well evident in *the Crazy*, where men's wealth and social power

are valorized in marital market, which is consistent with Louie's observation that "the transformation of *wen* to include business acumen reached its peak in the 1990s" (76). The influx of foreign investment also exposed Chinese to Western culture. Macho Western (including Japanese) male images on screen received huge popularity among the new generation, which directly negated the images of traditional fragile scholars. With the tough images from the West and Japan imprinted on Chinese mind as idols, the question was triggered—where is a real Chinese man? The perception of Chinese males' weakness and uselessness is well captured in the Chinese phrase of wide currency at the time – *yinshen yangshui* (Women are on the rise and men are on the decline), as I will elaborate in the following textual analysis.

Manhood is nationhood. Laments on Chinese masculinity found its echo in discontent with China's marginalized position and Chinese desire to see the nation rejuvenated. As Cynthia Enloe observes in *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*, "nationalism has typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation, and masculine hope" (4). As a community feeling obligated to serve the nation as always, Chinese intellectuals were prompted to embark on the quest for a real Chinese man. In addition, the intellectual's own peripheral position in contrast to center—the Party, as I mentioned earlier, generated the same desire for a real tough male image. Of course, the journey on which they set off to seek a real man is symbolic. In a cultural sense, the real Chinese man symbolized greatness of the nation, and thus the question to which the intellectuals attempted to seek answers is how to achieve China's cultural

prosperity and modernization in power and wealth. Basically their answers are two key words: pro-Western and anti-traditional. By “pro-Western” they suggest Chinese should embrace Western ideas and apply them to Chinese issues. Of course, the central authority responded quickly, launching the aforementioned campaign called “anti-bourgeois liberalization” (fandui zichanjieji ziyouhua). Western learning is accompanied by a culture fever, which features “criticism of traditional Chinese culture and criticism of Chinese national character” (Zhao 727). The “anti-traditional” attitude suggests an attack on Confucianism; in the meantime, anti-traditionalism suggests a revival of other cultures (especially the macho elements) in the past, which had been marginalized and drowned by the Confucian orthodoxy. The effort to revive other cultures in Chinese history than Confucianism emerged and developed into what was later labeled a root-seeking cultural movement. As its manifestation in literary domain, a genre named as root-seeking literature emerged. In it, heroes in most cases are tough men, physically masculine as Western male image, living in time and place pristine from Communist influence. Behind the genres is the motivation deriving from a hybridized desire to see China as powerful as the West and to critique Maoism. As Yiyan Wang claims,

The macho male figures in their writings stand for the strength and potency of the Chinese nation. Noticeably, most of the nativist writers are men, and their protagonists are villagers of “primitive passions” with little Confucian-literati restraint. 9 In many respects, root-searching literature represents a male gaze into Chinese cultural traditions and lifestyles, in

order to locate the source of power of the Chinese nation. Interestingly, macho masculinity, as depicted in hard life and harsh landscapes, becomes the literary representation of the Chinese national essence (48).

Although “pro-Western” and “anti-traditional” represent two different directions in rejuvenating the nation, they point their critiques to the same thing: the current political system. Pro-Western attitude is self-evident as the opposite of the dictatorship. Regarding anti-traditionalism, the critique of Confucianism insinuated critique against the Party because both represent dictatorship and the same by nature. “To some extent, the attack on culture was a tactic to discourage government repression, as culture was a euphemism for political institutions that were too dangerous to attack openly” (ibid). In summary, on the part of Chinese intellectuals, there was a chain of signifiers, which consist of 1) intellectuals’ marginalized position in the power structure, 2) *wen* qualities marginalized by economic pragmatism and consumerism 3) China’s marginalized status in the world. It is these three factors that constituted the crisis of masculine identity on the part of Chinese intellectuals. In response, Chinese intellectuals showed strong desires to fight for autonomy from the Party, to critique Confucianism and by allusion the Party’s authoritarianism, and to embrace Western ideas and other traditional masculine cultural elements beyond Confucianism. All the desires point, from different directions, to the symbolic center.

B. Textual Analysis of *The Crazy*

a. Basic Plot

The situation described above is the setting in which Ha Jin's *The Crazy* is set. The protagonists are Professor Yang, a senior professor of Chinese classic literature, and the narrator, Jian Wan who is Yang's student as well as his to-be-son-in-law. Professor Yang is the crazy of the title. The novel starts with Yang's hospitalization when suffering a stroke, which rendered him in a condition where he frequently rants and raves uncontrollably. Yang reminisces about his personal life as a Chinese scholar- the tortures inflicted on him in the Culture Revolution, his unfulfilled romantic affairs, the malicious scheme against him, and above all, his futile, passive, and controlled academic life. As a student and to-be son-in-law, the narrator Jian is assigned to sit with and care for Yang every afternoon. Jian listens, at first in contempt, and then in surprise and horror, to the old man's ravings. Gradually attracted to Yang's insane remarks, Jian started attempting to make sense of them, when he found some secret stories and truths behind his teacher's collapse. Spurred by his teacher's words, Jian begins to question the road he is taking and finally embarks on a new life journey. As the narrative moves, it addresses a wide range of moral, political and historical issues, which intersect with men's issues. The story also alludes to other culture phenomena. It heralds the hedonistic consume culture of the 1990s and beyond, reflecting a widespread detachment to politics among some students. As perception of masculinity changed, women began to want men who represented physical comfort and career prospects.

In the next section, I will explore the issues related to *wen* masculinity crisis of 1980s in the novel *The Crazy*. I am particularly interested in 1) how the crisis is

represented and 2) the strategies or tactics used by the intellectuals to deal with the crisis. By doing so, I also attempt to illustrate the relationship between Chinese male intellectual individuals and the CCP, and that between them and the nation, and that between them and women. As this book is a piece of transnational work, I am also curious about how the transnational environment informs us of Ha Jin's depiction of Chinese males.

b. Repercussion of Cultural Revolution on Intellectuals

My textual analysis starts with the protagonist Professor Yang. As a professor of Chinese classic literature, Yang is indeed an exemplar of a traditional *wen* man. He is a well-read, erudite, profound thinker with intellectual pretension. His knowledge and talent in literary field are appreciated by his fellow professors and worshipped by his students. Before he suffered stroke, he had been the editor-in-chief of the journal *Studies in Classic Literature*. Not only does he specialize in Chinese ancient poems, but also he has scholarly attainment in Western classic literature. As the narrator says, he recited Dante's *The Divine Comedy* by heart and had some unique insight into the difference between Chinese and Western poetry in the use of persona. Like many other intellectuals, he was categorized as the anti-revolutionary and tortured in the Culture Revolution. As he recalls in a ludicrous moment,

Sometimes the Revolutionary Rebels on campus planted on my head a dunce hat with my family name written on it. Sometimes they tied a bucket filled with water around my neck to bend my body and keep my head low. Sometimes they made me kneel on a washboard. Even when my knees

began bleeding, they wouldn't allow me to get up (H. Jin *The Crazy* 73)

Yang suffers a form of paranoid when he suspects that other people are conspiring to murder him.

While she was preparing the injection, ... he opened his eyes -only to see the syringe spurting a white thread of liquid. His face turned horror-stricken, though Nurse Chen forced a smile and said enticingly, "Well, Professor Yang, it's time to have some"

"Help! Help! Murder! They want to poison me!" he screamed, his eyes glinting. He kicked his right leg but was unable to raise his arms. He was gasping, agape like a spent fish (H. Jin *The Crazy* 26).

Yang's hallucinations and uncontrollable ravings represent Culture Revolution Syndrome- a set of post-traumatic symptoms of mental disorder. According to psychological research that

"traumas that occur in adult life can have long-lasting psychological consequences... and the symptom of distress are sometimes delayed for months, even years, after the experience which produce them" (Thurston 6). ...[Hence], "For many of its victims, the Cultural Revolution is not yet the "thing of the past" the government sometimes insists. Given the delay between the experience itself and the manifestation of its wound, the ghost of that episode may still return to haunt its victims" (Thurston 7).

The torture inflicted on Yang, although it occurred a decade ago, is still fresh in his memory and has strong relevance to the state of madness. When mad, Yang occasionally hallucinates himself as one of his torturers - the Red Guards. He

parodies the Red Guards by hitting on revolutionary songs, which Yang “would not have been entitled to sing” in the Cultural Revolution as a Demon-Monster. As the Red Guards did, he expresses deep feelings and loyalty for Chairman Mao by chanting Mao’s slogans, which he had never done when he was in right mind.

Yang is not alone in receiving torture in that chaotic period. There was another mad character named Little Owe who used to be a lecturer in chemistry and went through similar misfortunes.

“In the late 1950s he was branded a rightist, arrested, and sent away to a prison camp near Siberia. ... unable to endure the torture and hard labor, had committed suicide, he started to feign madness. ...But somehow this faked insanity had grown into his nature -when he was finally released, he could no longer control himself and had to continue to rave and curse every day, suffering from "mental incontinence," as some people put it.

Much as Yang did, Little Owl played Red Guards, shouting Mao's slogans, singing Mao's songs. Ravings and schizophrenic symptoms on the part of Yang and Little Owl represent an uncanny return of the past. The symptoms remind the people around of the agonizing past, which is truly a time of madness.⁴⁵ It is not the issue to clarify the psychological mechanism behind the symptoms. But in

⁴⁵ According to official estimates, in that chaotic upheaval, the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976, "upwards of 36 million people in the countryside were persecuted while about 750,000 to 1.5 million were killed and an equal number permanently injured. The number of casualties in the nation's cities is less certain, but could total in the hundreds of thousands. In Beijing, more than 1,770 were murdered in only two months in 1956, according to official reports, and one million were persecuted in Shanghai, with at least 5,000 killed in 1968 alone." Philip P. Pan, Out of Mao's Shadow : The Struggle for the Soul of a New China, 1st Simon & Schuster hardcover ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008) 84.

terms of narratology, Ha Jin seemed to intend to reveal the madness of the time through describing the madness of the characters. Intertextually, madness is a dominant theme of Chinese literature in the 1980s. Wang Ban points out that writing in the 1980s shows “a strong interest in madness and insanity; incessant probing of the taboo areas of Chinese culture; penetration into the schizophrenic psyche and the nocturnal world of dreams”(233).

As Belinda Kong remarks, Professor Yang is “the novel's chief allegorical figure for China itself,” and his “constantly bubbling over with repressed memories of and unfulfilled desires from the Culture Revolution” represents the uncanny return to the national past (Kong 148). Yang's eruptions were especially subversive, given there was an authority-encouraged “tendency of Chinese to forget their traumatic and shameful past” in post-Mao era, which is Fang “Chinese amnesia” in Fang Lizhi's term (Wang 242). This amnesia is well evidenced when his colleagues show no compassion for Yang's symptoms, treating his insanity as an embarrassing joke. They would rather attribute Yang's collapse to his overwork, overpressure and threat and blackmail from the malicious Secretary Peng than to the upheaval. “This absentminded apathy toward and cavalier dismissal of the national past pervades his generation”(Kong 148). To be fair, the Party has encouraged this mindset, and in fact “has been remarkably effective at suppressing discussion of what happened” in an effort to rescue the image of the Party (Pan 83). The Cultural Revolution represents the worst catastrophe caused by the dictatorship, and thus to forget the upheaval means to forget how destructive the dictatorship was. Consequently, Chinese

common people have become the “accomplices in the act of forgetting”(Pan 83). Kong establishes a direct link of the act of forgetting to the Tiananmen Incident, claiming, “As Jin repeatedly underscores in the novel, Tiananmen may be understood as a direct consequence of the willful forgetting of the Cultural Revolution in the post-Mao era. ...The thematic suggestion is that China's failure of historical retrospection leads directly to the final rupture of Yang's brain clot- which coincides, predictably, with the explosion of violence on that external clotting of Beijing's streets around Tiananmen Square” (Kong 148).

c. Autonomy and Masculinity Crisis

As introduced earlier, the novel is set in a time when humanism returned as a radical negation of the CCP's ideology and the mark to challenge the Party's tight ideological control. As Kang Liu claims, “Following the resurgence of the humanist May Fourth (1919) tradition in literature and the arts in the wake of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and the subsequent debates in philosophical and economical circles about modernization, the concept of subjectivity has gained a centrality in recent debates about culture in China, starting in the mid-1980s” (K. Liu 114). Chinese intellectuals' subjectivity was on the rise, which resulted in a strong desire in them to have autonomy from political determination. It is the desire and their struggle for independence that caused their anxiety, especially when they found their hope was slim. In the novel, Yang uses various phrases to speak figuratively of the fact that contemporary intellectuals are lack of autonomy and independence and reduced only to a group sacrificing one's souls for patronage of the political authority. The intellectuals (including himself),

are described by Yang as “dumb laborers kept by the state –a retrograde species”(153), “automatons without a soul”(154), “meat on a chopping board”(154), and “a screw in the machine of the revolution” (220). The words “species,” “automatons,” “meat,” and “screw” all point to the dehumanized existential condition of intellectuals under the CCP’s rule. Among these phrases, I would like to single out the “screw” metaphor, which was a key phrase of the CCP’s propaganda in Mao’s era. The “screw” metaphor had the symbolic implication of steel and selflessness, a self without a soul. The metaphor represents the effort of CCP to engineer Chinese souls into those devotedly serving the Party’s will. Wang observes: “This engineering is achieved through the violent expulsion of the dispersing instinctual impulses and drives of the unruly body. The subject forged in this way is ready to say a sublime and resounding “yes” to everything that says “no” to the individual and flesh-and-blood body” (258-59). Regarding this concept, Xuping Zhong claims that “the ideology of [little screw] ... foreshadowed an eventual fall into meaninglessness to Chinese in the post-Mao era (45-6). With the end of Mao’s era and negation to the ideology, the ‘little screw’ was revealed as an untenable inflated ideal of collectivism and altruism, in Zhong’s terms, “as no more than an empty signifier,” leaving a void to fill in. This void, as the literature of the 1980s demonstrates, was occupied later by “the suffering male, who embodies both the weakened image of the Chinese (men) and the strong desire to transcend the weak position, who emerges as the new hero”(Zhong 46). Professor Yang fits in with the description. Although the torture ceased with the end of Mao’s era, Yang remained in the

marginalized position as a suffering male intellectual. However, Yang was hard at fighting his autonomy as an independent scholar and preserving his moral integrity. He hated to become meat on the chopping board. His fight and struggle was first dramatized in his defying a demand from his superior—the Party Secretary Peng as the personification of the Party authority. Yang offended Peng by refusing to write a recommendation letter for her nephew who was applying for a scholarship from an American university, Peng began to give him a hard time, threatening to ruin his name by exposing Yang's affair with Weiya (a lecturer from the same department), and pestering him to return the eighteen hundred dollars which Yang spent allegedly inappropriately on an Academic trip to Canada. It was an astronomic figure for Professor Yang, given his salary was only thirty dollars per month. By contrast, as the narrator says, the leaders of the university who visited overseas places never bothered about the expense. The threat from Peng gave a great deal of pressure to Yang and contributed to his collapse. Yang would not have had the troubles, if he had knuckled under the Party official Peng. Peng demanded the favor of Yang because she held the belief that one could exercise one's political power to override codes or regulations. In this sense, Yang's gesture of defiance represents his intention to assert academic autonomy from political influence. Thus, he denounced Peng's mindset, saying

What a silly demand! "You don't understand," Mr. Yang resumed impatiently. "Things are done differently in Canadian colleges, where every applicant has to compete with others on an equal footing." How

ridiculous Ying Peng was. She seemed unable to see that in Canadian and American schools scholarships were not something that could be procured only by pulling strings... A dumb official, Secretary Peng didn't have any inkling of the admission process (H. Jin *The Crazy* 216).

Yang's defiance of Peng's demands represents his effort to preserve the independence of the academic rules, which should transcend any political influence. His dispute with his fellow professor Song over an academic question, which gradually developed into animosity against each other, is another example of Yang's struggle for academic autonomy. But this time, Yang insists an academic view transcend patriotism. As narrated, Mr. Yang and Professor Song (the chairman of the Literature Department) had animosity one another, which culminated in a row over the birthplace of the great poet Li Po a year ago. In his paper on Li Po, Song claimed that poet was born in today's Kazakhstan. Yang thought Song was "pseudo-scholarship," because Yang considered his so called "finding" not as truth but as a patriotism-motivated view, intending to aggrandize China as a powerful country with a vaster territory in the past. As the editor of *Studies in Classic Literature*, Yang prevented Song's paper from being published on the journal when Song refused to abandon his assertion as Yang asked. As a result, Professor Song retaliated Yang by criticizing Yang publicly whenever possible and prevented Yang from being granted full professorship. Bedridden, Yang sneered, "Let me tell you, I shall never knuckle under to you"(H. Jin *The Crazy* 51). The narrator Jian says he isn't sure to whom the "you" in Yang's words refer, Secretary Peng or Professor Song. In my opinion, the interpretation

is possible that “you” should refer to both of them, and by extension, to any schemer that attempted to deprive him of scholarly autonomy.

d. Yang’s Self-Contradictory Attitudes Towards Politics

On some occasions, Yang expressed his detached and even hostile attitude to contemporary politics. For him, politics is ugly and filthy. In fact, his uneasy relationship with Secretary Peng and Professor Song is partly attributed to his hostility towards party functionaries and what he calls pseudo-scholars who are interested in officialdom, not academic works and who do not seek truth but to serve the Party’s interest. As the narrator Jian recalls:

Many times he told me to be detached and disinterested, which he believed was the only proper way of pursuing scholarship. He would say, “I’d talk of poetics only with those who have an unpolluted mind.” How often he expressed to me his contempt for some pseudo-intellectuals, whose sole ambition was to enter officialdom and whose main function was to write editorials for the Party’s publications, to prepare speeches for their superiors, and to attack the people the authorities disliked (H. Jin *The Crazy* 104).

His remarks of keeping himself distant from politics, which he made before his collapse, are in direct contradiction to his utterance in delirium. One time, Yang shouts, “They ought to have appointed me the general director of the flood relief work. I’m more capable than any of those bureaucrats, who are just rice bags and wineskins”... “I’m a born official” (101). As the narrator says, “Empleomania was commonplace among the intellectuals” (103), and Yang “must have been

obsessed with the traditional ideal—the union of the official life and the scholarly life”(125). To explain this seemingly contradictory attitude towards politics on the part of Yang, we might need to start with traditional intellectual discourse shaped by Confucianism. Traditionally, to enter officialdom is the common goal for Junzi (the identity that Confucianism promotes “as an attainable ideal”) and the mark of ideal *wen* masculinity (Yao 25). The course of life set for Junzi is divided into four stages, departing from self-cultivation, through regulating the family, governing the state, and ultimately to bringing peace to the world. This implies that “political service should be a natural outgrowth of personal morality” (Tu *Way, Learning, and Politics : Essays on the Confucian Intellectual* 25). Thus officialdom pursuit is desirable for Junzi. Although to officialdom has been the desirable pursuit of intellectuals, retreat from civil service represents a typical response of Chinese intellectuals to an adverse situation where they find themselves frustrated, discontented with contemporary politics and society and difficult to enter officialdom as a result of being out of ruler’s favor. Thus, Chinese intellectuals have split personality and have traditionally maintained “dualistic outlook” on life and politics, which is service versus retreat (Chi 235). As Chi continues, “What paths was the Chinese intellectual free to follow? Not farming, nor business, nor any of the crafts. Two courses were open to him: civil service and retirement” (243). Reclusion of Chinese intellectuals has taken different forms in Chinese history.⁴⁶ One type of reclusion is to retreat into one’s inner world, when one is

⁴⁶ As Chi summarizes, recluse takes different forms from quietly living and angling on mountain-tops to living in the mundane world as a spiritual recluse. Quoted in Chi’s article, the T’ang poet, Po Chiu-i, wrote a poem in which the poet mentioned three types of retreat (yin), which are 1) the great yin at court or in the city 2) the small yin inside a hillside plot, and 3) the middle yin (something between the great and the small yin)

more self-conscious in their nonconformity, more concerned with showing the world what he is doing, while still cherishing the ideal of purity.

Due to the widespread disillusionment of Mao's ideology, the detached attitude towards politics is common among Chinese, especially among the marginalized Chinese intellectuals in post-Mao era. The father of the narrator Jian is another example, as Jian says,

My parents had always urged me to steer clear of politics. My father had once been an editor in Tianjin City, in charge of a column on women's issues. Because he publicly criticized the Party secretary at his newspaper, he had been branded a rightist and banished to Fujin, a frontier town in Heilongjiang Province, where he worked on a tree farm for over thirty years (H. Jin *The Crazy* 55).

In Yang's case, he retreats into one's inner world, which is one type of multiple recluses on the part of Chinese intellectuals in history. Yang's reclusion finds its expression in his aloofness, coolness, and sarcastic and detached attitude toward politics. As Louie aptly summarized, "since 1949, it has often been difficult for scholars to directly compete for supremacy in the bureaucracy or government. Accordingly, many have taken the 'flight' option "(Louie 74). By 'flight' option, Louie means to retreat into one's inner world.

The philosophical origins of the concept and the practice of 'recluse' in Chinese culture is so a broad and complicated issue that it deserves a separate detailed discussion. Here it suffices to claim that recluse practice has mainly rooted in Daoism and Buddhism, both of which have emphasis on these

concepts such as nature, purity, spiritual freedom, and desire-free lifestyle. Influenced by these philosophical concepts, there has been a tendency among Chinese intellectuals to seclude them from human society to nature in order to seek physical and spiritual purity. As Li Chi remarks:

The development and spread of Taoist philosophy and later of Buddhist thought enriched the concept of reclusion and at the same time introduced an element of conflict into the life of the Chinese intellectual, who thereafter came to be governed by a strong sense of two worlds, the moral world ruled by Confucian dictates and the infinite, free world of nature. The ethical emphasis of the Confucian school failed in the end to satisfy the full demands of the mind, and many an intellectual, ... cried out in agony at the loneliness of the soul surrounded and secured by social relationships, tried to free themselves from the bondage of the moral world and sought to realize a full life in the alternative of Taoist and Buddhist metaphysics (246).

On the other hand, we detect his desire to pursue officialdom, which might be better illustrated in the poems he recited in delirium. As a professor in Chinese poetry, it is natural for Yang to retreat into this form of art, to say nothing of the fact that Chinese poems feature with such themes as nature and recluse.⁴⁷ Here is one of the poems that Yang recited,

Serrate walls about the imperial land.

In smoky wind we watch the ferry crossings.

⁴⁷ Li Chi establishes a link between Chinese literature and the dualistic outlook on life of service versus retirement, on which Li observes, "In literature, we may say that the one [service] represents the soul of Chinese prose and the other [retirement] the soul of Chinese poetry". Accordingly, "nature is one of its dominant and most enduring themes" Li Chi, "The Changing Concept of the Recluse in Chinese Literature " Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 24 (1962-63): 247.

This parting, my friend, strings us
Together despite our separate roads,
You may reach any end of the earth,
Yet I shall keep you close like a neighbor.
Please don't stand at this fork
Wetting your handkerchief with our children.

Anyone familiar with Chinese poems knows this poem by Wang Bo, one of the four eminent poets in the early Tang Dynasty. As a child genius, Wang Bo was presented to the emperor, whereupon he was taken into the service of a prince. Unfortunately, at the age of eighteen, he offended the emperor by writing a spoof about cockfighting popular among royalty members. As a result, he was expelled from the court. Wang Bo began to travel widely before he again took an official position. This poem is about the moment the two friends part and set off on separate roads to their new governmental positions. In the tradition of classical Chinese poetry, the typical emotive tenor of parting occasion is the mixed feeling of loneliness, loss, and melancholy. However, this poem is an exception. Although the last two lines "Please don't stand at this fork/Wetting your handkerchief with our children" imply the tears and sorrows in the occasion, the poem's main tenor is masculine. The imperative "Please don't..." severs the tread of sorrow forcefully. Tears have to be held back for they call into question the firmness of manhood. In addition, rather than being concerned about any objects symbolic of personal emotions, the poem alludes to Serrate walls, the imperial land, the end of earth, which all demonstrate the author's lofty concerns of the

state. Indeed, Confucianism distinguishes two types of concerns. One is petty concern, which is about one's everyday life and personal emotions. The other is lofty concern, which is about the state affairs. Junzi (a noble man) should have the latter one.⁴⁸ Lofty concerns are the mark of Chinese *wen* masculinity. This poem mobilizes, channels, and sublimates the sorrow and delicately cherished friendship into the broader and higher goal of the culture - to serve the country. Reciting this poem, Yang subjected himself to a psychological progress of sublimation – a process of transformation from a lower to a higher, purer state of existence in effort to reconstruct his masculinity in crisis.

Yang's using poems to sublimate his feelings is more noticeable in a Tu Fu's poem that he recited.⁴⁹ This poem starts with wretchedness of the poet's life as the result of the autumn wind blowing away his home's roof. Across the brook flies the roof straw, which is then robbed away by the children around. The poet

⁴⁸ "The Master said, It is wrong for a gentleman to have knowledge of menial matters and proper that he should be entrusted with great responsibilities. It is wrong for a small man to be entrusted with great responsibilities, but proper that he should have a knowledge of menial matters " 15:33 Confucius and Arthur Waley, The Analects of Confucius (New York: Vintage Books, 1938).

⁴⁹ Here is the whole poem of a translated version from Ha Jin, The Crazy, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002) 130-32.

In late August the autumn wind bowls / Peeling my roof of three-layered straw.
 The straw flies across the brook, / Hanging on the top of the woods
 And tumbling into gullies and ponds. / The children from South Village
 Bully me for my old age / Daring to be thieves before my eyes:
 They take away my straw and vanish into the bamboo grove. /
 Lips cracked and tongue dried I can no longer cry.
 And coming back, I keep sighing over my cane. / Then the wind subsides, murky clouds
 Thickening while the sky runs misty and dark. / Our quilts, ragged for years,
 And hard as iron. / Full of cracks
 They can't keep my kids warm in their sleep. / Again I fear that rain will fall in
 Through the leaky roof, swaying like / Endless hempen threads and soaking our beds.

Ever since the war I've seldom slept. / If only I had ten thousand mansions
 To shelter all poor scholars on earth / And brighten their faces with smiles.
 Look, the mansions stand like mountains / Unshakable in wind and rain!
 Ah, once before my eyes arise such mansions, / I shall be happy, even though my own but
 Falls apart and I freeze to death! / Before I die, my aspiration
 Is not yet realized – / Tears often wet the front Of this hero's robe.

is too old to prevent them from stealing. What worries him more is threatening rain that will soak the beds of his children. Nonetheless, the poet transcends his personal suffering at the critical moment, when his thought goes beyond to “all poor scholars on earth”, whom “If only I had ten thousand mansions/” to shelter. Unfortunately, “Before I die, my aspiration / Is not yet realized -- Tears often wet the front Of this hero’s robe”. The poet is transformed from a poor, aged petty person into a scholar with determination to dedicate himself to grand and noble causes. Such an ambition is the mark of ideal Chinese masculinity, as mentioned earlier. In this context, even tears are not superfluous, useless, and aimless as mere emotional discharge, but serviceable to his worthy goals which symbolize sublimity.

e. Narrator—Anxiety and New Identity Search

The I-narrator is Jian who is Yang's soon-to-be-son-in-law. He was a good student, and enjoyed his studies. When Yang suffered a stroke, Jian was preparing an exam that would determine whether he would go on to a PhD program at a university in Beijing. If successful, he would be able to be united with his fiancée Meimei who studied medicine there. However, Yang's collapse unexpectedly causes Jian to question the road he is taking. In one sense, this is a coming-of-age novel about how the narrator transforms from a boy to a man, from a caizi (a literary man) to junzi (a noble man). It is his own identity crisis triggered by his understanding of Yang's suffering that set this process of self-transformation in motion. Such a kind of transformative narrator seems to be a pattern in Ha Jin's novels. As Yupeng Zhou writes of Jin's narrator's features,

“The narrator’s knowledge of adult life is often limited. But such limited knowledge usually stems from the narrator’s innocence rather than his/her being a child. The limitation makes the narrator’s observation a journey of discovery. The moment the narrator obtains the truth is when the narrator becomes disillusioned and loses innocence”(156).

As the book opens, the narrator was an innocent, sensitive and obedient student. The narrator’s naïve and innocence is self-evident in the commentary given by other characters about the narrator. As Weiya chides the narrator, “You’re a bit too emotional, perhaps because you’re not experienced in life yet. Meimei’s lucky to have a man like you who hasn’t lost his innocence” (H. Jin *The Crazy* 119). The narrator’s innocence is also signified in his lack of knowledge of inside stories behind Yang’s physical and mental collapse. In contrast, his fellow student Banping and junior lecturer Weiya were well informed about emotional and political entanglements in which Yang were trapped. It was not until later when the narrator intended to untangle the ravings of the bed-ridden Yang that the narrator learned those stories from his fellow students. When he learned the stories, he lost his innocence, starting to reflect on his road to a scholarly career. Like traditional *caizi* he is gifted in literary studies, being sensitive, emotional and often trapped in woman’s temptation. As his fellow student Banping teased the narrator. “You have a broad romantic streak and tend to take a woman to be a goddess. You’re so impressionable that anyone who dangles a skirt looks pretty to you”(H. Jin *The Crazy* 161). In emotion, he was heavily attached a great deal to his fiancée Meimei far away in Beijing, seemingly more than Meimei was to

him. It is this attachment that gave him impetus in his preparing for the exams because the success in the exams would finally enable him to unite with Meimei in Beijing. This effort is reminiscent of traditional caizi's life, which revolved around exams and women. When Yang collapsed, Jian was soon to take the exams. At first, the narrator was a bit upset with the care-giving task because he was distracted from his preparation for the exams. Like most other characters, the narrator discounts his teacher as insane, unwilling to listen to ravings that make his entire life seem like a lie. However, as Yang's rants moved on, the narrator was gradually attracted to them and came to understand a truly wretched picture of intellectual life in China under the yoke of the Communist Party. Yang's bitterness and despair caused the narrator to question the road he is taking to a scholar career. He began to feel emptiness when looking down the road before him. Just while he was struggling about whether to forego his entrance exams to the Ph.D. program or not, he was assigned another task by the school, which set him off on a revealing trip to a rural village. On this trip, the narrator saw various scenes that bespeak backwardness and poverty of the countryside. The scenes awakened the narrator's sense of social responsibility, his concerns about dark sides of the society such as social inequalities, corruption etc. The awakening of his sense of responsibility seemed to increase his determination to give up a prospective scholar life, thanks to Yang's ravings which told him that he could not fulfill such lofty obligations as bringing justice to society as a scholar in an ivory tower. In China, scholars were nothing but lightweight clerks. Only officialdom can take him in power to bring changes to the

society. He eventually made the decision to give up the exams for the Ph.D program in favor of a “useful” official life. His decision enraged his fiancée Meimei who broke off their engagement in disgust. In explaining to Meimei why he made the decision, the narrator says,

“I just want to live a useful life...Not to be a piece of meat on the chopping board for others to cut. No, let me put it this way: I want to take my fate in my own hands, and when I die, I want to end with the feeling of content and fulfillment. In other words, I don't want to feel that my life should have been used otherwise” (H. Jin *The Crazy* 277).

This sort of manifesto, which marks the maturity of the narrator, is an epitome of existentialism. Early on in the novel, he had lived in a passive life. He studied well, but he had done it in submission to his ambitious girlfriend and to fulfill his professor's hopes and aspirations for him. Now the narrator came to be aware that such a scholar life is by no means of his will. By emphatically pointing out he wanted to live a useful life, he meant a life over which he had control, a life of his own choice, a life that had existential meaning. In the meantime, the narrator went beyond his single-minded pursuit of a comfortable life with Meimei to concerns of social justice, inequalities and plagues. Such lofty concerns were the hallmark of the committed *junzi* (Confucian noble men). The fact that the narrator finally summoned enough courage to break up with Meimei in favor of an active life dominated with lofty concern reminds us of the ideal traditional masculinity which prioritizes one's lofty causes over romance. The narrator then made up his mind to apply for a position in the Policy Office at the Provincial Administration, in

an attempt to be someone that has the power to distribute resources and funds, to cut down a few corrupt officials. However, things did not turn out to be the way as expected. The narrator was brought to overwhelming disappointment when Party Secretary Peng told him he was not qualified for the application of the official position because he was not a Party member. The position was expected to deal with classified documents which only Party members were eligible for application. But it was too late for him to return to the exams, the Party secretary had canceled his candidacy for the PhD entrance exams. The story reaches the climax when the narrator joined the student demonstration incident of 1989 in Beijing. In the protest, he witnessed the manslaughters among other brutal scenes. The cruelty brought the narrator into despair of his motherland, when he "saw China in the form of an old hag so decrepit and brainsick that she would devour her children to sustain herself " (H. Jin *The Crazy* 315). His despair coincided with the police decision to arrest him as a counterrevolutionary because Secretary Peng turned him in to the police. Eventually, the narrator was left with no option but cut all ties and make an attempt to flee China.

Clearly, the narrator had been willing to be at the service for China, which he had seen as a duty. However, China's politics made the ambition of the narrator impossible. The political system shunned away those with social conscience, sense of duty and morality (i.e. the professor and the narrator), while absorbing the so-called party members, i.e. Banpin, of whom I will speak in details shortly, who single-mindedly pursuing personal gains by abusing power. The narrator is the representative of the overseas intellectuals on exile. Through describing the

narrator's experience and fate, Ha Jin attempts to point out that such intellectuals as the narrator are patriotic and the situation is that they are denied the chance to serve his homeland because of the political system. He seems to justify a man's choice of leaving his homeland, providing a criticism on the traditional view that to leave one's home country is a form of betrayal and thus immoral. With regards to this issue, we need to refer to another book of his *The Migrant as Writer (Migrant)*, in which his intention to justify this form of betrayal cannot be clearer. As mentioned in Chapter One, loyalty, at the core of Chinese ideal masculinity, is a moral code out of which rises the expectation for a man to serve one's emperor or nation both in traditional and contemporary China. In *Migrant*, Ha Jin writes, "people of my generation from main- land China had been indoctrinated to believe that there was a unstated contract between yourself and your country. As a citizen, you were supposed to serve your country" (H. Jin *The Writer as Migrant* 26). Picking up the topic again later in the book, Ha Jin refutes by saying that "[h]istorically, it has always been the individual who is accused of betraying his country. Why shouldn't we turn the tables by accusing a country of betraying the individual?" This remark can be applicable to the case of the narrator when we come to the conclusion that it is the nation, which betrays him by various forms of political exclusion and oppression (H. Jin *The Writer as Migrant* 31). In the book *Migrant*, Ha Jin relates his experience to this issue, when he justifies his adoption of English in writing – "the ultimate betrayal" for a migrant writer (H. Jin *The Writer as Migrant* 31). In doing so, he remarks such a step is something the writer is forced to take in order to survive in the market

where the adopted language is spoken, when he finds his home country does not allow him “to write with honesty and artistic integrity” in his mother tongue. Apparently, a writer’s “honesty and artistic integrity” implies the writer’s independence, and by extension, his subjectivity (H. Jin *The Writer as Migrant* 32). In insisting that a writer can ‘betray’ his mother tongue and his motherland in order to write with honesty and integrity, Ha Jin places a writer’s independence over, while not negating, a man’s loyalty to his country prescribed by the culture. Looking back to the novel *The Crazyed*, we may sense the narrator’s celebratory tone in the novel’s ending words—“and from now on I would use a different name” (H. Jin *The Crazyed* 323). The name symbolizes a complete independence and a new identity that has nothing to do with the whole system that has given him such disturbing non-choices.

f. Banping—Antithesis of Narrator

As a fellow student of the narrator, Banping is the former’s anti-thesis. As the narrator states explicitly “he and I by nature were different kinds of people: I was too sensitive, too introverted, and maybe too idealistic, whereas he was a paragon of peasant cunning and pragmatism”(H. Jin *The Crazyed* 163). Banping is described as “a phoenix hatched in a chicken coop indeed”. This phrase, in Chinese context, refers to a person, born and reared in a humble peasant family, moves and thrives later in a city. Indeed, Banping was born in a peasant family, so poor that “[H]is whole family had only one jacket. Whoever was going out put it on”(H. Jin *The Crazyed* 242). Because of this family background, Banping craved material comfort, embracing hedonistic, pragmatic attitudes towards life,

being determined to “suck all the juice out of this life” (H. Jin *The Crazy* 162). He studied his way towards university education. However, Banping was not gifted in a literary studies. He was admitted by the graduate program mainly because of his good memory which contributed to his good performance in exams of classics and politics. Banping is not keen on politics, but he is well aware of the importance of political power and career for a man. “Once you have power, you’ll have more comfort and pleasure” (H. Jin *The Crazy* 162). He made application for the Party membership not out of faith but for power. The Party membership grants him exclusive privilege in landing the position of a junior clerk in the Provincial Commerce Department. The position is lucrative, offering him tangible rewards of status and power, better housing etc. For him, “A real man should put his career before his woman”(H. Jin *The Crazy* 160), justifying this view with his male-chauvinist perception of women as a kid-raiser, who needs a financially powerful man to depend on. As a student of Professor Yang, Banping, though, did not validate Yang’s life outlooks as a scholar. Yang’s collapse and eventual death affirmed his belief that scholars’ life is hard and wretched, who “have too much to accomplish and too little to live on”, and never have control over their own fate (H. Jin *The Crazy* 34). Banping did not show much sympathy on Yang's collapse, as is indicated by his not being dedicated to the job of looking after Yang as much as he should be. It is no wonder that “I [the narrator] was sure that Banping didn't even bother about our teacher's face. Usually he would just sit in the room reading a book or stand in the corridor chatting with a nurse or a patient”(H. Jin *The Crazy* 59).

In the character of Banping, the traits of traditional *wen* masculinity is seen in that he worked his way towards a government position. His view that a real man should put his career before woman is consistent with the traditional view that a real man should resist temptation from women for his lofty task. Nonetheless, Banping was not *Junzi* in Confucian terms because he was not inspired and motivated by such lofty, altruistic goals as to rejuvenate the nation. Everything he did, he did it for his personal materialistic gains. The narrator Jian says “he was a paragon of peasant cunning and pragmatism” (H. Jin *The Crazy* 163). To some extent, his pragmatism reflects the triumph of economic pragmatism in a broader context promoted by Deng Xiaoping leadership. The Deng’s pragmatism is epitomized by his ‘mouse theory’ that no matter of what color it is, the cat that is able to catch a mouse is a good cat. With Deng’s pragmatism that has its emphasis on economic development comes mass consumption which became an important part of the political agenda underlying the government promotion of economic reforms.⁵⁰ As a result, the hedonistic outlook on life that Banping represented became widespread. With the rise of hedonism and consumerism, economic pragmatism changed the perception of Chinese men. One’s ability to make money and become wealthy became a primary measure by which a man was evaluated. As the wave of consumerism is quickly pushing the intellectual elite to the periphery of social life, traditional literary *wen* quality gave way to the wisdom involved in accumulating material wealth as a signifier of an ideal masculinity. This echoes Louie’s observation that *wen* changed in meaning in the

50 There were two waves of mass consumption in the 1980s. The first one was from 1982 to 1984. The second was from 1985 to 1989. See Tyrene White and Asia Society., China Briefing 2000 : The Continuing Transformation (Armonk, N.Y. ; London: M.E. Sharpe, 2000) 165.

1980s from literary power to business wisdom, which is the result of exposure to Western economic effluence. The social change in expectation for men is manifested in people's attitude towards the job offer the narrator Jian received from a Hong Kong trade company. The job would earn him at least ten times more than a regular college graduate could do in Mainland China. Jian's friends and many faculty members from the literature department advised him to accept the offer, as they justified, "Don't just have a one-track mind, Jian. Whatever we do, teaching or writing, in essence we all struggle to make a living. That job pays so well that you'll become a millionaire eventually" (H. Jin *The Crazy* 65). Nonetheless, the change in *wen*'s connotation does not mean the total loss of luster of literary power. Although the direct and definite connection between *wen* masculinity and political power had been severed, *wen* still conferred prestige. Possessing *wen* qualities continued to be a merit that could make a man more marketable in the marital market. *Wen* still provides one with possibility of upward mobility in terms of finance and social status. Banping's personal experience is one example. As he recalled, before went to college, no girls in his hometown would cast a glimpse on him. But after he became a college student, he received a dozen love letters in a year from some of girls at his hometown. In the contemporary Chinese society, it is fair to say how much luster traditional *wen* qualities remain depends on how much likely such qualities are to lead one to wealth and power. In the context of economic pragmatism, one's literary competence, which may still lead one to the power leading one to social and financial power material comfort, still appears attractive. "Young women who

were interested in Yuman Tan might have been impressed by his lectureship and writing, just as conventionally a man's learning amounted almost to a virtue, a virtue that would lead to a respectable position and yield more income" (H. Jin *The Crazy* 119). In contemporary China, *wen* quality cannot guarantee a ready access to power as it did in traditional China. However, it still grants prestige as it implies a good self-cultivation.

On the surface, Banping seemed to be a male character without masculinity crisis. It is not because Banping is a real man, but because he feels comfortable with his emasculated state. It is symbolized in his justifying why he wants to work as a junior clerk in a government position. His becoming a Party member and entering officialdom represent his submission to the authority. He is content with sacrifice autonomy for his personal comfort and gains. He has been in the feminized position where he feels comfortable. Masculinity anxieties on the part of Professor Yang and the narrator are caused by their strong desires to be identified with the masculine ideal. In this sense, their desires themselves are masculine. In contrast, Banping has no such masculine desires. He has willingly turned himself into an effeminate subject and thus no desire to claim his masculinity or challenge the authority of his ruler. In the novel, Banping's feminine condition is also symbolized in his narrow-mindedness, selfishness, cunningness and pragmatism. These traits are reminiscent of 'small person' in Confucian terms, which is equal with women in the Confucian symbolic world. By emphasizing that he had no endowment in literature, the narrator negates his *wen* attributes, and excludes him from *wen* masculinity.

h. Women's Image in Masculinity Crisis

In terms of man-woman relationship, a general pattern figures in the novel that female characters are on many occasions in power and authority while the male characters involved are dominated. Men do not enjoy successful relationship with women, which end up with men being jilted. The marriage of Yuman Tan (the subordinate of Secretary Peng) was an example of failure. Indeed, it was his wife who ran out on him, marrying an American professor with whom she later immigrated to the U.S. As the novel describes, the divorce left him weep for a week at night. At the school, he was a loyal and devoted subordinate of the manipulative female Party Secretary Peng. As a symbol of the Party's power, the Party Secretary Peng is a pronounced example. "She was a macho woman with a Mongolian face, which would remain stern on such an occasion... she looked down on women who wore skirts. Even on broiling summer days she would dress in baggy pants and a long-sleeved shirt. Sometimes she put on an army uniform that had lost its green" (H. Jin *The Crazy* 108). "Like a man, she drank black tea and smoked cheap cigarettes" (H. Jin *The Crazy* 2). Peng has power and strong will to dominate, as she is determined to try every scheme to force people to give themselves into her commands. For example, when Professor Yang declines to do her a favor by writing a recommendation letter for her nephew, she began to carry out a series of retaliation. As mentioned earlier, Peng began to pester him to return the money which Yang spent in an allegedly inappropriate way on an academic trip to Canada. She also threatened to ruin his name by exposing Yang's affair with

Weiya (a lecturer from the same department). In the meantime, she coerces Weiya into dating her ghostwriter and subordinate Yuman Tan in attempt to completely take away Weiya from Yang. Weiya does not dare to defy her power, with which Peng could kick her out of the department and banish her to a remote area if she chooses. In order to retaliate Yang, she also began to mastermind to separate Yang's daughter Meimei from the narrator. She knows that the son of the vice president of the university loves and wants to marry Meimei. To help the president's son date Meimei successfully is of course to please the vice-president, which in return is rewarding her with benefits in promotion. In doing so, the first step is to split Meimei from Jian. She is aware that Jian focuses on the Ph.D. entrance exams for the classical literature program at Beijing University and he hopes to enroll there so as to join his fiancée in the capital, where they plan to build their nest. To spoil his preparation, she attempts to disrupt his work by sending him off to a remote village on errand for a month.

Problematic gender relationship is also represented by men's submissiveness and women's disappointment and discontent with men. The relationship between the narrator and Meimei is another case in point. When Meimei came back from Beijing to visit her already hospitalized father, she fumed about the way Jian took care of the personal hygiene of Professor Yang, thinking that Jian did not deal with the job with enough dedication. Meimei's anger was caused by Jian's failure to carry out his filial piety as a "son." In Chinese culture, Professor Yang is equivalent to Jian's father in two senses. First, Yang is Jian's mentor in the post-graduate program. A Chinese saying goes, "Once a teacher, always a father."

More important, Yang is also Jian's soon-to-be father-in-law. A man of filial piety is supposed to do his utmost in giving care to his parents in a sickbed. Jian himself validates the value, thus he felt guilty and listened like a small boy "without talking back," "felt ashamed and remained tongue-tied" for not fulfilling his moral duty"(H. Jin *The Crazyed* 61). Meimei also criticizes him for his smoking habits,

Your breath makes me sick. How many times did I tell you to quit smoking? Why did you take my words as just a puff of meaningless breath? Look, even your fingers are yellow now. Why can't you keep your promise? You know tobacco will blacken your lungs and give you tracheitis, but you just smoke to show how cool you are. (H. Jin *The Crazyed* 61)

When scolding Jian, Meimei seems to assume a mother-like voice. Her reproach "Why did you take my words as just a puff of meaningless breath?" (H. Jin *The Crazyed* 61) conjures up the image of a mother disciplining her own child. What Meimei reproaches Jian is for his failure to keep his promise, and by implication, his failure to exercise self-control over himself. As mentioned early, such failures are supposed to be the mark of lack of masculinity in Chinese traditional gender discourse. Meimei's discontent with Jian anticipates the end of the relationship. Overall, Meimei was in the dominant position, where she had control over their romance and physical intimacy. Sexual intimacy is a privilege for the narrator Jian. Meimei would refuse to grant it to Jian when she was angry with him. Knowing this, Jian did not make sexual overtures to her that night when "her temper hadn't subsided yet" for his smoking (H. Jin *The Crazyed* 62). Indeed,

Meimei had held the view that she was a better match for the narrator. As Jian realized later, Meimei “must have felt superior to me” (H. Jin *The Crazy* 213). Being confident, she did not regard the narrator as indispensable. The main female characters in the novel exhibit qualities usually attributed to males (like rationality, independence, strength, and decisiveness), while the feminine conditions of male counterparts are brought to the fore. Meimei and her fiancée Jian are in the reversed gender relationship. In Meimei’s mind, sense carried more weight than sensibility in her decision-making. “She was really tough-minded rational like a clock” (H. Jin *The Crazy* 214). When Yang was sent to hospital for stroke, Meimei did not rush back to visit her father. On the one hand she was in Beijing cramming for the exams for a medical graduate program. Although she was informed of her father’s conditions and assured by the narrator that her father would be taken good care of, the fact she did not return immediately leaves the readers with the impression that she is the girl that prioritizes her study and career and makes rational judgments rather than emotional ones. This is consistent with the narrator’s view of Meimei, as he says, “I was...convinced that by nature Meimei was a cheerful girl, even more rational than myself”(H. Jin *The Crazy* 45) . Meimei was smart and coolheaded while the narrator was hotheaded, and “too often I was ruled by impulse”(H. Jin *The Crazy* 120). Meimei is sophisticated while the narrator “I” is a bit too emotional but hasn’t lost his innocence. Above all, Meimei was not a domestic girl. This is first symbolic in her studying away from home. Her main sphere was public while Jian spent time in taking care of her father, which was a domestic job.

Clearly such a depiction reverses the gender order common in patriarchal societies. The fact that Meimei was not domestic is also evidenced in cooking. "Meimei in fact was not a good cook. She couldn't even make steamed bread" (H. Jin *The Crazy* 78).

Meimei was clear about what she was pursuing. She would never entangle herself with politics and would only focus on her study, which would lead her to permanent residence in Beijing – the city she loved. As the narrator remarks, "yet beneath her casual appearance was the fire fueled by her determination to achieve" (H. Jin *The Crazy* 94). This is in stark contrast with the narrator who was anxious, indecisive and incessantly searching for his life goal, as I examined earlier. Meimei was independent, and was not as emotionally attached to the narrator as much as girls are stereotypically to boys. When she was going to take train to Beijing, she left alone without the narrator seeing her off, not letting the narrator to buy her lunch because she would eat in the dining car as a way to pass the time on the train. She knew her own mind and "she always liked to have things her way, right or wrong". She did not rely on the narrator's care and protection, as other girls did on their men. She declined the cash gift from the narrator's mother, because she would not follow the customs, "which required the parents-in-law to present a sum of money to the prospective daughter-in-law, who in return must call them Father and Mother in front of everyone" (H. Jin *The Crazy* 138).

Overall, the main female and male characters are anti-thesis elaborated by a set of tensions: powerful vs. powerless, rational vs. emotional (mad),

independent vs. entangled, cool-headed vs. hotheaded, decisive vs. indecisive, sophisticated vs. innocent. By eluding the gender stereotypes, the female images accentuate the emasculation of contemporary males. Although the powerful female images discursively demonstrates the rising status of women, that is not the main point the writer aims to make. What Ha Jin attempts is to accentuate the emasculation of contemporary males with the female images eluding the gender stereotypes. The novel indeed reflects the contemporary people's perception of male-female relationship of the time. The perception is aptly captured in the aphorism *Yin Sheng Yang Shuai* (the *yin* waxes and the *yang* declines), which enjoyed a wide currency in the 1980s.⁵¹ This expression euphemistically describes a perceived phenomenon of "women-are-too-strong-and-men-are-too-weak" (Zhong 40). Regarding this, *Yang Shuai* is "the 'real' issue at stake"(Zhong 51). The phrase was used to express public disappointment for Chinese men, which is well manifested in the literature of the 1980s (Zhong 41). In this novel, by applying phallic attributes to the women characters and bringing problematic gender relationship to the fore, Ha Jin accentuates the feminized condition of men, which was considered not only a man's problem, but also a problem for the nation in an allegorical sense.

C. Summary

Chinese *wen* masculinity in crisis in the 1980s is multi-faceted. It can be construed as, on the part of Chinese intellectual and elites of liberal arts, 1) the

⁵¹ It first gained its currency in sports field where Chinese men had bad performance. This is especially the case when the public thought of the strong performance of women's sport of the time. Those living through the 1980s cannot forget, among others, the exhilarating the moment when Chinese Women's Volleyball Team won the Champion of the Women's Volleyball World Cup in 1981. As the frustrated sentiment extended from sports field to other domains, the phrase gained it wider currency in the society.

consequences of suffering inflicted by the political movements in Mao's regime and the effect of continuous dictatorship of the Communist regime in post-Mao's era; 2) an anxiety caused by the disillusionment of the Communist ideals and socio-political changes brought about by the economic reforms and opening-up policies; 3) manifestation of worries on China's weak positions compared to Western modernity. The sense of crisis generates, in the intellectuals and by extension in Chinese men, the masculine desires to regain social power by challenging the Communist authority, to redefine one's identity to cope with the changing world, and to yearn for the re-creation of China's national greatness. This chapter uses Ha Jin's *The Crazy* as a literary example to study how the problematic Chinese masculinity is represented. Yang is a representative of the contemporary version of traditional literati. The textual analysis shows that Confucian moral expectations for literary men continue to exist in Yang as high callings. Chinese critic Li Zehou said Confucianism continued to be the psychic state of Chinese intellectuals (qtd. in Tu *Way, Learning, and Politics : Essays on the Confucian Intellectual* 176). They still maintain unacknowledged, often unconscious continuities with the culture of the past on every level of life: behavior, attitude, belief and commitment. Fang, in her dissertation, argues that "ideal masculinity in China as defined two thousand years ago is still alive, and serves as a major paradigm of masculinity for modern Chinese intellectuals" (Fang Abstract ii). Yang's masculinity crisis is represented by his marginalized position for political and economic reasons, where he could not fulfill his ambitions and commitment that have characterized Chinese literati. His madness

is an extreme form of rebellion against his marginalized position. His rants and ravings signify “the repressed” in his mind. In fact, Yang did not really lose his mind. He faked his insanity so as to stop wearing the mask and gush out the repressed.

Unlike his professor, the narrator’s masculinity crisis unfolds when he begins to question his determination to be a scholar in China. Listening to his teachers’ ravings, it dawned to him that scholastic life in China is useless and meaningless. His fear of dying wretched as his teacher prompted him to decide to give up his scholar career. He then tried to pursue an officialdom, which would bring him power to help those under-trodden. Later he found this idea was too naïve, and in addition the possibility was ruled out for him as a non-Party member. Finally he made a desperate attempt to flee China because of his involvement in the 1989 Student Demonstration. The narrator represents the generation of Post-Mao era, who were struggling to (re)positioning themselves and (re)defining their world outlook in the fast-changing period. It is this struggling that caused their anxiety. Men’s images are related to women’s. To further reveal the masculinity crisis, the chapter studies the women’s image and man-woman relationship. It is no surprise to find that women in the novel are full of phallic traits while men are feminized in one way or another. In addition, the problematic gender relationship also figures in the novel. All these findings in the novel were consistent with contemporary perception of men and women among Chinese.

Rather than using the third-person partially omniscient narrator, the novel employs the first-person non-omniscient one to tell the story. In terms of

narratology, the use of “I” non-omniscient narrator cannot be more suitable for such a novel about a crazy professor, because it helps to create suspense for the reasons behind the professor’s collapse. As mentioned earlier, the process of revealing the reasons behind Professor Yang’s madness is parallel to that of the narrator’s becoming mature. More to the point, the first-person narrator, who himself is also an active participant in a series events of the novel, seems to undermine the author-narrator distinction, indicating that the writer shared the experiences and psychological crisis. As mentioned in multiple places earlier, the story is partly based on Ha Jin’s experience, and the psychological impact of the 1989 incident on the narrator in the novel is almost the same as that on Ha Jin himself.

CHAPTER IV

A FREE LIFE: TRANSNATIONAL CONSTRUCTION OF CHINESE MANHOOD

Revelation

...

Suddenly he found his mother's secret cookhouse

Stocked with human flesh and blood.

For the first time he tasted tears of rage

and hated the nickname she called him.

He soon left for a distant place,

where he has lived secluded.

(Jin A Free Life 633)

A. Chinese Masculinity Construction of the 1990s in a Transnational Context

In his discussion in *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha states that “the very concepts of homogenous national cultures ... are in a profound process of redefinition ... there is overwhelming evidence of a more transnational and translational sense of the hybridity of imagined communities”(5). In the literary domain, English literature is increasingly created by a remarkably transnational, multicultural group of writers exploring many concerns including the effects of migration in the era of globalization, and correspondingly, the discipline of literary studies is undergoing a transnational turn. In this academic trend, to study literary

representation and construction of Chinese masculinity in *A Free Life* by Ha Jin, an immigrant-themed novel by a migrant writer, is a timely effort.

As a Chinese immigrant novel, *A Free Life* breaks away from Ha Jin's previous works which maintain priority of Chineseness, with its subject matter being the life of a struggling but undaunted immigrant family. The novel starts with the occurrence of the 1989 Tiananmen Square Incident, which the stanzas quoted above from a poem entitled as *Revelation* created by Nan Wu allude to. In it, "Stocked with human flesh and blood" speaks to the military crackdown of Chinese authority on the movement appealing for democracy. As the stanzas "He soon left for a distant place,/ where he has lived secluded" suggests, the incident prompted the protagonist Nan Wu to decide not to return China but to struggle to settle down in the U.S. with his wife and his son where Nan had been studying. Before the Tiananmen incident, Nan had arrived in the U.S to study for the PhD in Political Science and had originally planned to return to China after he graduated. The incident made him change his mind, as he felt completely disappointed with the nation's politics. Because of quitting the PhD candidacy in Political Science, he lost his funding as the only monthly income of family. To survive and sustain his family in the new land, he switched from brains to brawn, doing odd jobs from security guard to busboy. Eventually he learned to cook and brought his family from Boston down to Georgia where he and his wife start running a Chinese restaurant. That proves to be a turning point in their immigrant life. By way of unrelenting thrift and toil, they possessed their own house with the

mortgage paid off and some saving left. Towards the end of story, Nan sold the restaurant and retreated to a menial job that would allow him to write poetry in solitude - the dream he held fast for years. He is free at last. As Ha Jin's first immigration-themed novel drawing on some autobiographical elements, *Free* might be read as a sequel of the *Crazed*, which ends with the occurrence of the incident when the protagonist makes his final attempt to flee China. If *Crazed* depicts the crisis of Chinese male identity before the Tiananmen Square Incident, *Free* unfolds the process of a Chinese male immigrant reconstructing his masculinity in the post-Tiananmen era in a transnational context.

This is what this chapter aims to do—to present how Chinese immigrant masculinity is incorporated and transformed in a transnational context. While it is important to acknowledge the usefulness of the *wen-wu* model for understanding masculinities in China, it is more intriguing to explore this question: to what extent the same model may be applied to overseas Chinese in a transnational, Western context. According to Louie, "[t]he recreation or recovery of diasporic masculinity could be possible,... if the *wen-wu* dyad is re-cast by diasporic men in a Western context" (qtd in Khoo 223). This implies that in the new context *wen-wu* could be modified by American masculinity discourses. The result must be a sort of hybridization, which is part of broader cultural hybridity or transnational subjectivity. According to Ang, diasporic identities are produced through creolisation and hybridization through both conflictive and collaborative coexistence and intermixture with other cultures (Ang 45). Sociologists have suggested that in the postcolonial world masculinity is ever changing and is

mainly a hybrid discourse (Demetriou 337). If so, diasporic masculinities must be a sort of mixture, which is produced through negotiation and renegotiation between different cultures. In the case of protagonist Nan, it might be interesting to explore what impacts American culture and values have on the construction of his masculinity as an exile or immigrant, and in what way the reconstruction process breaks away from *wen-wu* masculinity. Above all, we discuss how this trans-border formation process is symbolized in *A Free Life* if we perceive a literary text as a semiotic world. Immigrant-themed novels such as *Free* are “particularly apt to uncover the constructedness of gender and ethnicity,” because “[w]hen we cross cultural boundaries, the provisionality of previously naturalized, smoothly functioning categories becomes suddenly visible” (Wong 13).

Although Chineseness is not as much a priority as that in Ha Jin’s previous novels such as *Waiting*, there is a homeward-looking subplot parallel to this immigrant plot. In the novel, Ha Jin speaks sympathetically as much as critically of the diaspora community’s (mainly Chinese intellectuals) insularity and unrelenting obsession with China’s national politics. For example, as antitheses to the protagonist Nan, Baoyuan (an artist), Danning (a writer), and Manping Liu (a scholar in Political Economy) did not choose to remain in the U.S after the Tiananmen Incident. Although they had been democratic activists and anti-government dissidents staying in the U.S when the Incident happened, they later returned to China, making compromises with the government, remaining silent on the sensitive issues, and leaving behind the political ideals they had pursued to

focus on mundane concerns. Their transformations represent those seen in the 1990s among Chinese intellectuals as a whole. Those transformations are closely related to the ethos of China towards the end of last century.

The 1990s' China, so-called China of the post-Tiananmen era, is characterized with patriotism and commercialization. In 1990s, after suppressing the democratic movement, the Party launched efforts to promote patriotism and 'state-of-the-nation education' (guoqing jiaoyu) targeting mainly workers and the youth (Barme 212). However, the nationalist sentiment was more linked to rapid growth in economy and less result of the official propaganda of socialist ideology which had been regarded obsolete. The 1990s also saw China embark on the process of integrating itself into globalization. "The new agenda shared by both the state and popular culture is the creation of a strong 'socialist market economy,' an economy that will ultimately catch up with those of the advanced countries in the West" (Lu 30-1). The rapid growth in economic power is accompanied by the rise of consumerism and commercialization, which in turn gave rise to a new wave of nationalism as a response to global capitalism. As Geng Song observes, "One of the most important factors behind the emergence of nationalist sentiment in post-1989 China, however, has been the impact of globalization on Chinese society, filtered through the marriage between the Communist regime and global capitalism"(Song "Chinese Masculinities Revisited: Male Images in Contemporary Television Drama Serials" 413). Song discusses in details how nationalism and commercialization informs us of understanding contemporary Chinese masculinities, claiming, "Forms of masculinity are

becoming increasingly hybrid in a globalizing China and have been influenced by the nationalist quest for Chineseness and a stronger China as well as the commercialization of mass media and the dominance of consumerist values in society" (Song "Chinese Masculinities Revisited: Male Images in Contemporary Television Drama Serials" 426). Thus, another task of the chapter is to discuss in what way Chinese *wen* masculinity was transformed in this changing decade, using other characters of the Chinese intellectual in *Free* as literary evidence. To sum up, below are the three sections which focus respectively on 1) the narrative of the reconstruction of the protagonist's masculinity in a transnational context, 2) masculinity transformation in 1990s' China and 3) the protagonist's masculinity representation in love and sexuality terms.

B. Reconstruction of Overseas Chinese Masculinity

When speaking of his name, the protagonist Nan says in the novel, "My name means 'martial man.' "(Jin *A Free Life* 458). As the protagonist's name suggests, this is a story about a man. It is a "coming-of-age story," as the writer remarks, depicting how life in the U.S transforms the protagonist into "a complete individual"(M. Zhang 30). It is a bildungsroman that narrates how Nan finally becomes strong-willed, tenacious, idealistic, and independent. The aim of this section is to unfold the process of becoming.

Baogang He said, "As men of ideas, Chinese intellectuals have usually been associated with politics"(He 264). Thus, politics is always a masculine project and closely related to the construction of Chinese masculinity. This is evident in the novel which narrates the transnational impact, physical as well as psychological,

of the occurrence of the Tiananmen Incident on Chinese intellectuals in the U.S. Although the incident happened in Beijing, as a Chinese intellectual and nationalist staying in the U.S, Nan felt it impulsive as much as compulsory to do what he could to cease the massacre undergoing back in Beijing. Nan was not alone. Around him there were many other overseas Chinese intellectuals thinking of how to deal with the political crisis in China. On impulse, Nan tossed to other like-minded Chinese the idea of kidnapping the children in the U.S of high-ranking officials of Chinese government. Unfortunately the plan was foiled and Nan was on the blacklist. Nan's disillusionment about the Chinese government and uncertainty about future all speak to a sense of crisis. The text is replete with allusions to the knock-on negative impact on intellectuals masculinity brought by the historical trauma. Political disheartenedness, desperateness, worries, and uncertainty overwhelmed Nan. "[H]is mind was restless, teeming with worrisome thoughts. So many things had happened recently that he was still in a daze"(Jin *A Free Life* 16). Nan was also shocked to learn that his fellow student Hansong had become deranged and committed to a mental hospital, partly because of the protest back in China and the disappearance of his girlfriend who might have been killed in the protest. As a matter of fact, the psychological impact of the Incident is what Ha Jin himself experienced as an overseas student during the time, although the writer did not involve in any sort of kidnap plot. In an interview, when asked what impact Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 (or 6.4 incident) had on him, Jin said

It is a painful experience. Though we didn't undergo it personally in Beijing,

it changed so many lives in the United States. It still hurts me because it has shaped my destiny. [...] In the wake of the Tiananmen massacre, I often had bad dreams, most of which took place in China. Gradually, I realized that it was impossible for me to return, and I began to accept my situation as an immigrant (qtd. in Shan 143).

The remarks find its echo in the characterization of Nan. The movement shaped Nan's destiny. Slowly but surely, Nan began to be "willing to accept the immigrant life as the condition of his existence so as to become a self-sufficient man. He felt grateful to the American land that had taken in his family and given them an opportunity for a new beginning" (Jin *A Free Life* 365). To become a self-sufficient, independent man is the goal Nan set for himself. In order to attain a newly-forged identity, Nan first had to deconstruct his previous self-identity as a traditional intellectual, that is to dismantle the self from the webs of self-identification and social recognition. His first step was to quit his PhD candidacy in Political Science. In fact, it was not out of his will to choose to study politics, "which he had never liked but which he had been assigned to study when he was admitted to college back in China. Later, he hadn't had any choice but to stay within the same field when he went on to earn a master's degree"(Jin *A Free Life* 17). His withdrawal signified his retreat from Chinese politics, and by extension, his social responsibility as an intellectual. It is a form of bodily resistance against social control. Of course, Nan's choice to quit was not free. It had a price to pay. Quitting the PhD candidacy meant the cessation of the scholarship as his only income. As a result, he had to think of how to survive in the new land. As the

narration goes,

Such an independent condition was new to him. Back in China he had always been a member of a work unit that provided a salary, shelter (usually a bed or at most a room), coupons for cloth and grain and cooking oil, medical care, and sometimes even free condoms. As long as he didn't cause trouble for the authorities, his livelihood was secure. Now he would have to earn a living by himself and also support his family. He was free, free to choose his own way and to make something of himself (ibid.)

This quote is reminiscent of existentialism in the sense that it foregrounds independence and free choice of life. Indeed, as the book title suggests, the story is all about freedom. But freedom is never free. In order to survive and sustain his wife and son, he had to work menial jobs for money. Nan's choice was in stark contrast to the pragmatic approach taken by his compatriots in the same situation. As the text reads, "some people who had been writing dissertations on Shakespeare or Dewey or Tocqueville had decided to go to business or law school"(Jin *A Free Life* 29). They "had changed their fields in order to make themselves more marketable" (ibid). These compatriots studied just for the pragmatic purpose of survival. However Nan would not choose to study for survival. In Nan's eyes, it amounts to selling his brain to study for materialistic rather than for spiritual concerns (i.e. interest and passion). "For years Nan had adhered to the principle that he would sell his brawn but not his brain. He wanted to save his mind for his study"(Jin *A Free Life* 24). Deep down, he is passionate about poetry, which he wanted to save his mind to study. However, for the time

being, it was impossible for him to engage with it.

Nan's selling his brawn marks his departure from Chinese traditional *wen* masculinity, using menial labor to construct his masculinity. Back in China, It would be a shame for a PhD student who was reduced to work menial jobs to support himself and his family. As Sheng Mei Ma observes, menial jobs are viewed as life suffering in Chinese culture, and "such part-time, temporary occupations symbolize a fall from their Confucian 'Shih' (literati) background where all things requiring strenuous or repetitious physical labor are relegated to the working class and to women"(Ma 123). In the novel, we find that Nan has an active and positive attitude towards his menial jobs, as Nan says; "Now graduate work was no longer his concern, so he wouldn't be too picky about jobs"(Jin *A Free Life* 24). Nan's positive attitude towards the challenge marks his Americanization, as in the U.S context, such jobs, which represent toughness and the spirit of independence, are laudable. San-ling Cynthia Wong discusses the relationship between masculinity and Americanization in Chinese American literature. In analyzing this genre, Wong argues that one's masculinity may often be signified by one's Americanization in it. As Wong argues, "Thus to be less Americanized is to be less masculine" (Wong 117). The characterization of Nan in the novel seems to lend the support to Wong's argument.

The roughness and toughness involved in menial jobs suggest Nan's construction of masculinity. But more to the point are the American values of independence and self-sufficiency behind Nan's choice of labor work, which Ha Jin intends to emphasize, through Nan's voice. These values are the central

marks of masculinity in the novel. Unfortunately, these values are not part of Chinese intellectual culture. As I will discuss in details later, since early Chinese history Chinese scholars have never been independent from authority. They have been pragmatic and interested in seeking patronage of various forms from the political authorities. Indeed, by extension, the lack of independence (either from state authority or parental authority) is the problem for Chinese men as a whole (Zhong 31). This lack is the one Ha Jin intends to debunk in the novel through characterizing Nan. On multiple occasions, Nan repetitively stresses the significance of independence, and self-sufficiency which means true freedom. When Nan heard his friend Bao (an artist) was berated by his girlfriend as “sponge,” and “parasite,” he “couldn’t help but despise Bao. If he was going to become an artist, he would be a different type. He’d be a self-sufficient man first. Now it was high time for him to start his life afresh”(Jin *A Free Life* 157). He despised Chinese peers for their lack of independence and freedom, which is in contrast to his admiration of his two White friends—Sam Fisher and Dick—both of whom are poets, for their free spirit and self-reliance. As the text narrates, “Nan was quite moved by their meeting with Sam Fisher, in whom he had seen the free spirit of a poet who wasn’t afraid of anything or anybody, a complete individual”(Jin *A Free Life* 153).

Although Nan had a positive attitude towards his odd job experience, the experience itself suggests his marginalized status in the new land. In turn, his marginalization is signified by eroticization and feminization of Nan’s body. In the novel, Nan was twice harassed sexually. Once Nan was asked by the doctor to

take his pants off when he received a physical examination as required by his potential employer. When serving as a night watchman for a factory, Nan stole out to buy food one night when he met two sex maniacs harassing him. Nan was for multiple times mistaken for a gay man by some of his White friends, although Nan never doubted his own sex orientation. The mistake suggests the connection of gender to ethnicity and stereotype held towards Asian in the society. Although there is a wholesome tenor in his attitude toward the current circumstances, his plunge in social status and self-esteem contributes to his distress, melancholy and self-depreciation. It is no wonder that one day Nan lost his control of emotion. When facing brutal treatment by traffic police for his alleged traffic violation on the road, he shouted "Come on, awfficer, pull out your gahn and finish me off here. I'm sick of zis miserable life. Please shoot me!"(136).

The real turning point of Nan's immigrant life is marked by Nan's bringing his family down to Georgia where they started to run a Chinese restaurant. Since then, he had set off on the road to freedom and independence in a real sense. The restaurant of this geographical location is a mark of hybridization of Chinese and American culture. On the one hand, restaurant business is a trade in which Chinese immigrants are frequently stereotyped historically. As a matter of fact, Nan took over this restaurant from an old couple of Taiwanese, which suggests the history of the Chinese restaurant. On the other hand, the geographical location bespeaks American values of independence, pioneering and individualism. The remoteness and aloneness are reminiscent of the rugged Western hero of American myth. Located at the outskirts of Atlanta, it is "almost

like virgin land just open for settlement" (166). Such a place overtly evokes the American memory of the Westward Movement which represents the spirit of independence as part of American tradition. In contrast, running an adventure-spirited, risk-involved business is not part of Confucian culture. "In the traditional Confucian masculinity framework, menial jobs were the less desirable in terms of wen-wu. Doing business was certainly not one of the arts and skills Confucius promoted" (Louie 129).

The menial jobs and restaurant business brought positive changes to his personality. "Yet he could see that he was no longer the same man. He had been toughened by the struggle, by the mistakes he had made, by the necessary process of acclimatization [...] he was a better man now, wiser and more capable, and determined to follow his own heart"(618). Nan also changed in his attitude toward women. His big temper that he used to have disappeared, along with his sense of superiority as a man over a woman. As his wife Pingping felt, "He's more like gentleman now" (51). Pingping's remarks alluded to the widespread chauvinism back in China. However the immigrant life experience changed Nan. The struggle in the U.S brought Nan off that privileged position back in China. It is the marginalized position that taught him to be sympathetic with women who were in a similar marginalized position. This change is transnational in the sense that the bitterness of his American life changed his attitude towards (Chinese) women that he had acquired in China.

As an intellectual brought up in China, Nan's self-identity could not be dismantled even though it had been baptized by the American values. Running a business

was not his dream. He had his literary ambition. Towards the end, Nan's restaurant became a success finally, which brought him a house and a small amount of saving and above all a truly financially independent life. But deep down, Nan despised menial jobs and business that is after only money. His despise reflects Confucian value prevalent among Chinese literati. As the narrative goes, all of sudden, Nan remembered his stifled dream to be a poet, when a strong sense of self-hatred and self-despise stirred.

"How he hated himself! He had wasted so many years and avoided what he really desired to do, inventing all kinds of excuses—his sacrifice for his son, his effort to pay off the mortgage, his pursuit of the American dream, his insufficient command of English, his family's need for financial security, the expected arrival of a daughter, and the absence of an ideal woman in his life. The more he thought about his true situation, the more he loathed himself, especially for his devotion to making money, which had consumed so many of his prime years and dissolved his will to follow his own heart" (605).

Nan finally sold his restaurant and returned to his literary ambition. It is arguable that the end is related to the writer's own immigrant subjectivity. As mentioned earlier, restaurant is one of trades where Chinese have been stereotyped. By allowing Nan to disentangle himself from the business, Ha Jin attempts to stamp out the stereotype. By becoming a poet, Nan claims his long-lost *wen* masculinity, switching from *wen* to *wu* and back to *wen*. However his *neo-wen* masculinity is not in traditional sense any more. It has been hybridized with American values of

independence and self-sufficiency. This hybridization is at the same time signified by Nan's adoption of English in writing, just as Ha Jin himself does. Nan wavered which language to use in writing: Chinese or English for a long time before he decided to use the latter. It is the same linguistic dilemma in which Ha Jin had found himself before starting to write. For the writer, it is more than a linguistic choice. Adopting another language "is an act of betrayal that alienates him from his mother tongue and directs his creative energy to another language. This linguistic betrayal is the ultimate step the migrant writer dares to take"(Jin *The Writer as Migrant* 31). Above all, Nan realizes the American dream which, in Ha Jin's eyes, is "to choose one's own way of life, even though the choices are conditioned and sometimes limited" (M. Zhang 33). With his American dream fulfilled, a new type of Chinese *wen* masculinity is constructed.

C. Dildungroman in Reverse—Chinese artists and Intellectuals in the 1990s

a. Nostalgia and Homeward Journey

The novel depicts three Chinese exiles who represent the community of Chinese artists and intellectuals. Danning—a writer, Bao Yuan—a painter, and Manping Liu—a well-known intellectual in political economy were all Nan's friends, living in the U.S as Chinese government dissidents when the Tiananmen Incident occurred. As antithesis of Nan, they all chose a life opposed to Nan's. They all returned to China in post-Tiananman era, compromised with the government authority, abandoning their political ideals, and falling prey to money-grubbing, materialistic and sensual desires. By depicting these characters, Ha Jin attempts to provide a ferocious critique to Chinese literati culture in the 1990s.

As for these characters, the immediate question we might ask is why they went back to China. To this question, the novel provides the answers. First, it is “because of the yoke of their significant past”(365). It is the “former privileged life [that] had deprived them of the vitality and stamina needed for grappling with adversities in order to take root in the American soil”(138). For example, Baoyuan (the artist) and Manping Liu (the renowned scholar) had had achievement and prestige before they arrived in the U.S. Both invariably experienced sort of regression in the New World. Bao, as the editor in chief of New Lines, is patronized by his girlfriend Wendy —“a white woman with half-gray hair and a puffy face, almost twenty years older than Bao”(103). The description make readers doubt if it is for love that Bao went into this relationship. In fact Bao had his pragmatic considerations in terms of the relationship. “By nature Bao was shrewd and pragmatic” (449). Similarly, Manping Liu was also jobless and lived mainly on his wife’s hard work and sacrifice. Nan was told by Liu’s wife in outrage “He dabbled in stocks with the sweat money I made. Yesterday alone he lost more than two thousand dollars” (146). All these mark Liu’s fall and regression. It is the result of the burden of their glorious past which has spirit-smothering effect, as aptly summarized in the text,

Gradually he figured out the essential difference between himself and the old scholar. Mr. Liu was an exile, whose life had been shaped by the past and who could exist only with reference to the central power that had banished him from China. Here lay Mr. Liu’s tragedy—he couldn’t possibly separate himself from the state’s apparatus that could always control and

torment him. Without the frame of reference already formed in his homeland, his life would have lost its meaning and bearings. That must be why so many exiles, wrecked with nostalgia, would eulogize suffering and patriotism (356).

Another related factor for returning is nostalgia sentiment and withdrawal to Chineseness. Admittedly, the yearning for Chineseness must be related to his marginalized position in the U.S. Upon returning China, Danning had a conversation with Nan over Chinese identity and patriotism. Danning said, "No matter where I go, I feel I'm a Chinese to the marrow. I'm terribly homesick recently, perhaps because I'm getting old and soft-headed"(96). Danning's nostalgia sentiment is what Ha Jin critiques in his work *The Writer as Migrant*, as he argues,

As a matter of fact, in our time the intense attachment to one's native land is often viewed as an unnecessary and anachronic feeling that tends to debilitate migrants. I would even argue that, for many displaced people, nostalgia is also blended with fear—the fear of uncertainty and of facing the challenges posed by the larger world and the fear of the absence of the clarity and confidence provided by the past. In essence, nostalgia is associated mostly with the experience of a particular type of migrants, namely, exiles (Jin *The Writer as Migrant* 22).

When an exile, wretched and marginalized situation in a foreign land, is set in stark contrast to his glorious, privileged past, and sense of uncertainty in contrast to sense of certainty, his determination to remain on exile must be wavered and

weakened. In a broader context, China witnessed huge economic development in the 1990s, which in turn brought about opportunities for one's personal development. This might be the most important reason for their return. Officially, the PRC is a socialist/communist state; yet increasingly it has steered toward a capitalist market economy since the 1990s. In the next section, I focus on the narrative of what transformations the male characters underwent in this broad context and by doing so I attempt to reveal the construction of *wen* masculinity in the 1990s back in China.

b. Consumerism, Commercialization and Wen Masculinity

The 1990s' China may be characterized with the two key words: nationalism and commercialization, as Geremie R. Barme in his article "To Screw Foreigners is Patriotic: China's Avant-Garde Nationalist" offers a comprehensive introduction of the historical context over the decade. Since the 1989 Incident, the Party had made effort to consolidate the eroded authority. In doing so, the Party beefed up the effort to promote the education of "state-of-the-nation," which warned against the tendency of Westernization in China by emphasizing China has its unique history and situation and the Western general belief is not applicable to the state of China. In addition, the transformation in the Western Europe and the Soviet Union coincided and seemed to lend the support to the propaganda. The partial failure of the transformation underpinned by Western values and systems led some Chinese to drawing the conclusion that Western ideology was not universal and China would be plagued with disorder if the nation embarked on the road of all-around westernization. A growing disenchantment with the West and its allies

was seen across the nation. In the education of “state-of-the-nation,” emphasis was also on the past humiliation by the Western allies in modern history of China. The hostile sentiment produced by past humiliation was reproduced in the eventual failure of the China’s bid for 2000 Olympic Games, which was deemed the result of the conspiracy by the Western allies for purpose of politics. Hostility joined disenchantment in the national sentiment towards the West. In a separate effort to create political stability, Chinese authority continued to carry the economic reforms forward on the road of market economy. It was a success and the decade saw a huge economic miracle in China. Statistics show China’s gross domestic product (GDP) nearly doubled in the decade, reaching 1.16 trillion US dollars in 2001.⁵²

Accompanying the huge growth was the transformation into an all-around commercialized society playing a vital role in the globalization process. The rise in economic power fuelled the nationalism. As Song claims, this new wave of patriotic sentiments “should be interpreted more as a reaction to oppressive global capitalism than a deeply felt identification with the nation-state” (Song “Chinese Masculinities Revisited: Male Images in Contemporary Television Drama Serials” 414). The broader socio-political change exerted heavy influence on the construction of Chinese masculinity. Specifically speaking, depoliticalization, commercialism and consumerism characterized Chinese manhood. As we find, *Free* recounts the transformations of the artist-intellectuals as representatives of Chinese *wen* masculinity. They all had been pro-democratic activists with metaphysical ideals in the U.S. However, they invariably

⁵² For more information, please see http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2002-09/16/content_562239.htm.

stooped to the government after the Incident so as to be allowed to return the country. In the years that followed, they transformed into money-grubbing artists or writers, winning on the financial, economic and libidinal battleground while losing their political ideals.

In the novel, the three characters Baoyang, Manping Liu and Danning became politically disengaged to a varying degree. They comprise with the authority in order to be allowed to return. Baoyuan says to Nan, "I'm no longer a democracy activist, they know. I can return as a working artist anytime. Things have changed"(452). Bao was allowed to return to China because he promised not to be involved in political activities for good as required by the Chinese government. Danning sought patronage by working as a writer for Beijing Writer's Association. In China, this organization has been an association of writers only in nominal sense. As a matter of fact, it has been affiliated and operated by the Party authority. Liu Manping, who had once headed China's Central Institute of Social Reforms, finally chose to write to the authority to beg for permission to go back to China, stooping to the authority by promising to keep silent over sensitive issues. Liu's stooping to the authority is symbolized by his feminine physical traits, as the text goes, "Somehow Nan kept observing the old man's hand, which was small and delicate like a young woman's and which was gesturing as he spoke. That hand, a true scholar's, was born to wield a pen"(94). This description conjures up the fragile image of traditional scholar in pre-modern China, who had been subjected to political indoctrination. This description also harks back to Baranovitch's interpretation of the implication of Chinese government's

repressing the 1989's democracy movement from a gendered perspective. Baranovitch observes that this suppression is a symbolic "act of castration," through which "the government restored traditional order and power relations, reasserting its own power and masculinity, and denying it to those [i.e. Chinese intellectuals] who challenged it," "plac[ing] China's intellectuals back in their traditional position of woman-like state subjects" (Baranovitch 141). In traditional China, the *shi* (scholar-official) played a submissive yin role in his relations to the sovereign, which is analogical with the son and wife in father/son and husband/wife relations (Song *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture* 45-50).

Ha Jin allows Nan to pay a short visit back to China and reveal Danning's the corrosion and degradation of Chinese intellectuals by rapid commercialization in the decade. The critical tone is evident in Nan's remarks about Danning. In Nan's eyes, Danning was in retrogradation. Danning never wrote anything better than that ever since after he flew to fame for his first novel, indulging himself in libidinal pleasure. When Nan returned to China for a short visit, Danning took him to a brothel-like restaurant of which Danning was a regular customer. As Nan was certain that "his friend had seen other women, at least some of the girls in the bars, hair salons, and nightclubs. Indeed, his own philandering might have driven his wife to have the affair, and nobody but himself should be to blame" (594). Danning's sexual indulgence may be construed as a negative and derogatory symbolism of the current status of Chinese society. Danning's talk was dominated by concerns of mundane life. For house estate investment,

Danning urged Nan to buy a pied-a-terre in Beijing, for which there'd be no realty tax. Danning also took Nan to a gathering of a bunch of government-patronized literates. At the table, the readers find the topics were frivolous and there was no serious talk about literature and politics. The representation provides a concrete example of what Barne claims,

The commercialization and de-politicalization of culture had marginalized serious artistic issues...[I]ntellectuals had suffered a new displacement in terms of social position and prestige from 1989 and that in the 1990s those who did not become involved in 'abstract debates' (qingtan or 'idle talk') about theory were busy themselves either hawking their talents in the market place or attempting to exercise a more overt political influence as 'strategists' for present or future power-holder" (226-27).

Clearly Barne indicates that Chinese artists and intellectuals tried to take personal advantage of China's economic development. Their works were now increasingly seen as commodities, as they were busy pandering to market demand. "Free-market commodification has 'demoted' writers from their previously privileged position as 'the architects of the soul' of society to being just 'common' members, who are left to float or sink in the market economy. Critics perceived a crisis in quality and morality in literary production in the early 1990s" (Wang 93). This opinion finds its echo in Cai Xiang's remarks that "[w]hereas prosaic if not vulgar taste and value orientation are quietly being established, the spiritual (jing-shen) is subjected to repudiation and ridicule. An age of vulgarization has descended"(qtd. in X. Zhang 115). In *Free*, Bao had an artistic

success later in the U.S. However he left behind his artistic aspiration and came back to China for money temptation. As the text reads, "Nan could see that this had been bound to happen, since Bao rushed too much and fell prey to moneygrubbing instead of aspiring to a higher order of artistic achievement... Indeed, China was probably more suitable for a man like Bao" (575).

Similarly, Danning grabbed money and fame by taking advantage of the rise of nationalism in China. As Nan commented on his novels about overseas life, "Danning...pandered too much to the Chinese readers' taste and depended too heavily on exotic details and on nationalistic sentiment to make his stories work. That in effect made his fiction simplistic, glib, and even clunky in places"(473). And later, because writing fiction was not as well-paid as writing TV scripts, Danning began writing for a TV show, though "[h]e disliked the show because the story was set in the Ming dynasty, six hundred years ago" (532). Besides making money, Danning was also well aware that the TV script writing serves the interest of authority, as Danning told Nan,

"If you lived here, Nan, you'd have to forget about literature. The higher-ups want us to write about dead people and ancient events because this is a way to make us less subversive and more inconsequential. It's their means of containing China's creative energy and talents. The saddest part is that in this way we can produce only transient work" (ibid.)

Danning's remarks illustrate the dynamic interaction among state, market, and intellectuals. As Yin Hong put, "While emerging market forces and the state were the two primary elements that governed television drama, intellectuals involved in

production acted as representatives of political power and the market" (Hong 33). By writing TV scripts, Danning met the demands not only of authority, but also of market.

The rise of nationalism in the 1990s is quite evident in the novel. In one of Danning's letters to Nan, Danning wrote, "Stories about American life are hot nowadays. Have you seen the book *Manhattan's China Lady*? It's a runaway best seller here" (258). Indeed, *Manhattan's China Lady* was a representative of overseas Chinese literature produced in China in the 1990s. *Manhattan* is a literary counterpart that involves "titillating, sensational transnational and/or transcultural love between Chinese and foreigners in China or between ethnic Chinese and non-Chinese in diasporic conditions" (Lu 31). Its popularity can be explained by meeting the market demand of transnational romantic fantasies involving Chinese men and foreign women or vice versa. The fantasy was desired because it was a libido's expression parallel to the economic competition between China and foreign countries. It is in these transnational romantic stories set against the background of competition between China and the West that the transnational Chinese male images are constructed. Sheldon H. Lu, in his article *Soap Opera in China: The Transnational Politics of Visuality, Sexuality, and Masculinity* examines in the TV dramas of the 1990s how Chinese masculinity constructed "through the foreign woman has become a new way of imagining national identity in the age of globalization"(25). Lu adds, "The reassertion of Chinese masculinity takes the form of a transnational fantasy, the wish-fulfillment of competing successfully with foreigners for the possession of capital and

women” (31). The reassertion is in turn an expression of a wave of neo-nationalism in China.

In a broader context, the 1990s was a decade that saw a cluster of narrative and visual texts—stories, novels, films, and nighttime soap operas, all motivated by nationalism and patriarchy. Another representative book is *China Can Say No*,⁵³ which argues China must firmly resist the U.S-led Western hegemony. This book challenges the pro-Western attitude prevalent among Chinese in the 1980s, criticizing a couple of well-known pro-Western dissidents who played a key role in the 1989 Tiananmen Square Incident. The book attempts to unveil American vile intention to keep China from thriving by rejecting China's bid for the World Trade Organization, manipulating against China's bid for the Olympics. Surprisingly, all of the writers used to be dissidents before and during the 1989 incident. In the novel *A Free Life*, Manping Liu spoke about unification of Taiwan with Mainland China in a speech. With regards to one of the most sensitive issues among Chinese, Liu emphasized Taiwan must be reunited with China for such practical reasons as national security and territory integrity. If he were the president of China, he would take military actions to achieve the goal. The tough point of view on Taiwan issues represented by Liu is an illustration of the rising nationalism in China as a result of the rise of economic power and its increasing integration into global capitalism in the 1990s. Along with commercialism, the rising nationalism informs construction of Chinese masculinity. Echoing Suisheng

⁵³Zhang Xiaobo, Song Qiang, Qiao Bian and Gu Qingsheng (张小波、宋强、乔边、古清生). *The China That Can Say No: Political and Emotional Choices in the post Cold-War era* (中国可以说：冷战后时代的政治与情感抉择; Pinyin: *Zhongguo keyi shuo bu: Lengzhanhou shidai de zhengzhi yu qinggan jueze*). Beijing: China Industrial and Commercial Publishing House (北京：中华工商联合出版社)

Zhao's concept of nativist nationalism, Song suggests,

"There is a strong interaction between the construction of masculinity in popular culture and the conspicuous rise of nationalism in mainland China since the early 1990s. ... In "mainstream" representations, patriotic politics has been a major venue for accomplishing masculinity. A "good" man is therefore a man who brings honor to the motherland and safeguards national dignity on the international stage. (Song "Chinese Masculinities Revisited: Male Images in Contemporary Television Drama Serials" 409)

Back to the Ha Jin's novel *Free*, Mr Liu's patriotism-motivated point of view about Taiwan issues was challenged by Nan, who articulated a different perspective on the issues. Arguing against Liu's view, Nan says, "all the regions in China are like members of the Chinese family—if one of the brothers wants to live separately, isn't it barbaric to go smash his home and beat him up?"(320). Nan's remarks clearly indicate that he prioritizes humanism over nationalism. This view was in fact the writer's own, which the writer articulated on multiple occasions. For example, in an interview, Ha Jin says, "[t]here are values beyond a nation and a people. I do believe in universals because I am a human being who has the same basic human feelings and desires as anyone else does. The kind of national pride shared by some overseas Chinese is often the result of indoctrination based on the absence of other beliefs, such as religions" (M. Zhang 31).

There is a tension between humanism and nationalism that features the relationship between Nan and his fellow Chinese intellectuals such as Baoyua,

Danning and Liu. The whole novel sees the transition of Nan from nationalism to humanism, which is in an opposite direction in which his fellow intellectuals move. As the book opens, Nan is involved in the aborted kidnap plan during 1989 Tiananmen Incident, which demonstrates Nan cares about Chinese politics as other overseas students do. Behind it is Nan's patriotism at play. The Chinese government atrocity in the incident appalls and disappoints Nan so much that he "made a vow not to be involved in politics again" (122). Since then, Nan increasingly distances himself from Chinese murky politics. This transition is suggested in his identity. The novel begins with Nan studying as a PhD candidate in Political Science and ends with Nan becoming a freelance poet. Nan's sickness of politics is reminiscent of Professor Yang in *The Crazy*. Like Professor Yang, Nan also hates those playing political trickeries. Nan does not respect his father, who he calls the old man, and "who lived in a network of officials and was nothing but an embleomaniac, foolishly perusing the histories of various dynasties, particularly the Ming and the Ching, to learn statecraft (or political trickery). Nan eventually goes beyond nationalism and Chinese politics to humanism and universalism.

Chinese nationalism may be deeply rooted in Confucian moral code of loyalty (zhong), which is at the core of Chinese ideal masculinity. Any act of leaving one's home country and by implication the emperor, no matter what reasons are behind the act, is supposed to call one's loyalty, and furthermore one's masculinity, into question. As a discursive manifestation in literature, Chinese immigrant or exile texts are perennially characterized with the tradition in which

diasporic writers' attempt to demonstrate spiritual loyalty and nostalgia to the home country. According to Sheng-mei Ma, the exile tradition in Chinese literary history might date back to Qu Yuan's poem "Li Sao" as the originating point (Ma 110). The poem is a political elegy that mourns the writer's banishment in an effort to prove his loyalty. Using student overseas literature as an example, Ma argues that the Chinese immigrant literature continues "the age-old exile tradition"(ibid.) and falls "in line with the long genealogy of ethnocentric texts in Chinese history", and the literature has been characterized with "the textual construct of idealized 'Chineseness'," and the expatriate writers' effort "to preserve Chinese integrity" as they migrate to alien cultures (Ma 111). Given this, Ha Jin's *Free* is a piece of work breaking away from the tradition of exile literature, constructing a sublime hero deserting his native country. The novel provides a careful critique of Chineseness while the protagonist is trying to sever his ties with China. The novel seems to be in the effort to subvert the "root" myth in Chinese culture. In this sense, the novel and the protagonist reject the notion of loyalty to the nation. As Nan said in bitterness,

China isn't my country anymore. I spit at China, because it treats its citizens like gullible children and always prevents them from growing up into real individuals. It demands nothing but obedience. To me, loyalty is a two-way street. China has betrayed me, so I refuse to remain its subject anymore (96).

Ha Jin is well aware of this psychological pressure inflicted on diaspora writers by the Chinese cultural tradition emphasizing one's loyalty to the nation, as he

writes that “the migrant writer feels guilty because of his physical absence from his native country, which is conventionally viewed by some of his countrymen as ‘desertion’”(Jin *The Writer as Migrant* 31). Nationalism vs. humanism is just one of many binary oppositions along which the text is organized.

D. Love, Sexuality and Masculinity Construction

Nan’s process of acculturation in the U.S is embodied in terms of love and sexuality. The acculturation is parallel to a sub-plot which narrates how Nan’s love for Pingping is nurtured finally into a base stabilizing the marriage during their struggle to settle down in the U.S. It is from this perspective that the construction of Nan’s masculinity is articulated. In the first place back in China, their union was little based on love. Nan married Pingping just in a rush in hopes to walk out of his first love Beina. As Nan admitted to Pingping later, “he had married her not out of love but out of convenience and compassion”(59). However, for years Nan had been haunted by his first romance. That constitutes the main source of tension in the marriage, which in turn symbolizes or runs parallel to the suffering inflicted on the couple as immigrants in the new world. Although Nan did not love his wife that much, Nan “had always cherished her as his wife, determined to be a decent husband and father. He felt for her, knowing she loved him devotedly” (57). By nature, Nan was good. Indeed, it was Nan’s honest, kind-heartedness that attracted Pingping. Their son Taotao played a cementing role in the couple’s relationship. It is on the account of the son that the couple “had agreed to stay together until Taotao grew up”(76). In Chinese

marriage, a couple's responsibilities for children usually comes first and the couple, though loveless and sexless for each other, choose to suffer by keeping the family intact on the account of their children.

As time goes by, Nan begins to feel attachment to Pingping and understand, "[t]hey were stuck together and had to depend on each other to survive"(60).

Migrating to Georgia has significant bearing on the couple's relationship. After they move there, they live more like husband and wife as their own restaurant business begin to thrive. At the same time, starting up his own restaurant also marks Nan's embarking on the real journey to maturity and independence. Since then, the marriage is more in peace though it is lack of passion. The increasingly stable marriage is signified by their increasingly harmonious copulation. As Pingping felt, "the longer they lived together, the more comfortable she felt with Nan in bed" (400). Like Nan's successful survival by working menial jobs, the sexual potency is the very signifier of his successful construction of *wu* masculinity. "By now he [Nan] honestly loved his wife, but in a steady and mundane way" (516). The steadiness symbolizes Nan's maturity—an image of man standing firmly with his feet planting squarely on the ground. The novel ends with Nan's writing a poem for Pingping, entitled "Belated Love," for the first time in his life on a Christmas Eve. His wife finally became the source of passion and inspiration for his poem writing. Using his wife as an inspiration, Nan successfully reclaimed his lost *wen* masculinity.

The process of Nan's developing a stable emotional attachment to his wife is a reversed process of his outgrowing of love for his ex-girlfriend Beina. Over a

decade ago, when Nan had loved Beina passionately, Nan had written more than a hundred poems. Ever since Beina had jilted him eight years before, his heart had remained numb. For several years after Nan married Pingping, Beina had appeared in his dream and fantasy. "Somehow wherever he went, he'd fantasize he might chance on her"(107). "When he closed his eyes at night, her vivacious face often emerged, as if she were teasing him or eager to talk with him" (172). As the Nan and Pingping's immigrant life was moving onto the track, Nan did not think of Beina as often as he had done. "The numb pain still lingered in his chest, but it was no longer as acute as before"(340). Towards the end of the story, Nan finally saw Beina again when he suddenly became disillusioned with his love for her. "Indeed, he didn't feel the old numbing pain anymore despite sitting so close to Beina"(590). If the stabilization of Nan's marriage symbolizes his increasing acculturation in the new land, Nan's growing out of love for Beina is the mark of his ultimate success in severing his emotional ties with China and his past.

As a vital mark of masculinity, sex plays a role in marriage in Chinese traditional culture different from that in American culture. This contrast is alluded to in the novel. In the marriage of Nan and Pingping, sex plays the secondary role all the time, although they both enjoyed it. In Nan's early immigrant life especially, the overwhelming demands of survival predominated the couple's mind so much that sex was a luxury for them to afford. At one time Nan went to New York to take a job, living separately with his wife and son. The couple's living separately on the account of work is reminiscent of the history Chinese immigrants. Back in the 19th century, Chinese male workers were almost all

bachelors as their wives were left back in China. The intimate contact with his wife also gives way to Nan's literary ambition. When they lived in the attic of Masfield where his wife served as a housekeeper, he and his wife slept separately most of time. As we read, "Nan had the habit of reading late at night, so he and his wife slept separately most of the time" (18). Pingping even said to Nan, "If you meet another woman you like in New York, you can spend time with her, as long as you don't catch disease and come back to us"(134). In her eyes, Nan's fulfilling his duty as husband defined the meaning of marriage. In other words, sex invariably comes after careers, duties among other mundane concerns for survival in the construction of Chinese masculinity. In contrast, a marriage without love and sex is impossible to imagine for the couple's American friends. Love and sex are at the very core of American masculinity. For example it is impossible for Heidi (i.e. the landlord) to imagine that a couple had to live separately for a long time on the account of job. It is the same with the couple's friends Janet and Dave, an American white couple. When Pingping spoke of her marital life defined mainly by family duties, Janet cannot help wondering, "Aren't passion and sex essential parts of the married life? Can a marriage last without those basic ingredients?" (399). The characters' comments present a vivid description on the difference between China and the West in the role of sex in construction of masculinity.

F. Summary

To summarize the above analysis, I would like to enumerate some tensions in the narrative between Nan and his fellow Chinese intellectuals. Nan remains and

settles down in the U.S. while they come back to China. Correspondingly, throughout the novel Nan attempts to sever his ties with China or Chineseness while his friends are in the yoke of nostalgia and Chineseness. Nan is independent in the U.S, surviving by selling his brawn (i.e. working menial jobs and running his own restaurant) and fulfilling his literary pursuit in the end. In contrast, his compatriots finally stoop to work for power and money back in China, leaving behind their artistic aspiration and political ideals. Overall, Nan transcends beyond patriotism and Chineseness symbolized by politics to humanism and universalism symbolized by poetry. He is in a spiritually ascending movement while his fellow intellectuals retrograde and deprave spiritually though wealthy materialistically. The intellectuals' life is the miniature of the whole community and an allegory of the nation in the 1990s. It is well evident that China is depicted as a place of spiritual decadency as opposed to the U.S as a possible place of spiritual redemption. As we read towards the end of the story, Danning has a chance to visit the U.S. again on a conference and in Nan's company goes to a church. There they join the Sunday's service, after which Danning says he is not a Christian but "he [the priest] made me feel better, much better. I'm cleaner now"(602). It is in America that Danning finds himself cleaner. In the novel, readers might find the tones of liberalism and radicalism are much more noticeable than those in *Waiting* and *the Crazyed*. In multiple places, Nan explicitly debunks and criticizes the dark side of Chinese culture and the political system, which in Nan's eyes are the source of Chinese emasculation and loss of humanity.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In the conclusion, I offer a summary of construction and representation of contemporary Chinese masculinity in Ha Jin's works within the framework *wen-wu*. The summary is situated in a broader socio-political environment of which construction of masculinity is the barometer. And then, I discuss whether there is presence of neo-colonialism in Ha Jin's work. I will finish the conclusion (i.e. the whole dissertation) by reiterating the status of Ha Jin's works in contemporary Chinese American literature and significance of the study.

Traditional masculinity theorized in the matrix of *wen-wu* and the moral concepts derived from Confucianism are still at the core of the construction of contemporary Chinese masculinity. The ideals and ambitions that traditional literati used to pursue still define the mindset of contemporary Chinese intellectuals. Failure to fulfill them usually causes the sense of crisis. The moral codes that derive from Confucianism and underpin *wen-wu* qualities remain to be the compass for Chinese men's behavior. Masculinity is power-based. Traditionally, *wen* assumes superiority over *wu* in the construction of masculinity mainly because *wen* qualities are much more likely to take one up to power. With the advent of commercialization and rise of consumerism, masculinity begins to be defined in financial power. Nonetheless, one's political power remains at the core of Chinese masculinity construction because political power is tradable to

financial power in contemporary China. One can abuse one's political power for financial gains.

The novels selected cover the time span of the four decades from 1960s to 1990s. Over the past decades, the 1980s may amount to be the most masculine decade in the sense that men's issues rose to prominence. Men's crisis in the 1980s is first of all the repercussion of the political traumas in the Mao's regime and the effect of continuous dictatorship in post-Mao's era. The political repressions resulted in sense of powerlessness in men, which in turn led to passivity. The growing concerns of men's issues in the period were also the result of the return of humanism and the rise of subjectivity. Chinese men's anxiety as a manifestation of crisis is caused by rapid socio-economic changes taking place in post-Mao's era, when contradictory values emerge and spread. For Chinese intellectuals, what role they should play and what position they should be in this drastically changing society are challenging questions for them to answer. The presence of challenges is the source of their anxiety. On the other hand, manhood is statehood. Chinese men's anxiety and desires are related to the position of China in the international arena. In the 1980s, men's anxieties were the manifestation of worries on China's weak position to Western modernity.

History seems to be repeating itself. Just recently a fresh wave of concerns about manhood and boyhood has emerged across the nation. Laments on Chinese boys lack of toughness have been reported in the media. There are also worries on some boys exhibiting what are traditionally considered to be more

female personality traits. Once again, it seems China is engaging a new round of movement to search for masculinity. Culture critics point out Chinese traditional culture prioritizes *wen* over *wu* in the construction of manhood and contemporary Chinese educational system indirectly encourages quietness, obedience and discourages outdoor activities, wildness and other traits associated with tough masculinity. It is reported on *New York Times* that “the public Shanghai No. 8 Senior High School will begin experimental male-only classes, seemingly aimed at promoting masculinity. According to the school’s Web site, subjects include surviving in the wilderness, using tools, repairing electrical appliances and boxing”.⁵⁴ Separately, primary schools in Nanjing, the capital city of east China’s Jiangsu Province, will begin rugby football courses, which aim to promote toughness among boys. The desire for a tough man (boy) behind these upcoming masculinity-promoting projects harks back to the culture movement to search for masculinity back in the 1980s. As the movement turned out to be an anticipator of the 1989 democratic movement, we cannot help but wonder the recent wave of concerns over masculinity will anticipate a similar incident. No one can tell at the point of time, but one thing is sure—there are signs to suggest that the voice for political reforms in China has been increasing sharply as people are increasingly aware that political dictatorship is hindering the economic innovation and development.

Almost all the novels by Ha Jin have been banned in China for obvious political reasons. Related to the fact is that his works, such as *Waiting*, were

⁵⁴ For more details, please see <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/28/world/asia/young-men-in-china-struggling-to-catch-up-in-class.html>.

under harsh attack from Beijing literary critics patronized by the authority. Admittedly, Ha Jin engaged in critical perspectives on Chinese traditional culture and contemporary politics. However the depiction and narrative in his novels are evidently authoritative and intertextually supported by social science studies on contemporary China, as my research shows. It may be too far to conclude that Ha Jin's works deliberately vilify China, as some Beijing critics remarked. It may be also arbitrary to label neo-orientalism to his works just because of the critique and negative depictions presented in the novels. Considering that the majority of his novels were written in the 1990s when China saw the rise of nationalism (as mentioned in the last chapter), the harsh response against Ha Jin's works from China may be related to the nationalism of the time. As Wen Jin remarks, "The Chinese critics' anxiety about the novel's possible co-optation by U.S. Orientalism registers a rising tide of Chinese nationalism that constructs itself against U.S. neo-imperialism and the historical legacy of European colonialism"(W. Jin 573).

I would like to finish my dissertation by reiterating how the research of Ha Jin's novels may enrich Asian-American literary transnationalism and reconfigure Asian American literary studies as a whole. In the article *Theorizing the Hyphen's Afterlife in Post-Tiananmen Asian-America*, Belinda Kong establishes a link between the 1989 Tiananmen Square Incident and Asian American literary studies. Kong argues that the Incident prompted a bunch of Chinese American immigrant writers to decide to remain in the U.S after watching on TV from afar those images of tanks turrets swiveling in Beijing downtown and the subsequent

bloody brutal scenes. Their works published in English forms a distinct genre of literary diaspora. Of this genre, Ha Jin's fiction is an exemplar. This genre is featured with predomination of subjects related to Chinese episodes and the writing position which "is more arguably much more engaging in the critique of authoritarian power than in the previous decades"(Kong 146). Before Ha Jin, Chinese American writers consisted mainly of these subgroups: 1) American-born writers with Chinese ethnicity whose works are predominated with subjects of the assimilation of Chinese as a race minority into American society to claim America for American-born Chinese, 2) Chinese immigrant writers from Chinese-speaking areas outside mainland China (i.e. Taiwan and Hong Kong etc), who arrived in the U.S. as early as 1950s and whose works published in English are concerned with immigrant life in the U.S. and nostalgia-motivated episodes of the areas from which they originally came 3) Chinese immigrant writers from either mainland and other Chinese-speaking areas who still publish their works about overseas life in Chinese for Chinese-speaking markets. Ha Jin belongs to none but cuts across all the subgroups. He is a Chinese-born immigrant author who arrived in the U.S. from Mainland China in the 1980s. All his works published in English clearly target English-speaking readership while the majority of his work maintains the outright priority of Chineseness with the subjects specific to the history of mainland China over the second half of the last century. There is no doubt that Ha Jin's works are forming a new model of cultural hybridity and transnational subjectivity. They are challenging the older concept of Chinese/Asian American literature. In fact, although "recently the rubric of Asian

American literature has actually stretched to denote writings in English by Asian diasporic residents in North America,” Ha Jin, due to his focus on “non-American existential experiences,” is still excluded in “discussion of Asian American literature [which] is basically confined to writings in English about existential experiences in the United States by Americans with cultural and ethnic origins in East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia” (Zeng 67). Thus, studying Ha Jin’s works is attempts to reconfigure Chinese American literary studies and Asian American studies as a whole. Such studies are made more significant and interesting when combined with studies of Chinese masculinity—an emerging field bound to be fascinating.

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Education

- PhD in Culture Studies, University of Louisville 07/2007- 08/2012
Dissertation: *Representation of Chinese masculinities in Hajin's Novels*
- MA in Linguistics, University of Reading, UK 09/2003- 09/2005
Thesis: *CDA of Negative News Reporting of English Media in China*
- BA in English Education, Guangxi Normal University 09/1998-07/2001
- College Diploma in Accounting & Banking, Shanxi Economic & Finance Institute 09/1994- 07/1996

Publications

- Ma, Lin and Lezhou Su. "Information Retrieval and Vocabulary Acquisition - an Empirical Study of ESL." *Foreign Languages-Academic Journal of Sichuan International Studies University* no. 1 (2009) [Chinese Social Sciences Citation Index]
- Su, Lezhou. "Metaphors of English-Learning Experience of Chinese Speakers." *International Association for International Communication Studies* 17, no. 1 (2008)
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- Su, Lezhou. "Incorporating Foreign Language Teaching Into Environmental Education." Paper presented at 2011 Conference of Environmental and Public Health Development - Technology, Policy and Entrepreneurship, New York, August 2011.

- Su, Lezhou. "Representation of Minority Community On Online News Media in China." Presented at International Association for Intercultural Communication Studies Conference of 2007, Harbin, China. August 2007.
- Su, Lezhou. Guidebook for IELTS Writing. Beijing: China Building Material Industry Publishing House, 2003. ISBN 7-80159-373-1

Additional Academic and Training Experience

- Served as Chair of the panel "Three Takes on Films: Genre, Auteurs, Pos-Colonial" at the 39th Louisville Conference On Literature and Culture since 1900, Feb. 2011
- Participated in developing Banking English Proficiency Test commissioned by Agriculture Bank of China (One of main participants for the test syllabus)
- Attended 2010 United States Foreign Policy Forum sponsored by National Committee on United States-China Relations.
- Member of Chinese Language Teachers Association
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