A POETIC MEDITATION ON EXISTENCE
-- A STUDY OF THREE NOVELS BY YU HUA

by

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Abstract

This research paper makes an overall analysis of Yu Hua's three novels: *Crying Out in the Drizzle*, *To live* and *Xu Sanguan Sells his Blood* in order to establish that Yu Hua's constant aim in his writing is to examine the existence of human beings marginalized in history. While not necessarily aiming at overt political criticism, Yu Hua's works seek to identify how individuals survive or fail to survive in Mao Zedong's China.

This research paper begins with an examination of Yu Hua's early life, discuss how he started his writing career, reveal his attitude to writing and world view through a brief analysis of his early short stories as well as through a clarification of his involvement in the so-called "Avant-Garde School." I then concentrate on Yu Hua's three long novels: *Crying out in the Drizzle*, which is regarded as the climax of Yu Hua's experimental writing as well as a transitional work to his more traditional realistic writing style; *To Live* and *Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood*, the latter two works marking a successful change in his writing style. This thesis will then systematically examine the following aspects of these novels: plot structure, theme, vision, historical background, cultural implications, psychology, archetypal symbols, narrative technique and style.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ................................................................. ii
Table of Contents ......................................................... iii
Acknowledgements ........................................................ iv
Introduction ................................................................. 1
Chapter One: About Yu Hua .............................................. 9
Chapter Two: Existence through a Child's Eyes ....................... 34
Chapter Three: To Live Is Victory ...................................... 59
Chapter Four: Blooding Selling - the Ceremony of Existence .... 80
Conclusion: A Poetic Meditation on Existence ......................... 100
Bibliography ............................................................... 108
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Novel is the great prose form in which an author thoroughly explores, by means of experimental selves (characters), some great themes of existence.

--- Milan Kundera The Art of the Novel

Introduction

Chinese literature has experienced a series of intense movements since 1978, the particular historical juncture when the utopian mood in Mao Zedong's China began to decline. Various literary schools emerged in Mainland China after this time, including that of Scar Literature (伤痕文学), Introspection Literature (反思文学), Nativist Literature (寻根文学) and so forth. In 1986, the literary critic Li Tuo (李陀) realized that another literary movement of specific significance was fast approaching. This particular movement brought to Chinese literature a new writing style and attitude which elevated language into the foremost position and tried to modify the interaction between the literary work and the reader, criticism, and society. Li Tuo further pointed out that Yu Hua (余华) and his works were worthy of primary attention and study in order to have a better understanding of this latest meaningful Chinese literary movement, labeled experimental writing by Li Tuo and avant-garde writing by other critics.

After the publication of his short story "On the Road at Eighteen" (十八岁出门远行) in November 1986, Yu Hua wrote a series of experimental short stories such as "1986" (一九八六年), "Mistakes at the Side of the River" (河边错误), "One Kind of Reality

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2 Li Tuo, "Preface" to On the Road at Eighteen 十八岁出门远行, Taiwan: Yuanliu Publishing Co, Ltd
"(现实一种), "Classical Love" (古典爱情), "World Like Mist" (世事如烟) in only two years, casting the Chinese literary scene into something of a state of shock. Both ordinary readers and literary critics alike could not help but ask why he wrote in this manner. This was a necessary question. People were unfamiliar not only with his writing style and technique but also with his attitude. Li Tuo, for his part, recalled his feelings when he first read the short story “On the Road at Eighteen”: “what accompanied my artistic pleasure obtained from an intuitive reading was a sort of panic and confusion: How should I understand this work? Or how should I read it? ... I had an obscure premonition: probably we will face an ever new group of writers and writings which we are not very familiar with... Later, Yu Hua and his series of works proved my premonition correct.”

Li Tuo’s comments represented the general response of the contemporary Chinese literary scene towards Yu Hua’s writing; Yu Hua's early short stories challenged our understanding of the relationship between literature and reality, language and objective world.

During the period roughly from 1986 to 1990, with the writing represented by the above mentioned short stories, Yu Hua achieved fame as one of the leading figures of the Chinese "Avant-Garde School." His works were warmly debated and analyzed by critics in many influential Chinese literary journals including *Contention in Literature and Arts, Contemporary Literary Criticism, Fiction Criticism* and so forth. Literary criticism on Yu Hua's early short stories can be placed into two primary categories. One

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Ibid., the Chinese origin is:

"伴随着那种从直觉中获得的艺术鉴赏的喜悦的一种惶恐：我该怎么理解这个作品，或者我该怎样读它？... 我有一种模模糊糊的预感：我们可能要面临一种新型的作家以及我们不很熟悉的写作。后来余华以他的一系列作品证实了我的预感。" p. 9.
stresses Yu Hua's innovative writing technique and labels him an avant-gardist. The critics in this group are represented by Professor Jing Wang, who regards Yu Hua and some other youthful writers' early writing as "a mere linguistic maze, a pure energy field, and an aesthetic game of narration." She further claims that they "construct a new fictional subject that has no historical, socio-political or even personal identity, the avant-gardists map out an imaginary subject position that language simultaneously creates and deconstructs." Though her comments on Yu Hua's works are widely accepted by many critics, I feel, however, that in a certain sense her interpretation is rather monolithic and dogmatic. It seems to be a misreading of Yu Hua's early stories.

Another category emphasizes the profound and far-reaching themes of Yu Hua's early works, regarding his experiments with language as simply another kind of literary exploration. The critics in this group are represented by Chinese critics Huang Yunzhou, Chang Qie, Mo Luo and Yang Fan for instance. They take "the violence in Yu Hua's short stories as a medium of his concern with human existence. It is a kind of humanism with ultimate concern for human beings." Mo Luo and Yang Fan have written a thematic analysis of Yu Hua's "1986" that demonstrated Yu Hua's attitude toward history -- Yu Hua reminds people not to forget history, showing his respect and veneration for it. These scholars' statements refute Jing Wang's above-mentioned judgement that Yu

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5 Ibid., p. 10

6 Huang Yunzhou 黃雲洲 and Chang Qie 常切, "Core Codes in Yu Hua's Short Stories" 余华小说的核心语码 in *Novel Criticism*, 小说评论. The Chinese original is: "暴力...作为关注人的生存的中介... 以人为本的人道主义精神." vol.1, 1994, p. 54.

Hua's works are merely linguistic mazes with no basis in historical, socio-political or personal reality.

In the 1990s, however, Yu Hua made a dramatic change from experimental writing obsessed with violence and death to a new, more realistic narrative on popular society with his novels Crying Out in the Drizzle (在细雨中呼喊), To Live (活着) and Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood (许三观卖血记). These three long novels transcended his experimental writing, revealed his diversified writing talents, strengthened his leading position in contemporary Chinese literature, and established him as one of China's best writers.

Many research papers and articles have been published which discuss and analyze these three novels, providing deep insights into these works. The criticisms on Yu Hua's latter three novels are mainly conducted by Chinese scholars and critics such as Chen Sihe, Wu Yiqin and others. Professor Chen Sihe indicates that Yu Hua rebuilds or revives Chinese popular society in these novels. For his part, Wu Yiqin attempts a comparison of the writing style between Yu Hua's early stories and his novel Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood, stressing that the later work marks Yu Hua's farewell to "hypocritical works". In their writings, critics Yu Xuan and Zhang Hong argue about

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9 Yu Hua 余华, To Live活着, Hong Kong: Boyi Press 博益出版集团有限公司, 1994.
10 Yu Hua 余华, Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood 三观卖血记, Hong Kong: Boyi Press 博益出版集团有限公司, 1996.
one of the obvious techniques - repetition - in Yu Hua's novels. While these articles make various helpful and interesting assertions, compared with research conducted on Yu Hua's early short stories, unfortunately, there remains no systematic and comprehensive analysis of the three novels. It appears that most criticisms thus far deal only with a specific aspect of these stories, with much more attention paid to their themes than to their writing techniques and styles. This deficiency in the scholarship on Yu Hua is the motive force behind the writing of this research paper. In this paper, I hope to make an overall analysis of Yu Hua's three novels -- *Crying Out in the Drizzle*, *To Live* and *Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood* -- in order to fill this void and to establish that Yu Hua's constant aim in his writing is to examine the existence of human beings marginalized in history. While not necessarily aiming at overt political criticism, Yu Hua's works seek to identify how individuals survive, or fail to survive, in Mao's China.

Milan Kundera, in his book *The Art of the Novel*, writes that the novel is "the great form in which an author thoroughly explores, by means of experimental selves (characters), some great themes of existence" and that the novelist is "an explorer feeling his way in an effort to reveal some unknown aspect of existence." Although describing the "novel" and "novelist" as they have come to be defined in the Western literary tradition, Kundera's definitions still manage to capture the essence of much of Yu Hua's literary effects. The latter author performs a poetic meditation on existence with his writings. Yu Hua makes the Mao era and the related political events of this time the

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existential setting for the characters in his novels. He deliberately fails to provide a clear explanation of historical events, but instead involves these events in the fates of his characters, all ordinary individuals, retaining marginal positions in the various political movements. He resurrects these individuals in history by permitting them to have direct relationships or conflicts with historical events. The tragic existence of these individuals much more clearly reflects the historical catastrophe that was Mao's China.

This research paper will begin with an examination of Yu Hua's early life, discuss how he started his writing career, reveal his attitude to writing and world view through a brief analysis of his early short stories as well as through a clarification of his involvement in the so-called "Avant-Garde School." I will then concentrate on Yu Hua's three long novels: Crying out in the Drizzle, which is regarded as the climax of Yu Hua's experimental writing as well as a transitional work to his more traditional realistic writing style; To Live and Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood, the latter two works marking a successful change in his writing style. This thesis will then systematically examine the following aspects of these novels: plot structure, theme, vision, historical background, cultural implications, psychology, archetypal symbols, narrative technique and style.

Before beginning the literary criticism of Yu Hua's three novels, it is necessary to first provide some background information on Yu Hua, including his early life, early literary influences from other writers, and his literary attitude and outlook on the world through a combined analysis of his early short stories. It would also be helpful to clarify the so-called "avant-garde" label which has been awarded him by some critics. Yu Hua's early life plays a decisive role in his writing career, with the visions in his fictions closely connected to his childhood experiences. His attitude to literature and his outlook on the
world determine the unique manner in which he wrote those early short stories and also extensively influence his writing of the long novels. An examination of the term "avant-garde" as applied to Yu Hua, a term which, in my opinion, does not apply to him, is a necessary consideration of this chapter as well. All information contained in Chapter I, I believe, is necessary for readers to more fully understand Yu Hua's later novels.

The second chapter will closely examine *Crying Out in the Drizzle*. Plot summary will be followed by theme analysis. In this story, Yu Hua tries to express his understanding of loneliness, anxiety of growth, human nature and uncertainty of fate through the perspective of a child. The author's historical and psychological analyses penetrate the analysis of theme. The title of this story contains two important symbols: drizzle and crying out. Drizzle is the background of crying out, while, drizzle and crying out also represent two modes of existence, with death as their common and eternal ending. This novel evolves in four temporally parallel chapters through an adult's recollection of his childhood. Yu Hua applies a multi-leveled first-person narrator who shifts alternatively from protagonist-narrator to witness-narrator. The effects of intelligibility, vividness and economy are achieved by an alternative application of summarized and descriptive languages.

Chapter Three will deal with *To Live*. The protagonist Fugui's marginal life is considered on two levels: with regards to a series of political/historical events and a series of deaths. Fugui himself is symbolized by the image of an old cow in the story. Putting this story into a framework and using two first-person narrators, Yu Hua employs plain but delicate language to match Fugui's peasant identity. Narrative repetition is another feature of this story, with occasional interjections which help
alleviate the burden which this repetition might otherwise cause.

*Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood* is the last novel to be analyzed in this research paper. I will first introduce the story, then point out its symbolism and themes. In this novel, Yu Hua extols the Confucian values which remain in the lives of ordinary Chinese people and in popular society. History serves as the background of the story with blood as the key symbol. In the traditional Chinese conception, blood is inherited from one's ancestors and symbolizes life and vitality. In this story, however, by selling his blood, Xu Sanguan shows his reverence towards life and confirms his own value and self-worth. The blood donation itself becomes a kind of living ceremony. With regards to writing technique and style, I will concentrate on the analysis of authorial silence, polyphonic narrative and narrative repetition and how they help to reveal the meaning or theme of the story.

In the conclusion, this thesis will seek to find points of overlap or difference among the three novels. After so doing, I will try to locate Yu Hua's current place in contemporary Chinese literature and indicate future directions which, I believe, scholarship should take to provide a more complete picture of Yu Hua and his works.
Chapter One: About Yu Hua

In his influential book *Form and Meaning in Fiction*, Norman Friedman indicates that the relationship between a literary work and its writer involves such questions as those of the author's biography, psychology, temperament, outlook, values and attitude, and vision of life. The peculiar temperament of a writer -- the pattern of his intellectual and moral qualities, and biographical factors play their parts as a selecting principle in the form of his works. In the same vein, in order to fully understand Yu Hua's literary works, it is necessary to have a general view of his early life, the early literary influence he received from other writers, and his literary attitude and world outlook.

It might first be helpful to locate Yu Hua and his early writings in the Chinese literary scene of the 1980s, in reference particularly to his place among the so-called "Avant-Guard School." Yu Hua was labeled as the representative writer of the Chinese "Avant-Garde School" by critics in the 1980s. Does this military metaphor "avant-garde" accurately reflect the nature and features of Yu Hua's early writings? Yu Hua has his own understanding about Chinese "avant-gardism." Before we go into Yu Hua's interpretation, it would be better to have a general understanding of modernism and avant-gardism.

In the early twentieth century, the process of modernization expands to take in virtually the whole world, and the developing world culture of "modernism" achieves striking triumphs in art and thought and enjoys popularity especially after World War

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16 Ibid., p. 35.
"Modernism is widely used to identify new and distinctive features in the subjects, forms, concepts, and styles of literature and the other arts... It is a deliberate and radical break with some of the traditional bases not only of western art, but of Western culture in general." Modernists challenge the certainties of traditional modes of social organization, religion and morality and so forth. The phenomenon of avant-garde is itself a prominent feature of modernism. Renato Poggioli, in his *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, examines avant-garde art through what it reveals, inside and outside of art itself, of a common psychological condition and a unique ideological fact. The term of avant-garde originally remains as a sociopolitical concept rather than a cultural and artistic one. However, to the early decade of the twentieth century, "the isolated image and the abbreviated term avant-garde became another synonym for the artistic avant-garde, while the political notion functioned almost solely as rhetoric and was no longer used exclusively by those faithful to the revolutionary and subversive ideals." "Avant-Garde School" means a small group of radical and self-aware artists and writers who "insists on the necessity of liquidating the art of the past, once and for all, liquidating tradition." The frame of reference for the Western avant-garde is bourgeois culture. The avant-garde artists and writers try to break the restrictions of conventional art and literature by applying ever-new forms to express some ignored or even forbidden themes. As a result, they alienate themselves from the established social order and

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20 Ibid., p. 13.
conventional readership.

When transplanting this western term onto Chinese soil, however, many elements need to be taken into consideration. The frame of reference must first be clarified for Chinese avant-garde. The world trend to avant-gardism came to Mainland China in the 1980s, several scores of years later than that in the West. So-called "Avant-garde Literature" in China appeared after 1986 and refers only to the literature of Mainland China. If we put the works of the Chinese "Avant-Garde School" into the framework of world literature, it would probably be considered "post-garde," a phenomenon which stems from the realities of China. China had been isolated from the outside world for almost thirty years, from 1949 to 1979, three decades during which Chinese literature was distorted as mere formulary writing to eulogize socialism and the totalitarianism of the Chinese Communist Party. To a certain degree, then, a rather gaping crevice existed in Chinese literature between 1949 and 1979. This was the situation faced by Yu Hua and his other fellow youthful writers when they started writing in the 1980s. Though the early 1980s witnessed the arrival of Scar Literature, Introspection Literature and Nativist Literature on the Chinese literary scene, there was no real breakthrough in narrative technique. Under these circumstances, Yu Hua and other young writers, such as Su Tong, Ge Fei, Bei Cun, led a narrative revolution in Chinese literature with their experiments in language. The appearance of the Chinese "Avant-Garde School" may be credited to the defects in narrative style, defects caused by political pressure. The

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difference between Chinese and western avant-gardisms lies in the fact that western avant-gardism occurred in the general process of literary development whereas Chinese avant-gardism developed to fill a literary gap. Yu Hua recalls his motivation and that of other avant-gardists' writing in the 1980s:

We were sincere. When we started writing short stories at the very beginning, we were dissatisfied with the current literature. At that time, most literary works had the same narrative as quality essays written by a high school student, except the wroks of Mo Yan, Ma Yuan, Can Xue and ever earlier writers such as Zhang Chengzhi, Han Shaogong, Wang Meng and Wang Zengqi. We tried to use what we felt was the most genuine form of expression... In the 1980s, we improved the language to a great degree of professional proficiency, and our language was sincere.

In fact, Yu Hua and his fellow writers were railing against the writing model preferred during the Maoist era. Yu Hua himself parallels his writings with that of Mo Yan, Shi Tiesheng and Wang Meng, regarding his experiment with language as simply another kind of literary exploration. He thinks a good writer should have a good command of various narrative techniques much like a craftsman masters his handicraft.

Yu Hua took up his writing just like a craftsman. "That's why I was identified as an avant-garde writer!" Yu Hua concludes. In actuality, Yu Hua never considers the writing technique as an end in itself, but rather he finds that, "Writing technique is a kind of expression, a kind of accumulation of knowledge obtained through reading, life experiences and training of the thought processes. The talent and accomplishments of


24 Yu Hua, "About Two Questions" 两个问题 in Can I Believe in Myself? In this article, Yu Hua illustrates his viewpoints on Chinese literature tradition and avant-gardism. I interpret some of his ideas in this paper. p.p. 173-180.
the writer determine what kind of technique he will apply."25

Yu Hua is not overly concerned with the term "avant-garde" itself. He indicates, "There is no single writer who writes for a single school." For Yu Hua, avant-garde means searching for the ultimate freedom so as to obtain more inspiration and imagination. To some extent, avant-garde is just one method of writing rather than a mode of thinking. Yu Hua regards the avant-garde school as part of Chinese modern literature more generally, declaring that "After the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, from Scar Literature (伤痕文学), Introspection Literature (反思文学), Nativist Literature (寻根文学) to Avant-garde literature (先锋文学), a period [a punctuation mark] can be drawn. This mark indicates that China has its own literature."26 Yu Hua also considers the avant-garde school to be comprised of those people at the forefront of this era. In this sense, Yu Hua is himself an avant-gardist, because he never stops his exploration for the truth of this world through the application of different narrative techniques, images and symbols in his writing.

Early Life

The vision of life reflected in a writer's works is often closely connected with his personal life. That Dickens' childhood was what it was certainly throws light for instance on certain recurring key characters such as orphans and rejected children in his novels. Understanding Kafka and Zhang Ailing's real life problems with their fathers also helps

25 Xu Xiaoyi, Discussion is the Way, "技巧就是一种表达，是作家阅读、生活和思维训练的一种积蓄。一个作家自身的素养和才华决定了他如何使用他的技巧。"

26 Ibid, "文化大革命以后，从伤痕文学，反思文学，寻根文学，到先锋文学，划了一个句号。这个句号表明，中国已经有文学了。"
readers better interpret "The Metamorphosis" and "The Golden Cangue." Similarly, in
order for readers to obtain a better understanding of Yu Hua's obsession with violence
and death in his early short stories, it will be helpful to review his early life.

As the second boy in a doctor's family, Yu Hua was born at noon on April 3, 1960 in
Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. Many years later, in an article "My Earliest Reality," Yu
provided a vivid and touching description of his childhood.27 He stayed in Hangzhou for
a short period of time with his family. His mother often mentioned their experiences
there, describing in a rather nostalgia manner the house and the surroundings in which
they used to live.

When Yu Hua was one year old, his father left Hangzhou for Haiyan (海盐), in order
to realize his great aspiration of becoming a surgeon. Later, his mother took Yu Hua and
his brother to Haiyan as well. His mother summarized her impressions of this small
materially impoverished town when they first arrived there in the following statement:
"One could hardly even see a bicycle!"28 Yu Hua's memories began in this place with no
bicycles, where the main street paved by slab stones was narrower than a lane, where the
wooden electrical poles at the sides of the street buzzed all day long. The hospital in
which Yu's parents worked was divided in two by a river. The inpatient department,
located on the south bank of the river, was connected with the clinic and dining hall on
the north bank by a narrow wooden bridge, large cracks covering its surface. Yu Hua
recalled that one of his feet often slipped into a crack and the river below always

27 For Yu Hua's autobiography, see "My Earliest Reality" in Can I Believe in Myself? all the
information about his early life is drawn this book, p.p. 205-212.

28 Ibid., "连一辆自行车都看不到。" p. 206.
frightened him. In the summer, his parents' colleagues often sat leisurely on the unstable railings of the wooden bridge to smoke and chat, a sight which made young Yu Hua admire them greatly. This image of his hometown, Haiyan, remained permanently etched in Yu Hua's mind. These narrow streets and rivers with people standing or sitting leisurely on the bridge kept recurring in his short stories and novels a score of years later.

The young Yu Hua was a quiet and docile boy. His mother remembered that every afternoon she went to the kindergarten to pick him up and found him sitting in exactly the same place she had left him in the morning. He sat there alone while his young friends played nearby. When Yu Hua was four years old, he started to come home from kindergarten by himself, or more accurately speaking, he was led home by his brother who was two years his senior. His brother, however, always forgot his duty, going somewhere else to play and leaving Yu Hua behind. Consequently young Yu Hua had to return home alone, dividing the way into two parts. The first part involved walking straight from the kindergarten to the hospital, while in the second, he trudged into a small lane opposite the hospital. His home was located at the end of that lane.

When Yu Hua grew older, his parents locked him and his brother upstairs at home instead of sending them to kindergarten. The young brothers routinely bent themselves over the windowsill to enjoy the scenery outside, for the countryside where peasants worked in the fields was just out that window. Yu Hua recollected that the most exciting moment of the day was when these peasants finished their day's labor and one man would stand on the ridge of the field and shout, "it's time to knock off."29 People

29 Ibid., “收工了。” p. 207.
gradually walked to the edge of the field and some women repeated "Knock off" again and again. In the midst of these cries, the two young brothers watched more peasants walk on the ridges with hoes on their shoulders. With their mothers shouting the names of their sons, the children ran with baskets in their hands. Several of them ran so fast that they fell down. This scene must have impressed Yu Hua deeply because more than two decades later he described the same picture in his novel *Crying Out in the Drizzle* when the young protagonist bent himself out the upstairs window with his friend Guoqing (国庆) to view the vast field outside.30

In Yu Hua's memory, his parents seldom stayed at home during his childhood. Sometimes, he and his brother were locked at home the entire night. The only thing they could do during these times was to move tables and chairs and fight with each other. On each occasion, Yu Hua lost the battle, crying until his parents returned in order that they would punish his brother. Most often, however, his parents did not come back until he lost his voice and fell asleep. During this time, Yu Hua's mother was often on night duty. She bought food from a dining hall, taking it back home as her sons' supper. After dinner, she hurriedly returned to the hospital. For his part, Yu Hua's father spent most of his time in the operating room, often returning home after Yu Hua and his brother had already fallen asleep and leaving again before they woke up. Yu Hua recalled that in his childhood dreams, he often heard someone shouting out the window "Doctor Hua! Doctor Hua! Emergency!"31

When Yu Hua's brother started to go to primary school, Yu also obtained his own liberation from home. He followed his brother to school every day, playing outside the

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classroom when his brother was in class. After school, they went back home together.
Occasionally his brother took him into the classroom, but was severely reprimanded by
the teacher for so doing. From then on, Yu Hua never dared to enter the classroom with
his brother.

The relationships with his family described by Yu Hua seems rather apathetic.
Actually there is nothing unusual in this -- it depicts a typical family in Mainland China
in the 1960s. Since 1949, the Chinese Communist Party had gradually destroyed the
tenderness and warmth felt by individuals towards one another, even those from the
same family. Family was far less important than a Communist Party career. Yu Hua
presents exactly the same family model in Crying Out in the Drizzle. In that story, both
Doctor Su and his wife work in a hospital, while their two sons are left uncared for.
Doctor Su's family is even more apathetic than is Yu Hua's own. When the elder son Su
Yu (苏宇) is dying in bed in the early morning, neither his parents nor his brother realize
that he is seriously ill. Su Yu's eyes beg for help from his family members. This family,
however, neglects these silent pleas, leaving him alone at home. "He cries out from his
heart to his brother, but the answer is the door closing."

Yu Hua did not say much about his relationship with his brother during childhood,
but some of his short stories and novels reveal his less than positive vision of this
fraternal relationship. In "One Kind of Reality," for example, the brothers Shangang
(山冈) and Shanfeng (山峰) kill each other without showing any mercy. In Crying Out
in the Drizzle, the protagonist Guanglin and his brother and Su's brothers never get along

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32 Yu Hua, Crying Out in the Drizzle, "他向弟弟发出内心的呼喊，回答他的门的关上。" p. 135.
particularly well, even going so far as to take a hostile attitude towards one another. Perhaps this is one reflection of Yu Hua’s feelings about fraternal relationships as experienced during the Maoist era.

Since Yu Hua grew up in the environs of a hospital, he always remained calm when facing death and blood. Young Yu Hua often sat beside the door of the operating room to wait for his father. Every time his father came out, his white gown, hat and gloves were stained with blood. Sometimes a nurse followed his father with a bucket of blood and fleshy stuff in her hand.

Later, the family moved into the hospital. The window of Yu Hua's bedroom was directly opposite the mortuary. Yu often heard the mourning cries of the relatives of the dead people during the night "the cries of their relatives resound through the endless night and rise up with the sun at dawn."33 In his childhood, he always awoke from dreams, listening to those sad sounds which were so enduring and touching that he felt they were not cries but the most moving ballad in this world. In the meanwhile, he discovered a truth -- many people die in the middle of the night. In the daytime, he frequently stared at that mortuary which, masked by several trees and seemingly without a door, looked lonely, solitary, even mysterious. At noon one summer day, young Yu Hua entered this room, finding nothing but a concrete bed inside. He stood beside the bed and touched it cautiously. "I felt incomparably cool and refreshed. On that scorching afternoon, for me it was not death, but life."34 Afterwards, at the most sweltering

33 Yu Hua, the quotation and information in this paragraph come from "Preface to Italian Version of One Kind of Reality," in Can I Believe in Myself?  "他们亲人的哭声也从漫漫黑夜里响彻过来，在黎明时和日出一起升起。" p. 152.

moment of the summer day, young Yu Hua often came to this room and lay down on the cool concrete bed to have a nap. He was afraid of neither death nor blood.

This period of life in the hospital deeply affected Yu Hua's future literary creations. For example, this small mortuary and the concrete bed appear three times in Yu Hua's novel *To Live*. The protagonist Fugui (福贵) experiences the death of his son, daughter and son-in-law in the same hospital, and their bodies are laid on the same concrete bed.

In *Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood*, the hospital is also an important setting, where the protagonist Xu Sanguan goes to sell his blood twelve times during his life. The vivid descriptions of the hospital and people there stem from Yu Hua's childhood experiences.

Similarly, violence, fear, death and blood also fill his writings, especially his short stories. His friends and readers kept asking him, "Why do you write so much about death and violence?" Yu Hua indicated he did not know how to answer this question, asking another question in reply, "Why is there so much violence and death in life?"\(^{35}\) Yu Hua, later admitted the remote memory of his childhood life may be a source of some of his writings. Those hidden and fragmentary impressions of his life as a small boy certainly played a great role in determining his future literary creations.

Though he could dauntlessly face death and blood, young Yu Hua did have a secret fear. He recalled, "at that time, my only fear was seeing treetops shining in the moonlight at night. The sharp treetops illuminated and extended into the sky. Every time this scene made me tremble with fear. I did not know the reason. In a word, I was scared as soon as I saw it."\(^{36}\) Years later, in his *Crying Out in the Drizzle*, Yu Hua

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\(^{35}\) Yu Hua, "Preface to Italian Version of *One kind of reality*," in *Can I Believe in Myself*? pp. 151-153.

\(^{36}\) Yu Hua, "My Earliest Reality" in *Can I Believe in Myself*? "当时我唯一的恐惧是在黑夜，看到月光照耀中的树梢，尖细树梢在月光里闪闪发亮，伸向空中，这情景每次都让我发抖，我也不知道是什么原因，总之我—
specifically described this secret fear of a seven-year-old boy.

Yu Hua finished primary school in 1973, the same year in which the small town opened a library. His father applied for two library cards, one for Yu Hua and one for his brother; from this time on, Yu Hua started reading fiction, especially novels. He almost finished all the Chinese novels of the Maoist era, including such well-known works as *Bright Sunny Day* (《艳阳天》) and *Golden Road* (《金光大道》) by Hao Ran, *Shining Red Star* (《闪闪的红星》), and *Wind and Cloud in the Mine* (《矿山风云》). The latter two were his favorites.

However, Yu Hua found most of the works of fiction relatively boring, particularly compared to the more fascinating posters on the street. Every day, on his way back home from school, he spent about an hour in front of these posters. Yu Hua observed how the people he knew hurled invectives and spread slanderous rumors against each other on these posters in the most malicious language. On these large posters, people's imaginations were brought into full play as all the literary techniques were applied, including fabrication, exaggeration, analogy, irony and the like. Yu Hua states, "This is the earliest literature I read. On the street, in front of the big posters, I began to like literature." It sounds somewhat ironic, humorous even, that those posters initiated Yu Hua's interest in literature. It is true, however, that the posters were far more interesting than was "Command Literature" (命令文学). Yu Hua frequently employs those large posters in his writings, giving detailed descriptions of their contents, as in *Xu Sanguan*
Sells His Blood, To Live, "1986" and so on.

After Yu Hua finished middle school, he studied in a medical institute, becoming a dentist in the town health center a year later. Yu Hua, however, felt this job was too stiff, too boring. He found it unbearable to work eight hours a day, to punch in and out on schedule. He preferred more free, imaginative and creative work. In Yu Hua's own words, his primary motive for writing was to avoid having to be a dentist any longer. At that time, his greatest ambition was to work in the town's cultural center, because people there did not need to sit in an office eight hours a day but could instead wander around town. There were three ways to work in the cultural center: music, painting and writing. The first two were too difficult for Yu Hua, requiring skills he did not possess. As a result, he started writing. Five years later, after examining thousands of opened mouths at the dental clinic, Yu Hua entered into the cultural center as he had desired. Thereafter, all the changes in his life have had something to do with writing. Later, he left Haiyan for Jiaxing (嘉兴), then moved to Beijing.

Yu Hua had been in Haiyan for almost thirty years. He was familiar with everything there. He grew up with the streets and river in this small town. Without any doubt, his life in Haiyan provided a profound and far-reaching influence on his writing, as he concludes, "Every corner [of Haiyan] can be found in my mind. The dialect [of that place] comes out of my mouth automatically when I talk to myself. My past inspiration stems from that place, so does my future inspiration." He continues to confirm that his early life in Haiyan helps determine the main elements in his writing. What he does now

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39 Ibid., "那里的每个角落我都能在脑子里找到，那里的方言在我自言自语时会脱口而出。我过去的灵感都来自那里，今后的灵感也会从那里产生。" p. 211.
is to review his past. Yu Hua confesses that with the passage of time, he has increasing feelings towards Haiyan; regardless of the type of story he writes, the characters and scenes automatically return to his hometown. Yu Hua emphasizes the relationship between his writing and hometown by stating that, "As long as I write, I will go back home."40

Early Literary Influences

Yu Hua frankly admits that he has been deeply influenced by foreign literature. From his early life can it be seen that Yu did not grow up surrounded by literature. Fortunately, when he did begin to try his luck at literature, China was experiencing a kind of liberation from Maoist totalitarianism. Literature returned once again as part of people's lives. Many classical Chinese books and foreign novels were reprinted during this period. People lined up in front of bookstores to buy these books, reflecting a kind of thirst, accumulated by countless people, the thirst of a whole era for books. Yu Hua placed himself in the midst of those people, as a drop of water merging into the sea.

At the outset, Yu Hua was confused when faced with such a vast world of foreign literature as well as classical and contemporary Chinese literature. Like drifting on an ocean, he lost his direction. Reading, for him, became a kind of struggle for existence. When finally able to make a decision, he chose foreign literature as his preferred reading, stating, "My choice is writer's choice, or a choice for writing instead of a choice of attitude toward life and experience. Only from foreign literature can I really understand what writing techniques are, then realize the richness of literary expressions

40 Yu Hua, Can I Believe in Myself? 我要写作，就是回家。 p. 251.
through the practice of my own writing.” As a Chinese writer, Yu Hua was fortunate in
that he was nurtured by foreign literature.

The Japanese writer Kawabata Yasunari (川端康成) was the first foreign author to
deeply influence Yu Hua's writing. In 1980, Yu Hua read Kawabata's short story "The
Izu Dancer" in Ningbo (宁波) and was shocked by Kawabata's writing. The early 1980s
were the golden era for Scar Literature in Mainland China, but from "The Izu Dancer"
Yu discovered another way to express trauma, a manner of expression much more
powerful and touching than that of mere Scar Literature. In the following five or six
years, Yu Hua was infatuated with Kawabata, a sensitive and exquisite writer, from
whom he learned how to express details by describing one's feelings. This laid a solid
foundation for his future writing. From that point forward, no matter how quickly he
wrote, he never forgot details.

It was perhaps harmful for Yu Hua, however, to be obsessed with one writer for such
a long period of time. Fortunately, he encountered Kafka's writing in the spring of
1986. Kafka's "Metamorphosis" and "Ein Landarzt" made Yu realize the freedom of
form and expression in literature. In this regard Milan Kundera describes Kafka's novels
as "the seamless fusion of dream and reality; supremely lucid gaze set on the modern
world, along with the most unfettered imagination." It is this unfettered imagination
which attracted Yu Hua and emancipated him from his obsession with Kawabata. Yu

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41 Ibid., “我的选择是一位作家的选择，或者说是为了写作的选择，而不是生活态度和人生感受的选择。因为只
有在外国文学里，我才真正了解写作的技巧，然后通过自己的写作去认识文学有多么丰富的表达。”p. 193.


43 See citation 24.

44 Kundera, The Art of the Novel, p. 81.
regarded Kafka's writing as free as the wind and, at that time, he felt his writing should be similarly relaxed and free. At the end of 1986, he published his first celebrated short story "On the Road at Eighteen."

In literature, writers necessarily affect each other's writing styles. Other writers' influences encourage a writer to constantly discover new things to make his or her own writing more independent. Yu Hua asserts, "The legacies of Kawabata and Kafka are two museums which tell us what has once happened in the history of literature; they are not banks and do not support any successors." While Kawabata taught Yu Hua the basic skills of writing, Kafka informed him of the liberation of thought. Both Kawabata and Kafka are writers of extreme individualism; their feelings are entirely personal. It is for this reason that their writings are so moving and touching, and it is also for this reason that Yu Hua learned from them.

With the passage of time, Yu found himself attracted to a greater range of writing styles, thereby permitting an increasing number of writers to enter his field of vision. Yu Hua still regrets, for instance, that it is too late for him to truly understand Lu Xun's works. Though he read Lu Xun's short stories at an early age, he unfortunately did not completely realize Lu Xun's value until he became a mature writer. In the mid 1990s, he re-read Lu Xun's works and was deeply attracted by the brief narrative and profound meaning of Lu's short stories. He concluded, "I think it is too late for me to read Lu Xun, because my writing can hardly go back at this time. However, he will also have an effect on my future life, reading and writing. I feel he will support me emotionally and"

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45 Yu Hua, "Why I Write" 我为什么写作 in Can I Believe in Myself? "川端康成和卡夫卡的遗产是两座博物馆，所要告诉我们的是文学上曾经出现过什么；而不是两座银行，他们不供养任何后来者." p. 94.
ideologically at every moment."\textsuperscript{46}

Though Yu Hua's writing is closely related to foreign literature, he cannot evade his profound connection with Chinese tradition and culture. Chinese culture is neither a kind of influence nor a model, but the very blood which supplies his life -- his image, body, language, life attitude, dietary habits and character and so forth. Yu Hua insists that all his feelings stem from the soil of China. The roads, villages and rivers given life by his pen will never be the Russian scenes and his characters will never perform Spanish dances. His works express the voice of his own nation since they come from his inner heart, his soul. Yu Hua confirms that Chinese traditions endow him with life and growth, and western literature provides him a working method.

\textbf{Early Literary Attitude and World Outlook}

The publication of "On the Road at Eighteen" established Yu Hua's reputation as an innovative writer. For Yu Hua, this six-thousand-word short story had a far-reaching and profound meaning because it reflected a new attitude to his writing -- the expression of truth.\textsuperscript{47} In this quest for truth, Yu Hua is similar to Marcel Proust who set himself the very goal of philosophers and mystics: the search for truth which necessarily takes the form of "a depiction of error."\textsuperscript{47} Proust applied "the depiction of error" to distinguish his understanding of truth from "useless duplication of days gone

\textsuperscript{46}ibid. "我认为我读鲁迅读得太晚了，因为那时候我的创作已经很难回头了，但是他仍然会对我今后的生活，阅读和写作产生影响，我觉得他时刻都会在感情上和思想上支持我." p. 254.

by." Yu Hua also indicates all his efforts at writing are attempts to approach the truth, a truth with specific connotations.

In 1986, Yu Hua began to think philosophically about the concept of truth. His meditation on truth was the first step in his exploration of human existence. Yu indicated that before 1986, his mode of thinking was tightly confined by common sense. That year, however, he suddenly broke free of the bonds of common sense, exploring the concept of truth on a more abstract level. He determined that life itself is not real. Only people's spirits are real. He emphasized the sensation or perception of the world. Only when people enter into the spiritual world can they truly feel the boundlessness of it. In the spiritual world, all the values provided by common sense are shattered. Yu Hua insisted that people's daily life experiences make them lack imagination. These experiences are only responsible for the superficial level of things, more and more estranged from the essence of spirit. As a result, the connotation of truth in everyday life is inevitably distorted. He felt that an individual's shallowness stems from limitations in personal experience. If, for instance, a writer describes one thing just as it stands, no matter how vivid and honest his description is, he can never reach the true nature of that thing. What is obtained is only a superficial truth. Such a concrete approach to writing must necessarily suffocate the talents of a writer, rendering our world full of only concrete things, such as houses, streets and rivers, without understanding the essence of the world. After Yu Hua concluded that such limited forms of writing could only lead to a superficial truth, he started to look for a new manner of expression. As a result of this


realization, he no longer faithfully described the pattern of a thing, but instead employed a "hypocritical" form much the same as Proust's "depiction of errors." Yu Hua deliberately chose the term "hypocritical", because, in comparison to people's experience and common sense, this form deviated from the order and logic provided by the material world, allowing him to more freely approach the truth or essence of the world.

Yu Hua thinks "On the Road at Eighteen" reflects the truth of life in such a "hypocritical" form. Describing a boy's experiences as he leaves home, this is a well-knit short story which achieves its symbolic effect through a series of displacements. On a bleak highway, a young boy walks alone and tries to find an inn or to hitch a ride from someone. Eventually he gets a lift from a truck driver, himself an apple vendor. Unfortunately, the apples on the truck are robbed and the truck tires are torn off by passing peasants. The driver, however, remains indifferent in the face of this robbery, finally grabbing the boy's bag and leaving with the peasants. The boy stays in the abandoned truck, the inn for which he has been searching.

While this story sounds illogical and absurd, it is highly symbolic, with home symbolizing imprisonment and leaving home as the goal of life. All the displacements taking place on the road, such as the driver's indifference and enthusiasm, as well as the robbery by the peasants, exemplify the lack of reason and the abundance of disorder in the real world. The inn, for its part, signifies eternal peace. Yu Hua uses this symbolic method to reflect his understanding of the real world and also criticize the human nature

50 Ibid., p. 158.
51 Ibid., pp. 158-172. In June 1989, Yu Hua published this famous manifesto to illustrate his writing attitude, causing an intense response in the Chinese Literary Scene.
52 Ibid., p. 158.
after the Maoist era: the truck has more warmth than the people.

In the years 1986 and 1987, Yu Hua also wrote "1986," "Mistakes at the Side of the River," and "One Kind of Reality." When he no longer trusted common sense obtained from reality, he started to pay attention to another kind of reality -- violence. His skepticism about the employment of common sense directly resulted in his extreme ideas about chaos and violence. Yu Hua admitted that in the 1980s he was an angry and grim writer. He was more concerned with the negative or opposite side of reality. The above mentioned three short stories all reveal this alternative view of the world, a world of violence, blood and death, mediums applied by Yu Hua to express his meditation on human existence. "1986," for example, describes a history teacher's self-mutilation, his intention being to remind people of the catastrophe of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. "Mistakes at the Side of the River," for its part, attempts to reveal the author's vision of human relationships by depicting a series of murders committed on the banks of a river. During the period in which he wrote these stories, Yu Hua thought violence stemmed from an individual's innermost desires, that violence was full of passion and enthusiasm. In the face of violence and chaos, civilization has degenerated into but a slogan and order into but an ornament. Ten years later, Yu recollected that when those stories were written, he always had nightmares, dreaming of killing himself or of being killed by others. With the passage of time, however, his inner anger disappeared, and he gradually rid himself of this obsession with violence.

Yu Hua preferred a kind of narrative which, in simple words, tells people another person's story, as compared to a narrative which told other people the author's own story.

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Yu stated, "Even if it is my own story, as soon as it enters the narrative, I transform it into another's story. In the process of the narrative, the most simple and efficient way of transforming personal experience is trying to avoid direct or straightforward expression. Let the cloudy sky bring to light the sunshine."  

Yu Hua advocated a kind of uncertain language whose opposite was popular language. He thought our daily language, popular language, possesses no individuality because in popular language, one sentence can evoke only one meaning for each individual. It provides us a predictable reality and confines our understanding of this world. Uncertain language, by contrast, breaks the restrictions of popular language, searching instead for a more truthful and reliable expression to reveal a reality open to limitless variations/interpretations. In order to reveal the true nature of the world, language has to violate common sense, to search for a way of expression which can provide multiple possibilities and present miscellaneous levels of life. In the meantime, it must also crush the bonds of grammar and apply grammatical juxtaposition, displacement and transposition and the like. Yu Hua observes words -- such as pain, fear and joy -- do not reflect an individual's true inner feelings, but are merely a generalization. Only uncertain language could express these emotional or psychological states, language which was more objective and authentic than popular language. His emphasis on uncertain language was his attempt to reveal the truth.

Yu Hua recognized that he could not fully understand the nature of the whole world. His understanding of the world in different periods of his life was just an understanding.

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54 Yu Hua, "Hypocritical Work" in ibid., "即使是个人的事，一旦进入叙述我也将其转化为别人的事。在叙述过程中，个人经验转换的最简便有效的方法就是，尽可能回避直接的表达，让阴沉的天空来展示阳光。" pp. 166-167.
of a limited or partial portion of the world, an exploration of human possibilities. As a matter of fact, this kind of understanding was a recognition of the world's structure as a whole. From "On the Road at Eighteen" to "One Kind of Reality," the structures of these stories are general imitations of the structures of reality, with the plots and paragraphs of the stories progressing step by step. When he wrote "World Like Mist", however, he had already given up such imitation of the structure of reality. He put more facts in his works, adopting a structural mode of juxtaposition and transposition so as to present the diversity of the world. In the meantime, he deeply felt the uncertainty of fate. He started to reconsider the various kinds of relationships in this world: people and people, people and reality, houses and streets, trees and rivers. All these things have their own fates and destinies endowed by the world. The inherent laws of the universe are hidden in these destinies.\(^{56}\) The story "World Like Mist" was constructed on the basis of this recognition of the world. In this story, the connections between people and people, people and things, things and things, plot and plot, detail and detail seem obscure, blurred. Yu Hua felt this way of writing fully presented the strength of fate -- the inherent law of the world.

Yu Hua had a specific understanding about time, interpreting it in his story "For the Young Girl Yangliu" 《献给少女杨柳》. Yu Hua insisted that time was the framework of the things which happened in the past in which chronological sequences could be broken.\(^{57}\) When the facts in the past are rearranged in different chronological orders,

\(^{55}\) Ibid., pp. 167-168.

\(^{56}\) Ibid., p. 170.

\(^{57}\) Ibid.
different meanings occur. Obviously this kind of arrangement or rearrangement is achieved in memory, an arrangement Yu Hua named as memory logic. Memory could reconstruct the past world at any time. After each reconstruction, a new meaning could be bestowed upon the past world. In traditional narrative, the technique of flashback is a kind of exploration of time, for the most part, a technique remaining on the superficial level of time. The writing of "For the Young Girl Yangliu" was an implementation of Yu Hua's conception of time, as explained in his statement, "When I utilized time to construct the story "For the Young Girl Yangliu," I felt excited about rushing into a new world. After I tried to employ a split, overlapping and displacement of chronology (time), the happiness I harvested exceeded my expectation." 58

In addition, Yu Hua was more concerned with revealing desire than merely portraying the character of the protagonist. He did not find much artistic value in portraying individual characteristics which could be described with abstract words such as optimistic, cunning, honest and melancholy and so forth since it is obvious that such characteristics do not truly reflect an individual's inner heart. And sometimes, it even hampers the writer's further exploration of a protagonist's sophisticated psychology. In literary works, Yu believed people, trees, houses and rivers all have their own unique desires. A river demonstrates its desire by flowing. A house discloses its desire by silence. The combination of all these desires form the symbolism of a literary work. In turn, a real literary work should be full of such symbols.

After publishing a series of short stories which employed experimental language and achieving fame as a representative writer of the "Avant-Garde School," Yu Hua turned

58 Ibid., “在我开始以时间为结构，来写作《此文献给少女杨柳》时，我感受到闯入一个全新世界的极大快乐。我在尝试地使用时间分裂，时间重叠，时间错位等方法以后，收获到的喜悦出乎预料。” p. 171.
his attention to Chinese popular society, making a leap from experimental writing to a new more realistic narrative in the 1990s. In fact, this was the necessary result of Yu's long-lasting exploration of the truth of the world. For a rather long period, Yu's literary works originated from the tension of his indulgence in an imaginative world which was tightly controlled by reality. As a result, he vented this tension by writing of violence and death, becoming an "angry and grim" writer. In the early 1990s, with an increase in his life experiences, Yu Hua gradually altered his view of the world, stating that:

I used to treat reality with a hostile attitude. With the passage of time, however, the anger in my inner heart gradually calmed down. I started to realize that a real writer is looking for a kind of truth which involves no moral judgement. The mission of a writer is, neither venting his grievance, nor accusing and exposing, but he should reveal loftiness (or nobility) to people. The loftiness mentioned here is not a simple goodness, but a kind of transcendence (or recognition) after understanding all things, treating good and evil without discrimination, looking upon the world with a sympathetic (or objective) view.60

"Looking upon the world with a sympathetic view" has in fact become Yu Hua's new writing ideal. In his eyes, the world is important, even holy. It is this type of devoutness and piety which orients his writing of To Live and Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood, while his earlier novel Crying Out in the Drizzle is regarded as a transitional work between his stages of experimental writing and realistic narrative. Some critics also think this earlier novel is the conclusion and summit of Yu Hua's experimental writing.61

59 The term "loftiness"高尚 is quite ambiguous here. Some people think it refers to the attitude of the author, some people think it means to show the loftiness or nobility of the characters in fictions.

60 Yu Hua, "Self-preface to To Live" in Whether I Can Believe in Myself 我一直是以敌对的态度看待现实。随着时间的推移，我内心的愤怒渐渐平息。我开始意识到一位真正的作家所寻找的是真理，是一种排斥道德判断的真理。作家的使命不是发泄，不是控诉或者揭露，他应该向人们展示高尚。这里所说的高尚不是那种单纯的美好，而是对一切事物理解后的超然，对善与恶一视同仁，用同情的目光看待世界。" The translations of several terms in this paragraph are quite arguable, such as 高尚 can be translated as loftiness or nobility; 超然 transcendence or recognition; 同情 sympathetic or objective. pp. 143-146.

61 Wu Yiqin 吴义勤, "Farewell to Hypocritical Form" 告別“虛偽的形式” in Contention in Literature and Arts, vol.1,
These three novels are the subjects of the following three chapters in this thesis. I will systematically examine the following aspects of these novels: plot structure, theme, vision, historical background, cultural implications, psychology, archetypal symbols, narrative technique and language style.

2000, p. 71.
Chapter Two: Existence through a Child's eyes

*Crying Out in the Drizzle* (or *Crying out and Drizzle*) was Yu Hua's first novel, published in 1991. In the preface to the Italian version, Yu Hua emphasized it as a book of memories: "My experience is that writing can constantly evoke memory and I believe these memories belong not merely to myself. They are possibly an image of one era, or a brand left by the world in the inner heart of one person . . . Memory cannot restore the past. It only reminds us once in a while of what we had before!"62 This novel reminds us of that which we had in our childhood. The structure of this novel comes from his recognition of time, or more accurately speaking, of time in a past world, time in memory. Memory can reconstruct the past world at any time. With each new reconstruction, the past world is bestowed with new meaning. In the narrative of this novel, time becomes the fragments of memory rearranged in "today's" position.

*Crying Out in the Drizzle* is the reminiscence of an adult of his boyhood from six to eighteen years of age. From the perspective of a boy, Yu Hua gives his reader a child's understandings of family, friendship, sex and marriage as well as more abstract themes of existence including fate, death, birth and time interspersed with the comments of an adult. It describes the solitary and helpless life experiences of his protagonist Sun Guanglin (孙光林). His experiences help produce a series of artistic effects from a strong sense of abandonment to great loneliness, inescapable fear, feelings of alienation from family, yearnings for friendship, and psychological trauma with the disappearance of hope and fantasy.

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62 Yu Hua, "I Have Two Lives" 我拥有两个人生，in *Can I Believe in Myself?* "我的经验是写作可以不断地去唤醒记忆，我相信这样的记忆不仅仅属于我个人，这可能是一个时代的形象，或者说是一个世界在某一个人心灵深处的烙印。"经历总是比回忆鲜明有力。...回忆无法还原过去的生活，它只是偶然提醒我们：过去曾经拥有
The book is divided into four parallel chapters. The first chapter focuses on Sun Guanglin's family life in his rural hometown Nanmen (南门). Sun Guangcai (孙广才), his father, a hot-tempered peasant, is an utter rogue who treats his own father and his sons as stumbling blocks to his life, ready to kick them away at any moment. He commits adultery with the widow next door and steals things from his own family to benefit her. After the death of his wife, he degenerates further into a drunkard who often cries at his wife's tomb in the middle of the night. At last, he drowns in a manure pit, perhaps an appropriate end for such a man's life. The mother, for her part, is a hardworking, kindhearted woman who endures all her hardships and humiliation in silence. The only time she vents her anger against her husband's adulterous behavior is on her deathbed, as she continues to shout at her husband, demanding that he not take her household utensils to the widow.

The poor family has three boys, elder son Guangping (光平), the protagonist Guanglin (光林) and youngest son Guangming (光明). The three brothers' lives overlap for a short period, then deviate in different directions. Elder brother Guangping always dreams of living in the city, an illusion which vanishes with his return to the countryside after he finishes high school, starting his mediocre but difficult life in Nanmen. Guanglin, the narrator of the story, is adopted by a family in Sundang from the age of seven to twelve years old. He has more experiences than do his brothers, thus witnessing more things. The younger brother Guangming for his part drowns in the river one beautiful summer noon while attempting to save another boy's life. This chapter also tells the story of a beautiful young girl Feng Yuqing (冯玉清) who is seduced and

betrayed by a young man and later elopes with a passing furrier.

The second chapter describes the friendships and thirst for sex Guanglin experiences as a teenager. In the town’s high school, Guanglin encounters the brothers of his previous neighbor, the sons of a family who had lived in Nanmen for two years. Because of their common temperaments, lonely and alienated in nature, Guanglin and Su Yu (苏宇) establish a deep friendship. Together they experience their thirsts for sex, sharing their secret of masturbation. Su Yu, however, is confined to prison for a year for impetuously embracing a young lady on the street. On a quiet morning one year after his release, he dies of a cerebral hemorrhage. For a short period after Su Yu’s death, Guanglin befriends a seven years old young boy, Lulu (鲁鲁), the only son of Feng Yuqing, who herself has returned to her hometown seven years after having eloped with the furrier and after having degenerated into a prostitute.

The third chapter is the life story of the grandfather Sun Youyuan (孙有元), a highly skilled stonemason in his youth. He follows the employment path of his father before him, later leading his fellow stonemasons in the construction of stone bridges everywhere in south China. His splendid career does not last long, since his predecessors have built so many strong stone bridges in the country that there is little need to build new ones during his time. He is a member of the last generation of stonemasons, their decline beginning in the 1940s. Finally, gunfire from the war forces him to give up his career and go back to his hometown where he encounters the tragedy of his parents’ deaths. Fleeing from this calamity, he marries a distressed young lady of noble birth, a woman who previously has a short-lived marriage with an aristocrat. In the face of the once celebrated background of his wife, the grandfather is always self-abasing, humble
and docile in his married life. After the death of his wife, he continues to live in his memories of the past. In reality, he becomes a great burden to his sons, living with their families alternately month by month because he hurts his waist and as a consequence loses his employment. His remaining years are a miserable struggle for survival.

The last chapter of the story concerns the protagonist's life in Sundang (孙荡). Guanglin is adopted by a couple, Wang Liqiang (王立强) and Li Xiuying (李秀英), and spends five years with that family. During this period, he attends primary school, enjoying the friendship of his classmate Guoqing (国庆), a boy who is abandoned by his own father and is therefore forced to make his own living at the age of thirteen. Life with Wang Liqiang's family seems to be the only normal time in Guanglin's childhood memory. Wang Liqiang, a strong, enthusiastic man serving in the army, has a rather unpleasant and unsatisfied sex life with his wife, a pale and chronic invalid lying on her sickbed the entire day. Given these circumstances, Wang Liqiang enters into a two-year long affair with another young lady, a relationship disclosed by a gossipy woman. After undertaking a bloody revenge against that gossipy woman, Wang kills himself with a grenade. Li Xiuying, Wang's wife, subsequently leaves Sundang one chilly morning. Thereafter Guanglin, now an orphan, returns to his hometown Nanmen.

The era of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, roughly from 1966 to 1976, provides the temporal background for this novel, painting a sentimental and miserable backdrop for the story. During this time frame, all abnormal and absurd happenings become possible. It is this abnormality and absurdity which underlies Yu Hua's manner of presenting history. He seldom directly describes historical events, displaying instead the suffering of individuals during these historical periods. At times, he also utilizes
some episodes as fables to satirize historical events. For example, in this story, his primary school teacher suspects that young Guanglin has written a slogan against him. Guanglin's two best friends are sent to persuade and induce him to admit this to the teacher. Facing his friends' betrayal and the teacher's interrogation, the young boy is forced to admit a crime which, in fact, he never committed. This is one example of a fable portraying the occurrences of the Great Cultural Revolution. In another example, the death of Guangming provides his father and brother a temporary illusion – Guangming as hero. As Guangming drowns in order to save another's life, his father and brother imagine the government will visit the hero's family, promoting them by means of reward. They dream of upgrading their political status. This entire sequence is also a satire mocking the hierarchical system of the CCP. While these particular instances illustrate a more obvious imitation or mocking of the Great Cultural Revolution, Yu Hua is generally more inclined to weave this reality into the fates of the characters in his story. The themes of his stories, in fact, seek to demonstrate how history is involved in, and reacts to, individuals' fates.

In addition to the interaction of history and individual fate, always contained within Yu Hua's fiction is his philosophical thinking concerning human existence. Descriptions of birth, death, and the very trauma of life are accentuated in his writings. *Crying Out in the Drizzle* involves a wealth of life episodes of different people. Through the perspective of a child, Guanglin, Yu Hua is able to expose the manifold themes of existence -- loneliness, fear of growth, human nature and fate -- themes to be examined below.

In order to reveal the theme of loneliness, the author first sets the scene to allow the
protagonist to experience this emotion. Guanglin is adopted by Wang's family at the age of six and is forced to return to his hometown six years later. He is reprimanded by his father as an "unlucky star" because on his first day back home, the family home catches fire, seemingly without cause. Rather than feelings of reunion with his actual family members, Guanglin feels as though he is beginning yet another life of adoption. He does not get along well with his father and brothers and is alienated from both his family and the village people. Recognizing the misery of his situation in the village, he says, "at the funeral [of my young brother], I've been standing far away all the time. Long-lasting loneliness and desolation cause me not to exist as a human being anymore in the village;" "as if released from a heavy burden, I find myself being completely forgotten. I am put in a position where everyone knows me and at the same time neglects me." In fact, the atmosphere of loneliness pervades the entire story. Almost everyone in the story lives a lonely and alienated life in varying manners. For instance, Guanglin's grandfather's loneliness originates from his disillusion with the career of his youth; Guanglin's father's later alienation is caused by his own degeneration; and Wang Liqiang's isolation stems primarily from the lack of harmony in his sexual relations with his wife.

In this novel, the loneliness experienced by Yu Hua's characters is closely connected to their fates -- four differing forms of abandonment. Both Guanglin and Guoqing are abandoned by their own fathers or families. The grandfather is abandoned both by his parents and his sons. With the arrest of Feng Yuqing, Lulu's mother finally deserts him.

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Yu Hua, Crying Out in the Drizzle, "葬礼的时候我一直站在远处，长久的孤单和被冷落，使我在村里似乎不再作为一个人而存在。""我如释重负地发现自己被彻底遗忘。我被安排到了一个村里人都知道我，同时也都否定我情位置上。" p.p. 46-47.
These are all instances of physical abandonment. Another form of mental abandonment, or betrayal, more accurately speaking, is also evident in the novel. The father rejects the mother, embracing the widow in her stead. Similarly, Wang Liqiang betrays his wife, engaging in an affair with another young woman. The type of hatred felt by Su Yu and Guangping toward their own families is also a kind of abandonment. Moreover Su Yu has feelings of shame towards his family because of his father's affair with the widow in Nanmen. Guangping attempts to rid himself of his own family because of his father's degradation and his own helpless life. Death, however, is the ultimate abandonment. The younger brother, Guangming, rejects his mother and the whole family as he drowns in the river; Wang Liqiang abandons his wife forever by committing suicide, and Su Yu relinquishes Guanglin with his cerebral hemorrhage.

In addition, an atmosphere of loneliness is accentuated by Guanglin's longing for tenderness and warmth. With the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Communist Party advocated collectivism, gradually substituting this "ism" for tender and warm relationships between individuals, relationships which were further destroyed in the Great Cultural Revolution.64 With tenderness and warmth withdrawn from people's lives, loneliness became an immediate reality. In the novel, however, Guanglin, with the pure heart of a young boy, yearns for these more positive elements in spite of the cruel reality, emotions which Yu Hua deliberately describes in some scenes. For example, when Guanglin finally leaves his hometown for university in Beijing, his mother says goodbye to him at the edge of the village. Yu Hua writes:

> In the morning breeze, mother watches us leaving, at a loss as if she does not

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64 Edward Friedman, Paul Pickowicz and Mark Selden, *Chinese Village, Socialist State*, Yale University Press, 1991. In this book, the authors illustrate how the CCP's dictatorship affected Chinese popular society and how ordinary people resisted these changes.
understand what fate reveals at that moment. When I last catch sight of her, I find her hair grizzled. I tell her, "I am leaving." She has no response. The ambiguous expression in her eyes seems as if she is staring at something else. At that moment, the tenderness wells up in my heart.  

Guanglin's feelings of tenderness at this moment express his affection to, and reluctance to be apart from, his mother and his sympathy for her deplorable life.

His friendships with Su Yu and Lulu also provide Guanglin with positive feelings towards life. "Su Yu's smile and timid voice gave me long-lasting warmth on that night while the moon now appeared, now disappeared." Later, after the death of Su Yu, Guanglin encounters Lulu whose loneliness and stubborn expression reminds Guanglin of his own childhood. "Looking at the ingenuousness revealed even in his walking, there is often a tender feeling flowing in my body. What I see is just like the unfolding of my own childhood."  

In his hometown, Nanmen, only the village pond provides Guanglin with feelings of warmth as he spends most of his lonely, thoughtful time there. He recalls, "if there is a place worthy of cherishing, obviously it is that pond." It is this pond which bears witness to his childhood loneliness and sentiments. The image of the pond repeatedly appears in the story.

During his childhood, Guanglin experiences three instances of disillusionment which aggravated his loneliness. The first instance involves Feng Yuqing, previously an

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65 Yu Hua, Crying Out in the Drizzle, "在晨风里，母亲不知所措地望着我们走去，仿佛不明白命运在那时所显示的一切。当我最后一眼去看母亲时，发现她的头发已经花白了。我对母亲说："我走了。"母亲没有丝毫反应，她含糊不清的眼神似乎是在看着别的什么。那一刻我心里涌上一股温悲。" p. 61.

66 Ibid., "苏宇的微笑和他羞涩的声音，在那个月光时隐时现的夜晚，给予我长久的温暖。" p. 132.

67 Ibid., "看着这个小男孩在走路时都透露出来的幼稚，我体内经常有一股温愧在流涟。我看到的似乎是自己的童年在行走。" p. 142.

68 Ibid., "南门如果还有值得怀念的地方，显然就是那口池塘" p. 28.
innocent and beautiful girl. "When I sat beside the pond and Feng Yuqing walked around in the village with her youthful manner, she gave a continuous feeling of hope for the future." Unfortunately, Guanglin has to witness the girl's gradual degradation. Years later, meeting her again in the town, he is shocked by the changes she has undergone.

At this moment, I clearly see her wrinkled face devastated by time. When she looks at me with empty eyes which have lost the passion of youth, her glance is just like dust drifting toward me. She turns to the well and mercilessly faces me with her drooping hip and sturdy waist. At this, I turn around to leave. The sadness welling up in my heart is not because she's forgotten me, but because it is my first time to see the brutal withering of a beauty with my own eyes. From now on, that Feng Yuqing who raises her arms to comb her hair facing the rising sun in front of her house, will be covered by a thick layer of dust in my memory.

Guanglin's second disillusionment stems from Cao Li (曹丽), his classmate in high school, the girl of his sexual fantasies. She is so pure and holy in Guanglin's eyes that he is always nervous and blushing every time he encounters her. This illusion is shattered irrevocably when, once eavesdropping on her conversation with other girls, he finds that she is completely different than he has imagined, enchanted as she is by the masculine leg-hairs of another boy, the worst student in the class. Yu Hua describes Guanglin's psychological fluctuation by stating: "I walk straight to the pond beside the school, stand there alone for a long time and stare at the sunshine and leaves on the water. I gradually transform my deep disappointment in Cao Li into sympathy for myself. This is the first
disillusionment of a beautiful ideal in my life."71

If Cao Li is Guanglin's ideal of youth, the music teacher is his ideal of adulthood, an ideal also broken by merciless reality. Guanglin admires the teacher's fine and elegant manner. This elegance, however, is weak and helpless in the face of the wildness and brutality of Su Hang (苏杭, Su Yu's brother). Once in the classroom, Su Hang places his shoes on the windowsill and his naked feet on the desk. When the music teacher reminds Su to behave, Su responses to him with taunts and, in the end, Su Hang throws his music book out the window. "At that time, an unutterable sadness wells up in my heart. The ideal of my future adult life is so easily insulted by Su Hang."72

Growth is the second theme Yu Hua hopes to reveal in this story. The story involves three generations, that of the grandparents, the parents -- including those of Guanglin, Su Yu and Guoqing, Wang Liqiang, and Feng Yuqing -- and the young generation -- including Guanglin and his brothers, the Su's brothers, Lulu, Guoqing and so forth. The birth of Guanglin and the death of his grandfather represent the two poles of the life cycle; the different life stories of the characters comprise the complete process of growth. It is around the growth of Guanglin's generation that the main plot of the story develops, with emphasis placed on two particular qualities of growth -- the anxiety of growth and the fear of growth.

The anxiety of growth, for its part, is expressed by the sexual awakening of the young generation. Their sexual curiosity and trepidation is disclosed particularly in the second chapter of the novel, when Su Hang steals a medical book from his father's library and

71 Ibid., "我一直走到校旁的池塘边，独自站立很久，看着水面漂浮的阳光和树叶，将对曹丽的深深失望，慢慢转化成对自己的怅惘。这是我一生里第一次美好向往的破灭。" p. 115.

72 Ibid., "当时我内心涌上一股难耐的悲凉，作为我成年以后的榜样，就那么轻而易举地被苏杭侮辱了。" p. 97.
shows his classmates a picture of female genitalia. Guanglin, however misses this chance at sexual awakening because he has to stand sentry at the door. His sexual awakening has its origins in yet more secret behavior -- masturbating at night -- through which he obtains a virtually mystical feeling. His life is divided into two parts -- day and night. At night, he indulges in this mystical experience, whereas in the daytime, he feels guilty and impure. He is so tortured by this inner conflict that he alienates himself from Su Yu. After discovering through Su Yu that this is quite normal behavior for boys, he is completely released from his feelings of guilt. He says, "I will never forget that afternoon when I stood with Su Yu beside the pond. Because of Su Yu's words, daytime turns out to be beautiful again." 

Su Yu also struggles with his sexual frustration which leads him to suddenly embrace a young woman on the street. For this misconduct, he is put into detention for one year. This incident, however, has a more positive outcome as well since it enables Su Yu to understand and forgive his father's short-lived affair with a widow. "At that time, Su Yu's smile surprised us a lot. Afterward, I understood why he smiled. Though it seemed that Su Yu was in a difficult situation at that moment, he was released from a heavy load on his inner heart. Later he told me that he finally understood why his father had done that kind of thing." 

Guanglin, his brothers and his friends do not grow up under very positive circumstances. On the one hand, their feelings of loneliness and isolation make them eager to grow up, wanting to join the adult world, while on the other, the miserable

73 Ibid., "我永远难忘和苏宇站在池塘旁的这个上午，因为苏宇的话，白昼重新变得那么美好。" p. 107.

74 Ibid., "苏宇当初的笑容让我们大吃一惊，直到后来我才明白他为何微笑。那时的苏宇看上去处境艰难，可他却因此解脱了心灵重压。他后来告诉我：‘我预知了父亲当时为什么会干出那种事。’" p. 125.
experiences of their parents in that world frighten them. The overwhelming likelihood of a gloomy future makes them fear growing up, a fear confirmed by the adult life of Guangping (elder brother). Guangping is a courageous boy who dreams of living a decent life in the city. This dream is shattered by the fact that during the Great Cultural Revolution, entrance examinations to universities were cancelled and students were deprived of the rights of further education. Students from the countryside were forced instead to return to their hometowns, having no opportunity to choose options for their own lives. "After Sun Guangping finishes high school and returns home to work in the field, the confidence on his face is swept away." Without any specific purpose in life, he climbs into a widow’s bed at night, as has his father. In the daytime, he watches the old men with wrinkles on their faces and dust on their bodies, walking back from the fields. His eyes reveal his complete emptiness and sadness. "The sight strikes a chord in Sun Guangping’s heart and makes him think his final fate."

Giving tacit consent to the status quo, he begins his boring, destitute life in Nanmen. Without any doubt, such will also be the future of his brothers and other fellow country boys. They understandably fear the inevitable journey to adulthood.

Human nature is an eternal theme in Yu Hua’s stories. In his early short stories, he frequently revealed the evils of human nature, more concerned as he was with the dark side of reality. In Crying Out in the Drizzle, however, Yu Hua concentrates not only on the evil inherent in human nature, but also the good. In a series of episodes, Yu Hua discloses the hatred, fraud and brutality of people in the story. For example, Guanglin’s

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75 Ibid., “孙光平高中毕业回家务农以后，脸上的自信就一扫而光了。” p. 63.

76 Ibid., “孙光平触景生情地想到了自己命运的最后部分。” p. 63.
elder brother cuts Guanglin with a sickle and slanders him. Later, his father beats him. Such actions underscore the hatred and brutality among family members in the novel. The father's adulterous conduct and the fight between the mother and widow uncover betrayal, cheating and jealousy as further disturbing qualities in human natures. The female CCP cadre, once enthusiastic to invade Wang Liqiang's privacy, in the end faces the death of her two sons. This reflects not only the darkness and meanness of the human heart, but also the abnormal psychology of people suppressed by the CCP system. Wang Liqiang's austere life represents the sacrifice of sexual repression during the Maoist era, since his services in the army demands asceticism as a basic requirement. "This asceticism stems from that era and echoes with political grimness. Sexual repression is just the physiological response to political repression." 77

In contrast to such evils, the expression of the good in human nature is more impressive in this story. Though the proletarian dictatorship tried to destroy traditional Chinese moral values, people are able to retain more positive traits because of the thousands of years' influence of Confucian culture upon this society. For instance, after the father's rejection of his family in favor of an adulterous relationship with the widow, the mother shoulders the heavy burden of the family, enduring without complaint various kinds of humiliation and hardship to raise her children. Through this character, then, does Yu Hua reveal the selflessness and greatness of maternal love.

Although Guangping, Guanglin's brother, gives up his hopes in life, he never gives up his responsibility to support the family. While his father rejects his wife and children, Guangping assumes his responsibility as a son and a husband. He looks after not only

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77 Yu Hua, "Luxurious Washroom"/"奢侈的厕所" in Can I Believe in Myself? /"我能相信我自己吗?", p. 131.
his own small family and his mother but also his paralyzed father-in-law. He works like a machine and runs like a rabbit from the fields to his home and his father-in-law's home. In spite of the family's poverty, when his mother is seriously ill, he insists on carrying her to the hospital. The mother refuses to go saying, "I am dying. Do not waste the money." However when he carries his mother on his back, "her face shows a sweet shyness like a young girl." The mother understands, and is proud of such a demonstration of her son's filial piety.

Though Guanglin never gets along particularly well with his elder brother, their fraternal affection is unintentionally demonstrated in the story. In 1978, China resumed university entrance examinations and Guanglin takes part in the exam. It is his elder brother Guangping who pays his admission fees and makes ready the everyday articles for his future university life. Guangping's behavior shows his affection for Guanglin and his admiration at the fact that his brother has an opportunity to better himself in the city.

In Crying Out in the Drizzle, Yu Hua also extols the vitality of people in this turbulent world. Existence or survival becomes people's ultimate goal. No matter what form of hardship they encounter, they never forsake their own lives. As an adult, Guanglin concludes his understanding of life by saying, "I love the sound of life flowing in my body so much that except for life itself I will never find another reason to go on living." It is for this reason that grandfather, mother, and the Guanglin brothers can still live in this world after experiencing so many adversities and afflictions. In fact, maternal love, fraternal affection, filial piety, exuberant vitality, as well as the purity of

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78 Yu Hua, Crying Out in the Drizzle, "死都要死了，不要花那钱。" "脸上开始出现少女般甜蜜的羞涩。" p. 72.
children and sincere friendships previously described comprise those positive elements of human nature which endow us with the courage to proceed.

Since fate might also be considered a theme of *Crying Out in the Drizzle*, it would be helpful to discuss the term "plot of fortune." In his *Form and Meaning in Fiction*, Friedman points out that one form of plot is the plot of fortune. "If this issue and its resolution, in terms both of the structure of the action and of our aesthetic-moral emotions, depend upon whether the protagonist succeeds or fails in gaining something outside himself, and if this depends ultimately upon external circumstances rather than upon his will or knowledge, then the principal part [of the plot] is fortune." Crying Out in the Drizzle is such a story. Tightly controlled by their fates, the lives of the characters can hardly be influenced by their own wills and efforts. This is what Yu Hua understands by the internal laws of the world -- the uncertainty of fate. In this sense, then, fate is another important theme of this story.

Living in the Cultural Revolution era, the characters in this story are destined to live tragic lives, the general fate of the whole period. Yu Hua's interpretation of destiny, however, reaches far beyond this limited understanding. The various fates of Yu Hua's characters are manipulated by an invisible hand. The grandfather, for instance, is a hardworking and skillful stonemason, but his brilliant career lasts such a short time that he has to live in memory most of his life. While he tries to fight his fate by leading his fellow stonemasons to build bridges in south China, this only results in the deaths of his followers. Similarly, the mother, elder

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79 Ibid., "我是那样崇拜生命在我体内流淌的声音，除了生命本身，我再也找不活下去的另外理由了。" p. 63.
80 Friedman, Form and Meaning, p. 81.
brother, Feng Yuqing and Wang Liqiang all challenge their fates, but with a bleak and desperate gesture. They cannot escape their destinies.

_Crying Out in the Drizzle_ is also replete with elements of symbolism. The very title of the story, _Crying out in the Drizzle_, contains two such symbols: crying out and drizzle, with the latter the backdrop of the former. These symbols represent two modes of existence. Though the story involves more than twenty life stories, the modes of existence of all individuals in this novel can fit into these two categories.

The story starts with a woman's crying out, the sounds of weeping and is accompanied by the fears of a six-years-old boy one rainy night. "The sound of a woman's crying out, like weeping, comes from the distance and her hoarse voice suddenly rises up in the stillness of the night making me shiver at the memory of my childhood."81 Rain forms the backdrop for this crying out and is also a form of metaphorical weeping. The boy's fear is grounded in the lack of response to the woman's wails: "I am so anxiously and fearfully waiting for the appearance of another voice which can answer the woman's calls and calm her weeping. However, nothing appears...There is nothing more dreadful than such lonely, helpless shouting on an empty rainy night."82 The boy later discovers a sound to answer the woman's wails, the rustling of the clothes of a man dressed in black walking in the field. In the end, however, the man in black is found dead in a dilapidated temple, completing the set of images: crying, drizzle and death. If crying and drizzle are two forms of existence, death is their final goal -- the ultimate fate of all human beings.

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81 Yu Hua, _Crying Out in the Drizzle_ , "一个女人哭泣般的呼喊声从远处传来，嘶哑的声音在当初寂静无比的黑夜里突然响起，使我此刻回想中的童年颤抖不已。" p. 9.

82 Ibid., "我是那么急切和害怕地期待着另一个声音的来到，一个出来回答女人的呼喊，能够平息她哭泣的
While "crying out" may at times reflect a positive mode of existence, for the most part it is inevitably painted a tragic color. The younger generation and that of their fathers have different ways of crying out. The former's cries are accompanied by a sense of loneliness and anxiety at the idea of growth. The sexual awakenings of Guanglin, his brother, and Su's brother are calls of their youth. Guanglin, Su Yu, Guoqing and Lulu's pursuit of tenderness, warmth and friendship are rally out cries against an indifferent world; Guoqing and Lulu's persistence in living with their parents is a railing against their fear of abandonment.

If the cries of the younger generation stem from their fears and sadness at the prospect of aging, then the earlier generation's calls originate from their lack of satisfaction with reality. The cries of the father and Wang Liqiang reveal their life disturbances and sexual passions. The father's adultery is a desperate wail against his failure to receive a political promotion. Wang Liqiang's bombing of the female cadre's house and subsequent suicide are shouts against asceticism, with however, the end result of self-destruction.

In comparison to Guanglin's father and Wang Liqiang, the grandfather and Li Xiuying are much weaker and cannot cry out loudly against their adversities. Their lives can perhaps be likened to drizzle or ineffectual rain, even fog. For example, the grandfather lives a humble and self-abasing life, completely neglecting his own brilliant past. In his later years, he has to rely on his son and is forced to employ all his intelligence and cunning to secretly fight with his son for three meals a day. At last, he waits for death on his sickbed, refusing to eat anything. As a matter of fact, his refusal of

声音。可是没有出现...再也没有比孤独的无依无靠的呼喊声更让人战栗了，在雨中空旷的黑夜里。” p. 9.
food is an indirect refusal to continue to live in this “drizzle” mode of existence. Li Xiuying, the wife of Wang Liqiang, is deprived of the ability to cry out because she is so weak that she must remain in bed all the time. She is destined to live a dreary existence in the drizzle. This sickly woman, however, makes the only loud noise in her life after the death of her husband. When the people from the army tell her the news of her husband's death, she screams, "It is you who murder Wang Liqiang . . . You, all of you killed Wang Liqiang. In fact, you want to kill me." Thus, she proclaims the true nature of her husband's death. In the drizzle, she rails against the whole system, the whole era.

If crying out and drizzle are two modes of existence, then death is their common ending, the ultimate outcome of life. Yu Hua's philosophical understanding of death deeply penetrates this story. Life is limited by the framework of time. Death, however, transcends time. When recalling the death of his younger brother Guangming, Guanglin feels that his brother freed himself from the constraints of time:

> When my eyes rove over the long road of memory and see Guangming again, he does not just walk out of the house. My young brother carelessly walks out of time. He is fixed there as soon as he is separated from time. The rest of us, however, keep proceeding forward under the push of time. Sun Guangming will observe that time takes away the people and scenery around him. I find a true scene like this: after the living bury the dead, the dead will lie there forever, the living will keep moving. This true scene is a hint given by time to people who are still wandering in reality.\(^{83}\)

If death means only that a person is derailed from the path of time, then death should never be considered an abhorrent conclusion. This is the concept Yu Hua hopes to express through this story. He describes Guanglin's feeling when first seeing a dead man

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\(^{83}\)Ibid., “当我的目光穿越了漫长的回忆之路，重新看到孙光明时，他走出的已经不是房屋，我的弟弟不小心走出了时间。他一旦脱离时间便被固定下来，我们则在时间的推移下继续前行。孙光明将会看着时间带走了他周围的人和周围景色。我看到了这样的真实场景：生者将死者埋葬以后，死者便永远躺在那里，而生者继续走动。这真实的场景是时间给予依然在现实里的人的暗示。” p. 40.
in the dilapidated temple: "This is the first dead person I have ever seen in my life. It seems he is sleeping. This is my true feeling at the age of six: death turns out to be sleep."\textsuperscript{84} Death means people enter an eternal quietness. The death of Guangming is a permanent departure, the death of Su Yu, a permanent and silent slumber.

Friedman writes that, "the choice of narrator, or of the point of view from which to tell the story, is, I think, the basic or determining choice of all [fictional techniques]."\textsuperscript{85} Yu Hua seems to agree, and chooses the first-person narrator as a convenient device to open the reminiscence. The choice of first-person narrator in the story makes the narrative more flexible. In fact, it involves at least three layers of narrative: narrative of the child "I", the narrative of adult "I" and an omniscient narrative. In the meantime, the implied author overlaps with adult "I" as well as the omniscient narrator. The child "I", the primary narrator of the story, is employed to relate the concrete stories and scenes which can be observed through a child's eyes. If it were only to rely on the child's perspective, however, the narrative would be far from complete and rich. Consequently, Yu Hua inserts an omniscient narrator into the novel, a narrator who can describe the scenes and stories which the child Guanglin cannot experience or see by himself. For example, the grandfather's experiences in his youth, things which happen in Nanmen after "I" is adopted by Wang Liqiang, Guoqing's attempts at violence against his young lover's family after "I" leaves Sundang, Guangping's adult life and so forth, are all narrated by the omniscient narrator in spite of his first-person tone. The omniscient narrative supplements the blind spots in the visual field of the child "I".

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., "我第一次看到了死去的人，看上去他象是睡着了。这是我六岁时的真实感受，原来死去就是睡着了。" p. 11.

\textsuperscript{85} Friedman, \textit{Form and Meaning}, p. 131.
The adult "I" also plays an important role in the narrative. Because of the existence of this adult "I", the chronological sequence or order can be rearranged. The adult "I" is involved in scenes of flash forward -- advanced and prophetic narrative in the story. For instance, in the first chapter, "my" father hates to see "I" and grandfather standing together, since he believes that a disaster will occur in this situation. The readers must be confused by the father's attitude, but "I" gives no further explanation. With this question firmly in mind, the readers, reading further, eventually discover the answer at the very end of the story: father's house catches on fire the night when "I" and grandfather return home together.

In addition, the existence of adult "I" provides the vehicle by which the implied author can express his own outlook or ideas. In the reminiscences of "my" childhood, this adult "I" often inserts "today's" opinions and feelings as well as "my" philosophical understanding of birth, death, love, friendship, time and the like. This is the implied author (second self) who is speaking.

In fact, the application of multi-level narrators is a shift of the narrative burden, from the child "I" narrator to the adult "I" or omniscient narrator. In this story, however, there is another kind of shift of narrative: from "I" as protagonist-narrator to "I" as witness-narrator. When Guanglin's experiences and feelings are expressed, "I" serves as the protagonist-narrator who "is limited almost entirely to his own thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. Similarly the angle of view is that of the fixed center." In Crying Out in the Drizzle, "my" story is but part of the plot. Many other people's fates and life experiences are involved. As a result, when other people's stories are told, the first-

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86 Ibid., p. 152.
person narrator "I" shifts from protagonist to witness. For instance, Feng Yuqing's story is revealed by the young boy "I" from a distance. Here, "I" serves as a witness-narrator. Because of "my" subordinate role in her story, "I" has much greater mobility, and consequently a greater range and variety of sources of information, than does Feng Yuqing herself, who is centrally involved in the action.

When summarizing the plot of the story, I mentioned the fact that there are four parallel chapters in this novel. The term "parallel" is employed to emphasize that the four chapters share the same time frame. In traditional narrative form, the chapters of a novel are typically arranged in chronological sequence or order. In Crying Out in the Drizzle, however, Yu Hua does not arrange chapters in chronological sequence. The four chapters are juxtaposed in temporal background, revealing the different aspects of "my" childhood life within the same time period. The first chapter, the main part of the story, concentrates on "my" family life, a panorama of "my" whole childhood. It also serves as the information reservoir for the whole book by producing the outlines, or mentioning key points, creating suspense or foreshadowing the scenes in the following three chapters. Consequently, the next three chapters are supplements to the first or an enlargement of certain episodes, while at the same time, each chapter has its own independence. Because this novel is a reminiscence composed of different stories of the protagonist himself and also of the people around him, the application of this juxtaposed structure enhances the entirety of each story.

As previously mentioned, this novel consists of the life stories of the protagonist and those around him. Though it involves many characters, the novel does not create confusion about their relationships because the author applies a basic unit -- family -- to
unite or separate them. When one character's story is narrated, the stories of his family members are unveiled simultaneously. Family is a thread sewing different stories together, those stories of the families of "I", Wang Liqiang, Su Yu, Feng Yuqing and so on. The life and fate of individual character is exposed through his or her relationship with the family. The application of family as the basic structure of the novel endows the work with a profound atmosphere of culture and humanity. In Chinese, or likely in all human culture, family is the most basic and important unit of society. Traditional Confucian values center on the family relationship. Consequently, when Yu Hua attaches individual characters to the larger family unit, the conflicts of the characters take on a deeper cultural implication, leading the readers to consider the loss of traditional Chinese cultural and moral values in an abnormal era.

Friedman indicates that a writer's style is governed by his choice of narrative method, for the language of the story must suit its theoretical speaker. Yu Hua, for his part, adopts the first-person narrator to reveal the recollections of the protagonist, Guanglin. The following discussion will show how this narrative method determines the intelligibility, vividness, economy and philosophic sense of his language.

"Intelligibility means simply that the writer must present his conception in such a way that it will be understood or grasped somehow by the reader . . . it is better to be clear than obscure." Since Yu Hua employs multi-level narration by child "I", adult "I" and

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88 Friedman, Form and Meaning, pp 123-133.

89 Ibid., pp. 126-127.

90 Ibid., p. 126.
omniscience, he is unrestrained in the manner in which the story is narrated, using different angles to provide readers a lucid understanding of what is happening in the story.

In Guanglin's recollections, summarized language (telling) is combined with descriptive language (showing), where summarized language helps achieve two effects for the story: intelligibility, by providing condensed information to readers, and economy, by avoiding unnecessary description in some unimportant scenes. Yu Hua employs summarized language to explain relationships among characters as well as the background and development of specific stories.  

When Yu Hua expresses the inner feelings and consciousness of his characters, he employs descriptive language. He pays particular attention to details through which the characters' psychological fluctuations or feelings are revealed, descriptions helping to achieve the effect of vividness. Yu believes that a good writer should possess sensitivity to detail. He greatly admires Lu Xun's descriptive details, stating, "Lu Xun never neglects those key points, that is the sensitivity to details in his narratives. As you know, details should not be piled up, but show up properly at critical moments and junctions. At this moment, you will feel certain details suddenly rise up from the whole narrative, and brighten the whole narrative." The concept of detail here, however, is different from what might be considered "normal", because Yu Hua has a unique understanding about details being unconcerned with descriptions of concrete things. To his mind,

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91 The well-known theory of showing and telling is discussed in Friedman's *Form and Meaning*, pp. 123-133.

92 Yu Hua, *Can I Believe in Myself?* "鲁迅在叙述的时候从来不会放过那些关键之处，也就是说对细节的敏感。要知道，细节不是靠堆积来显示自己的，而是在一些关键的时候。又在一些关键的位置上恰如其分地出现。这时候你会感到某一个细节突然从整个叙述里亮了起来，然后是着凉了全部的叙述。" p. 254.
concrete things never refer to real details. This point is explained in one of his articles when he writes:

They [certain writers] take delight in describing what kind of clothes and hat the character is wearing; what kind of furniture is set under the window or at the side of the wall in the room; bed over here and cupboard there and so on. Very few readers can remember how the character arranges the furniture in his house. They [writers] spend too much time on unimportant things. Twentieth-century writers don't run after such insignificant things, they go on to more important things -- that is, the inner feelings and consciousness of the characters.  

Given such an orientation, Yu Hua chooses to omit many unnecessarily detailed descriptions of concrete things, while writing profusely on other details which reflect the character's psychology or reveal important elements regarding the character's life or fate. For example, on page 29, Yu Hua composes a complete paragraph describing how young Feng Yuqing combs her hair early in the morning, a description which on the one hand reveals the beauty of the young girl, and on the other hand provides a sharp contrast to her later decline. In another instance, when "my" young brother Guangming is drowning in the river, Yu does not neglect to mention the boy's last sight: "The last time when my brother struggles to lift his head out of water, he opens his eyes widely to stare at the dazzling sunshine for several seconds until he eventually goes under." The bright sunshine is indeed a sharp contrast to death. Guangming's staring at the sun reveals both an eagerness for and a desperate farewell to life.  

*Crying Out in the Drizzle* is a re-construction of his childhood by an adult. It discloses certain modes of existence and a series of life themes: loneliness, fear and

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93 Ibid., "他们总是津津乐道地去描述人物身上穿着什么衣服，头上戴着什么帽子；屋子靠窗的地方放着什么；床在这里，柜子在那边等等。没几个读者在读完一本书之后，会记住书中人物寓所的家具是怎么放的。他们在不重要的地方停留了过多的时间，二十世纪的作家是不会再去从事这种无效劳动，而是去抓住最重要的事物，也就是人的内心和意识。” p. 176.

94 Yu Hua, *Crying Out in the Drizzle*, “我的弟弟最后一次从水里挣扎着露出头来时，睁大双眼直视
anxiety of growth, human nature and the uncertainty of fate. When a person recalls his or her past, many elements have been added; the past cannot be restored objectively. Especially when writing fiction, there may be more fabricated elements than real ones. Yu Hua has been questioned by journalists regarding whether the boy in Crying Out in the Drizzle is himself. Although not giving a clear and direct answer, he said that the boy represented many of his feelings about childhood.
Chapter Three: To Live Is Victory

In the preface to the Chinese version *To Live*, Yu Hua disclosed that this novel originated from an American folk song, "The Old Black Slave", which he heard long ago. This song describes various hardships experienced by an old slave and the deaths of those family members around him one after another. In spite of such tragedies, however, the old man maintains a positive outlook on life, without a single complaint. Deeply moved by this song, Yu Hua made up his mind to compose a similar story. This decision resulted in the birth of *To Live*, a novel demonstrating people's resilience in the face of affliction and their optimistic attitude toward life.\(^5\)

Explaining the reason why he chose this title for his story, Yu Hua indicated that the word "living" is full of strength, strength which stems from endurance -- enduring the responsibilities, happiness, hardships, and insipidity of life. The term "to live" best describes the protagonist Fugui's (福贵) status, not only physically, but also mentally. The novel tells of a relationship between a man and his fate, revealing how people bear severe hardships, exposing the rich and profound meaning of tears, showing people living for life itself, rather than for anything beyond it, and exhibiting how Chinese people survived during these two scores years from the early 1940s to the end of the 1970s.\(^6\) With the Post-Mao improvement in people's standards of living, Yu Hua felt that China was becoming much richer than before, but an increasing number of people were forgetting the past, giving up their memories of adversity.\(^7\) The novel *To Live*

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\(^5\) Yu Hua, "Self-preface to Chinese Version *To Live*" in *Can I Believe in Myself?* pp. 143-146.

\(^6\) Yu Hua, "Self-preface to Korean Version *To Live*" in *ibid.*, pp. 146-147.

\(^7\) Yu Hua, "Live Forever -- An Interview with Italian Journalist" in *ibid.*, p. 225.
seeks to remind people of their prior experiences.

The narrative begins with a young man going to the countryside to collect folk songs. There he meets an old peasant, Fugui, working in the field with his ox on a scorching summer afternoon. The young man spends the entire afternoon with Fugui in the field, listening to the old man recollect his whole life. Fugui, born to a rich landlord family, squanders his money and energy on gambling and prostitutes in his youth. Eventually he loses his entire fortune on a bet to Long Er (龙二). His father is so angry with his son's degeneration that he dies. As a consequence, the whole family is forced to move out of the mansion into a thatched cottage. From that point, Fugui begins to experience the hardships of everyday life and to witness the deaths of his family members. When he goes to town to find a doctor for his sick mother, he is conscripted by the Nationalist (KMT/GMD) Army. Three years later, the People's Liberation Army captures him, later releasing him to return home. Upon arriving home, he learns of his mother's death years earlier and his daughter's deafness and dumbness due to illness. With the founding of the People's Republic of China, Fugui and his family experience various political movements. His family members perish one after another: his son Youqing (有庆) dies when providing a blood transfusion to a CCP cadre's wife; his daughter FengXia (凤霞) dies of dystocia; his wife Jiazhen (家珍) perishes of grief and illness; his son-in-law Erxi (二喜) dies in an industrial accident; and finally his grandson Kugen (苦根) dies of illness. In the end, Fugui is the only person left alive in the family, his only company an old ox also called Fugui.

Through Fugui's life story, Yu Hua expresses his understanding of the state of existence of an individual living in obscurity, on the margins of society, an existence
with two connotations: (1) the obscured individual remains in a marginal position in history; (2) the obscured individual lives in a marginal state between life and death.

As currently written, history might be considered a giant net knitting together prominent people and significant events. The lives and stories of ordinary people generally fall through the holes in this net. Historians tend to overlook the existence of the individual, regarding ordinary people as a footnote or prop on the stage of history. Yu Hua, however, is quite concerned with how individuals live or survive under certain historical conditions, individuals who remain in marginal positions in history. While they cannot "make" history, their fates and lives are deeply influenced or controlled by history. Yu Hua seeks to push these obscure individuals to the forefront of history, revealing their states of existence. In turn, history is also disclosed through the fates of these individuals.

*To Live* is such a novel, reflecting the suffering of ordinary people in an abnormal historical period when individuals cannot act according to their own free will. Their thoughts and actions are completely governed by mainstream ideology. Given this reality, Fugui and his family are simply human sacrifices to this abnormal historical period, from approximately the early 1940s to the late 1970s. The book contains six chapters arranged in chronological order, coinciding exactly with historical events in China, with the exception of Chapter One which serves as a foreword and introduction to the story. Though Fugui and his family always remain on the periphery, important historical events tightly control their fates. Consequently, this novel can be read as Yu Hua's reference book for the history of the People's Republic of China.

While it is indeed Fugui's own fault that he loses all his property while gambling,
thereafter, he can no longer control his own fate. He is automatically pushed forward by history. China's twentieth century may be called a century of revolution as this period involved of a series of revolutions, wars and movements: the 1911 Revolution, the May Fourth Movement, tangled fighting among warlords, the Northern Expedition, the Sino-Japanese War, the KMT-CCP Civil War, and the founding of the People's Republic of China and Mao's proletarian dictatorship.  

*To Live* places the critical junction in Chinese history as the Chinese Civil War between the KMT and CCP armies from late 1945 to 1949. During this period in the novel, when he goes to town to find a doctor for his mother, Fugui is forcibly conscripted into the KMT army. He is then forced to become involved in the war. In the eyes of Fugui and his fellow soldiers, this war, a contest between the KMT and CCP for control over China's regimes and territory, is nothing but a series of more limited personal difficulties: conscription, running away, re-conscription, marching, starving, fighting and death. The experiences of Laoquan (老全) best illustrate the true nature of the war for the common people:

Laoquan tells me, as early as the Sino-Japanese War, he was subjected to conscription and ran away from the army when reaching Jiangxi (江西). Several days later, however, he was conscripted again by another army which was heading to Fujian (福建). In the past six years, he always fought with the CCP guerrillas, but never with the Japanese. He fled seven times during that period, but every time, he was conscripted by another army again... Laoquan says he does not want to run away anymore.

Laoquan's wish is granted when he is finally killed by a CCP/PLO bullet.

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98 One useful summary of these movements is in *The Communist Party of China and Marxism (1921-1985)* by Laszlo Ladany, Stanford University, Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press 1988.

99 Yu Hua, *To Live*, "老全告诉我，他抗战时就被拉了壮丁，开拔到江西他逃了出来，没几天又被去福建的部队拉了去。当兵六年多，没跟日本人打过仗，跟共产党的游击队打仗。这中间他逃跑了七次，都被别的部队拉了去...老全说他不想再逃了。" p. 82.
Throughout the course of his entire military career, Fugui only participates in one battle, his first and last, in which he and his fellow soldiers are besieged by the CCP army for over a month. The only thing they can do is to hide in the trenches, waiting for rescue troops from Chiang Kai-shek. Countless soldiers are killed by flying bullets or frozen to death on snowy nights. The fear of death and of starvation torture these helpless soldiers. "After more than one month's artillery experience, I do not so completely dread death. I only feel it is unworthy to die in such a muddled situation. Neither my mother nor Jiazhen would know where I am dying." In actuality, Fugui does not die, but is captured by the CCP army and later sent home. From these events it can be seen that, while Fugui is forced to be involved in this war, he always remains on its fringe. He wants to run away, to rejoin his family in the countryside. After his capture by the CCP army, he faces two choices: serve in the CCP army or return home. He chooses the second option. For him, war is nothing but slaughter. "I tell myself that I will not fight anymore. I will go back home."

Soon after Fugui returns home, Land Reform policies are initiated. Fugui and his family are sufficiently fortunate to stay on the periphery of this movement as well. Having won much land and many houses from Fugui, Long Er is now pushed to a central position, as the government confiscates his lands, redistributes them to the peasants and shoots him as a counter-revolutionary landlord. On his way to the execution grounds, Long Er shouts loudly to Fugui, "Fugui, I am a scapegoat. I am

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100 Ibid., "一个来月在枪炮里混下来后，我倒不怎么怕死，只是觉得自己这么死得不明不白实在是冤，我娘和家珍都不知道我死在何处。" p. 97.

101 Ibid., "我对自己说再也不能打仗了，我要回家。" p. 100.
dying for you!"\(^{102}\) What Long-Er says is true. If all landlords deserve death, then Fugui too should be shot, because the last several generations of his ancestors were all landlords. For his part, though, Fugui feels that it is his good fortune to have lost all his property to Long Er. Long Er and Fugui's experiences underscore the fact that the Land Reform Movement completely destroyed the traditional moral values of Chinese peasants. Fugui's ancestors were hardworking and thrifty peasants who gradually accumulated property by toiling in the fields, finally becoming landlords. "A long time ago, the ancestor of our Xu's family merely reared a small chick. When the chick grew up, it changed to a goose. When the goose grew up, it changed to a goat, then to a cow. This is how our Xu family became prosperous."\(^{103}\) This is also the dream of all honest peasants -- living a prosperous life through hardwork. The Land Reform Movement, however, destroys this dream. The poor peasants realize that if they toil hard in the fields and live an affluent life, they will eventually be killed by the government. Their lands will be confiscated. By contrast, those who are lazy and slovenly can carve up the lands of the rich under the guidance of the CCP and live safely. Fugui is the ultimate example of this phenomenon. If he is as hardworking and thrifty as his ancestors and is able to accumulate more properties, the CCP government will unquestionably kill him in the end. It is therefore fortunate that he squandered all his money on gambling and prostitutes, degrading himself into abject poverty. As a result, he and his family safely ride the waves of the Land Reform Movement while Long Er becomes his scapegoat, managing to enjoy his landlord status for only four years. This scenario demonstrates

\(^{102}\) Ibid., "福贵，我是替你去死啊！" p. 107.

\(^{103}\) Ibid., "我们徐家的老祖宗不过是养了一只小鸡，养大后变成了鹅，鹅养大了变成了羊，再把羊养大，羊就变了牛。我们徐家就是这样发起来的。" p. 44.
that the effect of the Land Reformation Movement extended beyond mere confiscation and redistribution of lands to the complete demolition of traditional moral values among the Chinese masses.

After the Land Reform Movement, Fugui and his family toil in the five *mu* fields allotted by the government and live a stable life for a short period. In 1958, however, the People's Communes are founded, with the lands in peasants' hands confiscated again by the government. Fugui's family also lose their lands and join the commune as the government becomes the biggest landlord. Before long, more absurd things begin to occur, as the CCP cast the whole country into the Great Steel Smelting Movement (part of the Great Leap Forward) during which the People's Commune confiscates and breaks all metal utensils possessed by families in order to smelt steel. To emphasize the preposterous results of this movement, Yu Hua elaborately designs several scenes. The village head invites a geomancer to choose a lucky place for steel-smelting. This is ironic because, with the founding of the PRC, the CCP theoretically eradicated all superstition and blind faith within popular society. Eventually, the cottage of an old peasant Lao Suntou (老孙头) is chosen as the steel-smelting location, and as such is burned to the ground, leaving a desperate Lao Suntou:

I have always felt I am a wastrel, but never imagined that our village head is also a wastrel. Standing within a hundred yards of the cottage, I watch the village head and his people pour cooking oil onto the cottage. The cooking oil is taken from our mouths and burned by fire like this. The tongues of flame leap up to the sky and black smoke rolls around the cottage. I see Lao Suntou holding onto a tree. He helplessly watches his nest being destroyed. Lao Suntou is really pitiful. He wipes his tears and leaves after the roof of the cottage turns into ash and the four walls are burned black. People hear him say: "The pot is broken, the house is
burned. It seems I am going to die."

The so-called Dictatorship of the Proletarian brings little benefit to the so-called proletarians, pushing the peasants into an increasingly miserable position. Poor peasants lose their lands, houses, and later their lives under the leadership of the CCP.

Although the village head selects a steel-smelting location, no one in the village really knows how to smelt steel. The village head takes Youqing's (Fugui's teenage son) suggestion to boil the broken iron with water in an empty gasoline barrel. The families in the village are scheduled to look after the so-called steel smelting pot day and night. In the end, however, the bottom of the barrel breaks, melding together with broken pots into a big piece of iron. The village head proclaims this mess to be steel, though everybody recognizes that this is in no way true. This is a case of the emperor's new clothes; everybody realizes that the emperor is in fact naked, but no one dares to speak the truth. Common sense tells everyone that the molten mess is a piece of iron, yet no one dares to disclose this fact. Of this phenomenon, the famous writer A Cheng indicated that the series of political movements experienced in China resulted in a collective loss of common sense. This loss, however, was the necessary result of Maoist totalitarianism.

The small village in which Fugui lives epitomizes China as a whole. The village head has absolute authority in the village, living in the large house which many generations of Fugui's family, and later Long Er, occupied. The words of the village head control the
peasants' daily lives; he orders them to break their cooking utensils, to turn over their grain and livestock to the commune, and to go to the public dining hall to eat. After the dining hall runs out of food, the village head orders them to buy cooking utensils and to cook for themselves once again.

Soon, a famine year besets the village as the rice paddies are submerged by continuous rain. With no harvest that year, the peasantry must make it through the famine year by themselves, digging up and consuming wild herbs or drinking pond water when they are hungry, the latter situation, for instance, undertaken by Youqing, the young son of Fugui.

Such natural disasters, however, are less horrible than those coming at the hands of human beings. Although Fugui and his family always remain on the margins during both war and political movements, they are not necessarily safe. After the famine year, for instance, Fugui faces the death of his son Youqing. The school principal, the wife of the county magistrate, needs a blood transfusion while giving birth. The school calls the students to donate blood to her. Youqing is the only one whose blood type matches that of the magistrate's wife, and therefore, he is sacrificed.

In order to save the life of the magistrate's wife, the person in the hospital keeps drawing blood from my son's body. Youqing's face gradually turns pale; however, he endures and does not complain. Later, his lips turn pale too and he trembles and says: "I'm dizzy." That person, however, tells him, "it is normal to feel dizzy when drawing blood." In fact, at that time, Youqing cannot stand anymore . . . the blood in my son's body is almost exhausted . . . The doctor does not pay much attention to him . . . and runs into the delivery room to save the magistrate's wife.\footnote{\textit{Common Sense and Knowledge} 常识与通识, Beijing: Writer Press作家出版社, 1999, pp. 105-107.}

\footnote{Ibid.}
This episode reminds readers of a similar scene in Wu Zuxiang’s “Guanguan’s Tonic” written in 1932. In that story, Guanguan, a young landlord, has an automobile accident and needs blood transmission urgently. As a result, a young peasant is taken to the hospital from the village to donate his blood which is ironically called "Guanguan’s tonic." More than three decades later, in the so-called "New China," this young landlord is substituted by a CCP cadre's wife who obtains her "tonic" from the son of a peasant.

The People may be born equal, but in Mao's socialist country, however, some people are born much more equal than others. The life of a CCP cadre's wife is in this context considered much more precious and valuable than that of a mere peasant's son. Mao always proclaimed that he eliminated exploitation and abolished the class system in China, but in reality, he created a hierarchical system in which the CCP members enjoyed absolute privilege and the abject peasants struggled silently at the bottom. If not Youqing, another peasant child must certainly have perished to save the cadre's life.

To strengthen the dramatic effect of the novel, Yu Hua manipulates the identity of the county magistrate, making him Fugui's former fellow soldier in the KMT army, Chunsheng (春生). In the civil war, the CCP army also captures Chunsheng, like Fugui, but the former chooses to serve the CCP rather than to return home. This choice helps secure him the role of county magistrate. When Fugui first learns of the death of his son, he rushes into the hospital, attempting to kill the doctor and the county magistrate. Recognizing the county magistrate as none other than Chunsheng, a man with whom he has shared the experiences of gunfire and the threat of death on the battlefield, Fugui

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107 Wu Zuxiang 吴组缃, Wu Zuxiang Xiaoshuo Xuan 吴组缃小说选, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Wan li shu dian 香港万里书店, 1958.
simply gives up his ideas of revenge, saying: "Chunsheng, you owe me a life. Pay me back in your next life." Later during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, Fugui employs the same words to encourage Chunsheng to live, not to commit suicide. Chunsheng, differing from Fugui who always stays on the margin of the revolution, strives to be closer to the center of the revolution and political power. As a result he is more miserable than are the more marginal people. With the coming of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, Chunsheng is labeled a "capitalist-roader (zou zi pai 走资派)" and is forced to parade through the streets. Thinking himself a loyal follower of Mao's proletarian dictatorship, Chunsheng keeps shouting "Long-live Chairman Mao!" In response, several people with red armbands rush to beat and kick him, shouting: "Is that what you're supposed to say? You damn capitalist-roader!" This scene is reminiscent of "The Execution of Mayor Yin", written by Chen Ruoxi. Mayor Yin was also a CCP cadre regarded as a counter-revolutionary and finally shot by the Red Guards, while loudly shouting "Long-live Chairman Mao." The Red Guards have to cover his mouth with rags while killing him because a person shouting such a slogan is obviously not supposed to be shot. Although Chunsheng is not shot by the Red Guards, he still hangs himself.

In an interview with one journalist, Yu Hua indicated that the effect of the Cultural

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108 Ibid., "青春，你欠了我一条命，你下辈子再还给我吧。" p. 196.

109 Ibid., "毛主席万岁！" p. 245.

110 Ibid., "这是你喊的吗？他娘的走资派！" p. 245.

Revolution was much more serious and brutal in the cities than in the countryside. By way of this novel, he was able to reveal the chaos and disasters of the Cultural Revolution through the events Fugui witnesses in the town.

The Cultural Revolution in the city is more and more serious. The streets are full of Big Character Posters... The door of Fengxia and Erxi's house is posted with slogans. Chairman Mao's words are printed on the washbasins... on the pillows... and sheets. Everyday Erxi and Fengxia sleep on Mao's words. Every time I go to town, I always avoid the crowded places. People fight every day in the city. I have seen several occasions where some people are beaten to the ground and can hardly stand up. No wonder the village head does not go to town for meetings anymore... He tells us secretly: "Someone dies in the city everyday. I am almost frightened to death. Going to the city for a meeting, at present, means entering a coffin."113

Remaining home does not really guarantee the village head's safety, however, for several months later, a group of Red Guards dashes into the village and labels the village head a capitalist-roader after failing to find any landlord or rich peasant to so label. As a result, he is taken to the city and beaten for three days, after which he returns home, considering himself lucky to be alive.

Those closer to the center of political power, to the revolution, suffer more in these movements. Fugui and his family members are obscure peasants, not deeply involved in these movements, and consequently better able to survive political disasters. These political disasters, however, lead to the subsequent poverty of the whole country. The peasants, the lowest class in society, are destined to struggle in abject poverty to the point of death. This is another theme of this novel.

112 Yu Hua, "Living Forever" in Can I Believe in Myself? pp. 223-228.

113 Yu Hua, To Live, pp. 239.
The prospect of living surrounded by death and the continued life of the protagonist in the face of the deaths of the other characters are the principle contrasting images of the story. Fugui gradually changes his attitude towards life and death. Experiencing a series of deaths among of his relatives and friends, his own vitality becomes ever stronger. When he first faces his father's death, he feels guilty at having caused it; he is also desperate about the future, having lost all his property. "After the death of my father, I felt weak in my limbs as if I had contracted pestilence. I sit in front of the thatched cottage, my eyes brimming with tears one moment and heaving deep sighs the next." His father's demise means that he has lost a source of dependence in his own life. From that point, he has to shoulder the financial load of the family. In fact, his sadness and fragility reflect his fear and despair at his future, afraid as he is of the prospect of trying to support his mother and his own small family in a comfortable fashion. In fact, these fears show that Fugui still has great aspirations for his own life.

When Fugui later reluctantly becomes involved in war and witnesses countless deaths among his fellow soldiers, his ideas concerning life and death change utterly. Death is no longer a dreadful thing for him. "At this moment, life and death are not important matters. I feel satisfied enough to eat a big pancake before to die." On the battlefield, Fugui and his fellow soldiers consider living as ordinary as is eating a pancake. Death then means only that people are deprived of their right to eat.

After he returns home from the war and watches Long Er being shot as a landlord in the Land Reform Movement, Fugui feels life or death is determined by an individual's

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114 Ibid., "我爹死后，我像是染上了瘟疫一样浑身无力，整天坐在茅屋前的地上，一会儿眼泪汪汪，一会儿唉声叹气。" p. 50.
115 Ibid., "到这时候死活已经不重要了，死之前能够吃上大饼也就值得了。" p. 97.
fate (命). He attributes his own survival in this movement to the fact that his ancestral
graves are located in a lucky position. When people are unable to control their fates
through their own wills, they must trust in fortune. Their requirements and aspirations in
life become much more moderate. "Jiazhen looked at me and said: 'I don't want any
further good fortune. I only wish to make you a pair of new shoes every year.' I
understood her words. My wife hopes we will not be separated anymore." 116 At this
point Fugui and his wife's only hope for life is that the whole family can remain
together. Even this modest wish goes unfulfilled, as death separates this family one by
one.

Both Fugui's son Youqing and daughter Fengxia perish in the hospital, with Youqing
dying during another woman's childbirth, and Fengxia during her own childbirth
experience. While these deaths leave Fugui overwhelmed by sadness, he must consider
other family members and ensure that they continue to live. Here Yu Hua describes in
detail Fugui's psychology as he carries his son's body
back from the hospital.

The village is drawing near, the more I walk, the worse I feel. I am thinking
about how to tell Jiazhen about this. Since Youqing has died, Jiazhen will
not live any longer, not to mention that she is seriously ill. I sit on the ridge
of the field at the village entrance and rest Youqing on my knees. I cannot
help weeping at the sight of my son. After weeping a while, I wonder again
what'll happen to Jiazhen. 117

As a husband and father, Fugui cannot simply indulge in his own grief, but has to keep

116 Ibid., “家珍看着我说：‘我也不想要什么福分，只求每年都能给你做一双新鞋。’我知道家珍的话，我的女

117 Ibid., “眼看着走到了村口，我就越走越难，想想怎么说对家珍说呢？有庆一死，家珍也活不长，家珍已经
病成这样了。我在村口的田埂上坐下来，把有庆放在腿上，看见儿子我就忍不住哭，哭了一阵又想家珍怎么
办？” p. 197.
living for the sake of his family. He buries his son, concealing Youqing's death from his wife, Jiazhen. Jiazhen, however, finally learns of it and quietly asks Fugui to carry her to visit Youqing's grave. They tacitly accept this arrangement of fate. The death of Youqing makes them even more treasure Fengxia, now their only child.

Fengxia, a deaf mute, marries a kind-hearted if slightly disabled orphan, Erxi. Since this humble young couple love each other deeply, Fugui and Jiazhen derive great happiness from Fengxia's marriage, bringing hope into their lives. Unfortunately, death visits the family again. Fengxia dies in childbirth, leaving a baby boy whom Jiazhen names Kugen (bitter root) because of this loss of his mother. Three months later, Jiazhen dies of osteomalacia, a gradual softening of the bones. Though she has faced much adversity in life, including the abnormal deaths of her two children, she does not complain about anything, telling Fugui on her deathbed:

I feel relieved. Because both Fengxi and Youqing have died before me, I do not need to worry about them anymore. As a mother, I am satisfied that my two children were filial when they were alive... You must keep living well on account of Erxi and Kugen. In fact, Erxi is just like your own son, and Kugen will be as filial to you as Youqing when he grows up.\(^\text{118}\)

In this statement, Jiazhen emphasizes the concept of filial piety, a central value of the Chinese family, and also her hope for their lives in the future. Fugui is therefore able to face his wife's death peacefully. He has lost his family, but Erxi and Kugen give him another family.

This new family is unfortunately short-lived since three years later Erxi is killed at a construction site. Fugui and Kugen thereafter depend on each other for survival. Fugui

\(^{118}\) Ibid., "凤霞，有庆都死在我前头，我心也安定，用不着再为他们操心，怎么说我是做娘的人，两个孩子活着时候都孝顺我，做人能做到这样我该知足了。你还得好好活下去，还有苦根和二喜，二喜其实也是自己的儿子，苦根长大了会和有庆一样对你好，会孝顺你的。" p. 264.
indicates that though life is hard, he is content. He draws courage from Kugen; seeing Kugen grow day after day, he is increasingly relieved. Describing his hopes for a wonderful future for Kugen, Fugui states: "when these two chicks grow up, we will change them to gooses, then to sheep, to cows. We will become richer and richer." Kugen, however, does not wait to see the cows, dying as he does at the age of five.

It seems that Fugui has no excuse to continue living, yet he lives nonetheless, without any specific reason. He purchases a cow to help him work in the field, treating the cow as a family member and calling it Fugui, his own name. This cow is the personification of the old man. On his way to buy a cow, Fugui discovers some people preparing to kill an old one. "I feel sorry to see this old cow weeping so sadly. It is really pitiful to be a cow. After toiling for people all its life, it becomes old and not as strong as before, then it will be killed and cooked." Since Fugui cannot bear to see the old cow slain, he brings it home. His sympathy for the cow reveals the sympathy he possesses for his own life. Sometimes he feels sad about the death of his family members; sometimes he feels relieved -- because he has buried them one after the other with his own hands, he need not worry about anyone any longer. He recalls his life peacefully, concluding that it is better to live a moderate life since those who strive to climb higher eventually destroy themselves as did Long Er and Chunsheng. Fugui is satisfied simply to have lived a long life.

Death runs through Fugui's life, changing his attitude toward life itself. When his

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119 Ibid., "这两只鸡长大了变成鹅，鹅养大了变成羊，羊大了又变成牛。我们啊，我们就越来越有钱了。" p. 196.

120 Ibid., "我看到这头老牛哭得那么伤心，心里怪难受的。想想这牛真是可怜，累死累活替人干了一辈子，老了，力气小了，就要被人宰了吃掉。" p. 290.
father passes away, he thinks only of himself, feeling dreadful and desperate with the loss of someone on whom he depends. Later, when faced with the deaths of his children, his concern is for the continued existence of other family members. For him, life means responsibility for his family. After having lost all his family members, living becomes a continuous journey. He has to keep going. Fugui begins to live for life itself, without any greater reason. To live is a victory. This is the lesson Yu Hua hopes to teach his readers, a lesson he also laid out in Can I Believe in Myself? when he indicated: "Fugui's value lies in the fact that he is living alone there. His living voice is much louder than that of everyone else."¹²¹

The basic framework of To Live is that of a folk song collector encountering an old peasant in the countryside and listening to the old man's recollection of his life. It involves two first-person narrators. In the first chapter, the folk song collector "I" discloses how "I" gets to know this old man and also introduces his current life conditions. At the end of each chapter, the folk song collector "I" always draws the readers back from the old man's recollections by inserting some of "my" comments, including descriptions about the old man's appearance and expression, his cow and surrounding scenery, or brief conversations between "I" and the old man. The language in these sections is humorous and agile in order that the intervention of folk song collector "I" is able to endow the story with a more lighthearted interlude, providing the readers temporary relief from the otherwise heavy and depressing theme. It serves moreover to contrast the old man's detached attitude in later years with his early more distressing experiences. After recalling certain episodes of his early life, the old man

¹²¹ Yu Hua, Can I Believe in Myself? "他的价值就是他孤一人...他的声音应该比所有人群'活着'的声音要强大得多。" p. 217.
shows no abhorrence or hatred at all, but rather a peaceful understanding of life, an understanding Yu Hua wants to reveal to readers -- loftiness (高尚), a kind of transcendence with the understanding of all things, treating good and evil without discrimination, looking upon the world with a sympathetic eye.

The story involves two first-person narrators. The effect of one, folk song collector "I", has been analyzed in the previous paragraph. The other is Fugui, since the main story is told by Fugui as the first-person narrator. In Can I Believe in Myself, Yu Hua indicated the reason he chose a first-person narrator in this context:

At the very beginning, I still utilized my previous narrative method, the indifferent narrative which tried to keep a distance from the characters. I did not feel comfortable, however, and it seemed there was something that came between myself and my characters no matter how I wrote. Later, I switched to a first-person narrator, let the protagonist speak for himself, and suddenly found the narrative was full of cordial and touching sentiments which are the key to first-person narrative. I know I can write in this way.122

Friedman, for his part, asserts the limitation of employing the first-person narrator as a protagonist, arguing that such a narrative style limits an author almost entirely to the protagonist's own thoughts, feeling, and perceptions, and that the point of view is a fixed center.123 Yu Hua, however, deliberately applies "I" as protagonist in order to stress the uniqueness of Fugui's life. In the meantime, the fixed point of view enables readers to better experience and understand Fugui's thoughts, feelings and perceptions, in other words, Yu Hua's so-called "touching and cordial sentiments."

Since the choice of narrative method governs the writer's style, the language of the

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122 Ibid...“刚开始我仍然使用过去的叙述方式，那种保持距离的冷漠的叙述，结果我怎么写都不舒服，怎么写都觉得隔了一层。后来我改用第一人称，让任务自己出来发言，于是我突然发现自己的叙述里充满了亲切之感，这是第一人称叙述的关键，我知道可以这样写下去了。” p. 239.

123 Friedman, Form and Meaning, p. 152.
story must suit its supposed speaker. In this novel, Yu Hua deals quite carefully with
language. Having obtained only a basic education in a private school during his
childhood, Fugui's identity remains that of a peasant all his life. Consequently, when
Fugui narrates his story, the writer must choose the simplest language for his self-
expression, limiting the narrative to suitable words and sentence patterns. Yu Hua
emphasizes that he even tries to avoid set phrases, only cautiously employing those set
phrases that appear in the language of children.

The application of simple language does not mean Yu Hua forsakes his pursuit of a
delicate narrative. On the contrary, it requires him to pay greater attention to this pursuit.
In this vein, Yu Hua discussed the writing of one episode of this story in particular. After
the death of Youqing, Fugui secretly buries him beside the graves of his grandparents.
Fugui stands there weeping and staring at the road on which Youqing has run to school
everyday, a road which now lies quiet in the moonlight. Yu Hua felt it was his
responsibility as a writer to describe Fugui's feelings about this road. But how could he
do so? In "World Like Mist", Yu Hua wrote that the road in the moonlight looked like a
river glimmering in the pallid light. Applying the same image to express the feelings of a
father who had just lost his son, however, seemed rather inappropriate. It took Yu Hua a
long time to find the proper image -- salt -- to expose Fugui's sadness. "I look at the
small winding road leading to the town, I cannot hear the sound of my son running with
his bare feet. The moonlight projects on the road as if it were covered with salt."¹²⁴ Salt
is very important for people's life. Salt, meanwhile, helps emphasize Fugui's pain; his

¹²⁴ Yu Hua, To Live, "我看着那条弯曲着通向城里小路，听不到我儿子赤脚跑来的声音，月光照在路上，
son's death is just like spreading salt on his wounds.125

The series of abnormal deaths in Fugui's family clearly establishes the narrative method of *To Live* as one of a typical narrative repetition; whereas the young and vigorous may deserve a long and happy life, they still perish at an early age. By contrast, the old and weak, including Fugui and the cow, live as long as fossils, witnessing the injustices of this world along the way. The repetitive images of death symbolize the hardships of people approaching their ultimate fate. In the process of experiencing death, Fugui's attitude toward life and the world continues to evolve, as discussed previously. This variable repetition helps to illustrate the theme of the story, the introspection of an anomalous era being projected onto individual existence.

In order to avoid the tedium or boredom associated with the repetitive narrative, Yu Hua brings in the folk song collector and cow, whose functions are discussed in part above. Both the conversation between Fugui and the folk song collector, and Fugui's monologue to the cow produce a cushioning effect against repetition, providing readers an opportunity to breathe fresh air during Fugui's heavy narrative. It deliberately breaks the continuity of the narrative in order to reduce the reader's feeling of repetition. For example, after Fugui finishes discussing the story of Youqing's death, there is a short break in his narrative. Here, Yu Hua inserts a lighthearted conversation between Fugui and two young women in the field. Fugui proudly informs them of some of his basic life principles: "As human beings, there are four principles which cannot be forgotten: (1) don't speak incorrectly; (2) don't sleep in the wrong bed; (3) don't step onto the wrong

125 Yu Hua, *Can I Believe in Myself?* p. 249.
threshold; (4) and don't touch the wrong pocket."\textsuperscript{126} Yu Hua's interjection of this small episode of comic relief helps draw readers away from the melancholy of Youqing's death, offering them an opportunity to release their sadness. After this juncture, the folk song collector asks the old man to continue his story. "He looks at me excitingly as if I am doing some good thing for him. He looks very happy because his life experience is taken seriously by another person."\textsuperscript{127} After this momentary pause, Fugui continues his narration of the death of his daughter, son-in law and wife.

In the novel \textit{To Live}, Yu Hua utilizes the plainest language, a delicate narrative and two first-person narrators to tell the life story of a Chinese peasant from the early 1940s to a late 1970s. Through this story, Yu Hua tries to reveal his understanding of living by describing the arduous and marginal existence of individuals under the dual pressures of a bad political situation and a harsh material reality. In the preface to \textit{To Live}, Yu Hua states: "The writing process makes me understand: people live for life itself, not for anything beyond life. I think I have written a noble (gaoshang高尚) work."\textsuperscript{128} He has indeed.

\textsuperscript{126} Yu Hua, \textit{To Live}, "做人不能忘记四条，话不要说错，床不要睡错，门槛不要踏错，口袋不要摸错。" p. 203.

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., "他有些激动地看着我，仿佛是我正在为他做写什么，他因为自己的身世受到别人的重视，显示出了喜悦之情。" p. 204.

\textsuperscript{128} Yu Hua, "Preface to \textit{To Live Chinese Version}", in \textit{Can I Believe in Myself?} The Chinese original is, "写作过程让我明白，人是为活着本身而活着的，而不是为了活着之外的任何事物所活着，我感到自己写下了高尚的作品。" p. 146.
Chapter Four: Blood Selling— the Ceremony of Existence

*To Live* and *Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood* are regarded as works in which Yu Hua changes from experimental writing with an obsession on violence and crime in the 1980s to more traditional realistic narratives on folk society in the 1990s. If *To Live* seeks to explore the state of existence of peasants in the countryside during an abnormal historical era, then *Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood* hopes to disclose the life struggles of the urban poor during the same historical period. As early as his composition of *To Live*, Yu Hua emphasized that a writer should understand and look upon the world with a sympathetic view. In his eyes, the world is important and holy. In *Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood*, Yu Hua’s understanding of the world is expressed through his understanding of human nature, history and popular society.

Completed in August 1995, *Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood* tells the tale of Xu Sanguan's lifelong experience of selling blood for survival. Yu Hua himself describes this book as follows: “expressing the author's obsession with length, a road, a river, a rainbow, a continuous and unbroken reminiscence, an endless ballad and the whole life of a person. All these look like a roll of coiled rope, and are gradually drawn out by the narrative to the end of the road.”

Xu Sanguan’s life is like a continuous and unbroken reminiscence narrated by Yu Hua in the rhythm of a Chinese ballad.

The time span is from approximately 1948 to 1988. Xu Sanguan, a cocoon-deliverer (送茧工) in a silk textile factory in a small southern Chinese town, exchanges his blood

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129 Yu Hua, "Preface to Chinese Version of *Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood* " in *Can I Believe in Myself?* "这本书表达了作者对长度的迷恋，一条道路，一条河流，一条雨后的彩虹，一个绵延不绝的回忆，一首有始无终的民歌，一个人的一生。这一切犹如盘起来的一捆绳子，被叙述慢慢拉出，拉到了路的尽头。" p. 136.
for money twelve times in his life in order to overcome his family's economic difficulties. When he is a small child, his father dies and his mother elopes with an army officer, leaving Xu a virtual orphan to be brought up by his grandfather and fourth uncle. The story starts with young Xu Sanguan visiting his grandpa and uncle in the countryside where he learns for the first time that sales of blood are the primary source of income for the poor country people. The miserable peasants think the blood in their bodies is just like water in a well; even if you draw water from the well, the water will not diminish. If you draw it everyday, the water will remain as plentiful as before. Every time they sell their blood, the peasants can earn thirty-five dollars, equivalent to the amount they might make for toiling in the fields for half a year. With this money, they can accomplish all the important things in their lives -- marrying a wife, building a house, buying cows and horses, and so on.

Accompanied by his countrymen A Fang and Genlong, Xu Sanguan sells his blood to the hospital for the first time in his life. He returns to the town with thirty-five dollars and marries the "Doughnut Beauty" Xu Yulan ("油条西施"许玉兰), a woman who fries twisted dough sticks in a small restaurant. In five years, the young couple bear three sons, Yi-le (First Happiness), Er-le (Second Happiness) and San-le (Third Happiness). The birth of Yi-le is, however, the result of a simple, naive sexual encounter between Yulan and a previous suitor, He Xiaoyong. The circumstances surrounding Yi-le's conception haunt Xu Sanguan and his family for many years. At the age of ten, Yi-le has a fight with blacksmith Fang's son and cracks his skull, sticks up for San-le. This forces Xu Sanguan to sell his blood again in order to pay compensation for Fang's son's medical care. Later, Xu Sanguan has a short-lived love affair with a
colleague, Lin Fenfang. In order to show his appreciation and tenderness to Lin, Xu sells his blood a third time to buy tonic for her. From 1958, together with billions of Chinese people, Xu and his family begin to experience a series of political movements. During the famine of the so called "Three -years Natural Disaster", Xu and his family are forced to drink corn congee for fifty-seven days. As a consequence, yet another transaction is justified: " I am going to sell my blood and let my family have a good meal."130

In 1966/67, Mao Zedong instituted the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Yi-le and Er-le, along with thousands of young students, are sent to the countryside to be reeducated by the peasants. Xu Sanguan is forced to sell his blood twice a month in order to better the young brothers' lives in the countryside and to entertain a village head who controls the fate of Er-le. Unfortunately, Yi-le contracts hepatitis, requiring money to receive treatment at a large Shanghai hospital. This situation causes great difficulty for the family. Xu Sanguan raises money for Yi-le by obtaining loans from his neighbors and by selling his blood. However, since his neighbors are as poor as is he, the money he raises is far from sufficient. As a result, he makes up his mind to sell his blood on the way from his hometown to Shanghai, donating five times within one month.

Some years later, the children grow up and the family's economic situation is greatly improved. Xu Sanguan wants to sell his blood one more time for his own sake. Of course, his request is turned down by the hospital because he is too old and his blood is said to be worth only as much as pig’s blood which can only be used as in making paint.

In the story, Yu Hua neither gives the protagonist Xu Sanguan intense character

130 Yu Hua, Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood,"我要去卖血了，我要让家里人吃上一顿好的饭菜。” p. 132.
development nor directly describes Xu's current psychological states. Rather he endows
Xu Sanguan with an unchanging, innocent character. Xu uses his own simplicity and
innocence to protect his family and to struggle against poverty and hardship. This
reminds readers of another character, Li Shunda in Gao Xiaosheng's short story "Li
Shunda Builds a House". 131 With the same simple and innocent temperament, Li Shunda
struggles his whole life to build a brick house for his family. The simplicity and
innocence of these two characters contrast sharply with the existing harshness and peril
of the political and material realities of Mao's China.

The twelve experiences Xu has selling blood comprise not only the main plot of the
story, but they also define the complete value and meaning of Xu's life. For Xu Sanguan,
the only way to deal with adversity is to sell his own blood, a symbol of life and vitality.
In the traditional Chinese conception, one's blood is inherited from one's ancestors, a
concept revealed when Yulan, after realizing her husband has sold his blood, clearly and
loudly remarks:

My father has told me since I was a young girl that the blood in our body is
inherited from our ancestors. As a human being, we can sell everything,
crullers, houses and fields . . . except blood. Even if the body is sold, the blood
still cannot be sold because selling blood is selling the ancestors. Xu Sanguan,
you have sold out your ancestors! 132

For Xu Sanguan, however, selling blood has a different meaning. For Xu him, engaging
in these transactions demonstrates his reverence for life and confirms his own value and
self-worth. His blood becomes thinner and thinner, but his vitality becomes ever

131 Gao Xiaosheng 高晓声, "Li Shunda Builds a House" 李顺大造屋, in Selection of Modern Chinese Fiction中国
现代小说选, ed. by Zhen Shusen 郑树森, Taipei: Hongfan shudian youxian gongsi 洪范书店有限公司, 1989,
pp. 939 - 967.

132 Yu Hua, Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood."从小我爹就对我说过，我爹说身上的血是祖宗传下来的，做人买
油条，卖屋子，卖田地...就是不能卖血，卖身是卖自己，卖血就是卖祖宗，许三观，你把祖宗给卖了。"
p. 88.
stronger. He sells his blood for his wife, for his children and for his family, and through them his life is perpetuated. At the end of the story, when Xu Sanguan wants to sell his blood one last time just for himself, giving blood has itself become a kind of living ceremony.

By employing this plot and symbolism in addition to revealing the vitality of Xu Sanguan, Yu Hua is trying to reveal the goodness and beauty of traditional Chinese values. Xu and his family belong to the working class and consequently are not well educated. They do, however, inherit the legacy of traditional Chinese values, values rooted in traditional Confucian culture. In their actions, readers can see benevolence, propriety, righteousness, trustworthiness, filial piety, tolerance, sincerity, thrift and hardwork.

Yulan, for her part, is the female protagonist in the story. Like most beautiful women, she is interested in dressing up and applying make-up. She is both gossipy and snobbish. Fortunately she also has more positive traits. She loves her husband and sons, and tries her best to provide a decent and comfortable life for her family within a tight budget. She is thrifty and handy. As a cocoon-deliverer, one of the advantages her husband, Xu Sanguan, enjoys is to receive a pair of white cotton gloves every month. Yulan saves all these gloves and re-knits them into sweaters for her sons, her husband and herself. She carefully balances the family's income and expenses. She tries to save every penny and every grain of rice in daily life. In this frugal way, she manages to help her family make it through the famine year with corn congee and wild herbs. Thus can it be seen that Yulan and Xu Sanguan jointly support the family.

In chapter 23 and 24, the protagonist's traits of benevolence, righteousness,
trustworthiness, lenience and filial piety are best manifested. He Xiaoyong, Xu Yulan's previous suitor and Yi-le's biological father, is hit by a truck and dying in the hospital. According to a fortuneteller, only Xiaoyong's own son can save his life if he stands on the roof of his house calling back his soul by crying out "Daddy, do not leave! Daddy, come back!" Having had only two daughters, Xiaoyong's wife has to convince Xu's family to let Yi-le save Xiaoyong. At the beginning, both Xu Sanguan and Yulan turn down the request because, in order to save money, Xiaoyong and his wife have all along refused to admit that Yi-le is really his son. Through his leniency and kindness, however, Xu Sanguan finally persuades Yi-le to go to Xiaoyong's home to plead for the return of his father's soul. When trying to convince Yi-le to perform this task, Xu uses his own experience to teach Yi-le the meaning of a clear conscience, of righteousness and filial piety. Standing on the roof of He Xiaoyong's house, nevertheless, Yi-le cannot cry out the necessary words and insists that Xu Sanguan is his father rather than Xiaoyong. Though Xu Sanguan is deeply moved by Yi-le's words, he has promised Xiaoyong's wife to save her husband's life. In response, then, he discusses trustworthiness with Yi-le stating that when you promise something to other people, you have to fulfill this promise. Finally, Yi-le cries the words from the roof top and Xu Sanguan carries him back home. This scene is one of the climaxes of the story, for at this moment, Xu Sanguan and Yi-le break the psychological barrier that has existed between them for thirteen years. They become a real father and son, even though they are not blood relatives.

Fraternal friendship and love are also vividly portrayed in the story. In chapter 27,
Er-le finds Yi-le lying on the bed in the countryside sick with hepatitis. To aid Yi-le, Er-le carries his elder brother on his back all the way to the ferry during a snowstorm at night. When waiting for the ferry, he takes off his overcoat and covers Yi-le with it, realizing that Yi-le might still freeze to death in this snowstorm. Then he runs the more than ten miles back to the village to obtain a quilt for Yi-le. He falls down several times on the road, cutting his knees. After returning, he wraps his brother with the quilt and holds him tightly while they wait for the ferry. The next morning, he finally arrives home with his brother on his back, looking like an enormous snowball when Xu Sanguan and his wife open the door to let them in. Later, when San-le hears that Yi-le is seriously sick and needs money to go to a Shanghai hospital, he gives all his wages to his father and stays at home to look after Er-le, who also becomes ill. The three brothers help and support one another from childhood to adulthood. It is this type of fraternal affection that the Chinese call Filial Piety and Fraternal Duty (孝悌).

In his works, Yu Hua always allows historical events to penetrate the narrative and permits individuals to have direct relationships or conflicts with events. Similarly, in Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood, the history of Xu Sanguan's family parallels the history of the People's Republic of China from 1948 to 1988.

In chapter 18, a series of political movements in Chinese history takes place: the establishment of the People's Communes, the Great Leap Forward and the Great Smelting of Steel and Iron. Through the dialogues between Xu Sanguan and Yulan, Yu Hua relates his own opinion of these movements. As can be seen in the following explanation by Wayne Booth in his Rhetoric of Fiction, Yu Hua's opinions lay just beneath the surface of his fiction: "They [authors] do not speak, that is, directly. The
author's voice is still dominant in a dialogue that is at the heart of all experience with fiction.”134 When mentioning the People's Communes, Yu Hua remarks through the voice of Xu Sanguan that, "The fields in the village of my grandpa and fourth uncle have been confiscated. From now on, no one has his own field. All the fields belong to the state (guojia). If the peasants want to grow crops, they have to rent the fields from the state and pay taxes to the state after harvesting. The state becomes the landlord, a big landlord. The name of this big landlord is the People's Commune."135 Yu Hua also exposes his views on the nature and influence of these movements by depicting the life of Xu Sanguan's family during this period. Because their cooking pots, bowls and rice are expropriated, Yulan does not need to cook for the family anymore. Xu Sanguan takes his family to have free meals in various public canteens. Before long, however, the canteens close and the family has to cook for itself again. Fortunately, Yulan was smart enough to hide some pots, cooking oils and foods in advance. The readers read these above descriptions as if they were watching a grotesque farce, and they all know such things actually happened all over China.

With the coming of the famine years, there is an increasing number of beggars on the streets. However, the life of Xu's family is better than that of other's because Yulan saved two crocks of rice, hiding them under her bed. They have to eat corn congee and wild herbs as their daily meals for a long time before they are saved by the rice. On Xu Sanguan's birthday, Yulan cooks a pot of thick corn congee and puts sugar in it, but none


135 Yu Hua, Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood."我爷爷，我四叔他们村里的田地都被收回去了，从今往后谁也没有自己的田地了，田地都归国家了，要种庄稼得向国家租田地，到了收成的时候要向国家交租粮，国家成了地主，那可是大地主，大地主的名字叫人民公社。" p. 115.
of the children realize the congee is sweet. Xu Sanguan sighs when he realizes that the children have even forgotten the taste of sweetness. Through such details as these, readers witness the suffering of the ordinary people under the dictatorship of the Maoist Communist Party.

In Chapter 25, Yu Hua describes the experience of Xu's family in the early period of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Once again, through Xu Sanguan the author provides the readers with his own understanding of the Cultural Revolution.

What is the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution? In fact, it is an opportunity to avenge private hatreds in public ways. Whoever offended you before, you can write a big character poster about him and post it on the street. You can call him an escaped landlord, a counterrevolutionary . . . anything you want. Nowadays, in this world, there are no courts and no policemen, only criminal accusations . . . You don't have to do anything, other people will punish and torture him to death.\(^\text{136}\)

This is the impression of the masses regarding the Cultural Revolution. No family can escape from this terrible "disaster." Yulan is ferreted out and reprimanded in public as a typical prostitute because she once had extramarital sex with He Xiaoyong. In public meetings, the PRC leaders expose and castigate various kinds of "class enemies," and "bad elements" including prostitutes, landlords, counterrevolutionaries, rightists, and capitalists. Yulan is the only woman in this small town that they can squeeze into the category of prostitute. After this accusation, she has to attend various meetings or stand on the noisy street with a board hanging from her neck reading "Prostitute Xu Yulan". The first day at the public meeting they cut half of her hair and label her Yin-yang head (male-female head), a label applied to class enemies. When she returns home, her

\(^{136}\) Yu Hua, *Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood*, "…什么叫文化大革命？其实就是一个报私仇的时候，以前谁要是得罪了你，你就写一张大字报，说他是漏网地主也好，说他是反革命也好，怎么说都行。这年月法院没有了，警察也没有了，这眼月最多的就是罪名….用不着你自己动手了，别人会把他往死里整…" p. 174.
husband has to cut off all the rest of her hair in order to make her look better. Everyday Xu Sanguan delivers lunch for her on the street. He covers the delicious meat in this lunch with white rice because class enemies are not supposed to eat tasty food.

Furthermore, Xu Sanguan's family is required to have a family meeting to criticize Yulan. In this meeting, Yulan has to confess her "prostitute experience" in front of her sons and husband. Xu Sanguan, however, uses this opportunity to let his sons know that their mother has never been a prostitute but is being slandered by others. He also confesses his love affair with Lin Fenfang in order that his sons understand that their mother is no worse than others. He concludes, "In fact, we are the same, we are equal."

Xu Sanguan and Yulan reach a mutual understanding and forgiveness. The shadow of the He Xiaoyong affair is completely cast away. Xu Sanguan and Yulan are common people, but they understand true love. They have quarrels, arguments and misunderstanding with each other, but in the most difficult situations they protect and support each other, jointly resisting adversity and hardship. In fact, it is the traditional conception of family that unites them, that encourages them to fight against outside affliction and to protect family members. Family is the key to Chinese culture, a key which the CCP could not destroy as a force for good and ill. This fact also proves the conclusion drawn by Edward Friedman, Paul Pickowicz and Mark Selden in their book *Chinese Village, Socialist State*: "an unintended consequence of the state's war on village culture and the peasant household economy was that villagers, expropriated for so much they treasured, clung more tightly to surviving, virtually sacred, household resources, from the home to the lineage to the marriage bond...Family turned inward
to preserve what they cherished." Though this conclusion is based on the situation in Chinese villages, it applies equally to Chinese towns and cities. To survive, maintain dignity, and avoid impoverishment, Xu's family acts in an ever more Confucian way.

In this story, there is only one specifically negative character -- Blood Chief Li, who is in charge of buying blood for the hospital. Though his status in the hospital is lower than that of a nurse, he is a savior in the eyes of the people who sell their blood due to poverty or other factors. He establishes his authority in this small blood kingdom. He lets the blood sellers coming from remote villages worry whether or not they will be permitted to sell their blood. He cultivates their deep respect and esteem towards him, allowing these simple peasants to know the meaning and function of gifts. The first time Xu Sanguan goes to the hospital with A Fang and Genlong to sell blood, he does not understand why they carry so many watermelons with them. His companions tell him these watermelons are gifts for Blood Chief Li. Gifts are another kind of language, a language with the premise of self-sacrifice and self-loss. These poor peasants understand that they should take fresh vegetables, eggs or other gifts before they leave home to sell their blood. For a period, Blood Chief Li declares that he will no longer receive presents because as a member of the Chinese Communist Party, he should not take one needle or thread from the masses. In spite of this supposed stance, in the famine year, he still asks Xu Sanguan for five dollars as a reward for allowing Xu to sell blood. Blood Chief Li explains himself as follows: "I have no other way in this famine year..... When life is better, I will not take one needle or thread from the masses." In fact, even in the famine year, Blood Chief Li still lives a much better life than others.

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137 Frieman, Pickowicz & Selden, Chinese Village, Socialist State, p. 267.
His complexion is ruddy; his face is fleshy. Through the character of Blood Chief Li, Yu Hua discloses the greediness, cruelty and hypocrisy of some CCP members and makes a contemporary point as well.

In recent years, the Chinese critics realized that Yu Hua has rebuilt or revived the Chinese popular society in his later novels. In Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood, Yu Hua tries to portray a vivid and vigorous pictures of popular society for his readers. In the preface to this work, Yu Hua indicated that, "This book is, in fact, a long ballad. Its rhythm is the speed of reminiscence; its melody mildly leaps and bounds; its sign of rest is concealed by rhythm. Here the writer fabricates the history of two persons, but he is attempting to evoke the memories of many more people." In this story, Yu Hua endeavors to take our memory back to this lost popular society of common people. By detailing scenes through the delineation of the nature of the masses, their ethical structures and folk life, on the one hand, Yu Hua discloses the cunning, gossipy, ignorant and chaotic nature of the rural, small town masses, while on the other he also extols their kindness, tenderness, tolerance and lenience.

Yu Hua's perspective on the masses and popular society differs from that of other writers such as Lu Xun and Mo Yan. Lu Xun ruthlessly criticized the apathetic, cowardly and brutal nature of the Chinese people, portraying them as "fierce as a lion, timid as a rabbit and crafty as a fox" in his famous Diary of A Mad Man. Mo Yan, for

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his part, believes the dictatorship of the Chinese Communist Party has entirely
destroyed the ethical morality and harmonious relationships among people. All
tenderness, kindness and affection in popular society have been thoroughly swept away.
In his short story "Dry River" (枯河), a small boy is jointly beaten to death by the
village leader, his own brother, mother and father. No mercy, sympathy or kindness can
be found in his story.\textsuperscript{141}

On the contrary, in \textit{Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood}, readers discover a popular society
full of sympathy, kindness and leniency. This popular society is too deeply rooted in
traditional Chinese culture to be readily destroyed by the CCP's various policies and
political movements. As Edward Friedman and his co-authors indicate:

\begin{quote}
The CCP's unpopular campaigns against tradition are unsuccessful. Official
socialist culture is so alienating that primordial loyalties actually grew stronger
and more sacred even as they perforce became invisible. Surprisingly little had
changed in human relations and understanding in spite of the war against
landlord, private property, and market, in spite of mass campaigns and
catastrophes.\textsuperscript{142}
\end{quote}

In this novel, Yu Hua tries to reveal these primordial loyalties, human relations and
understanding in popular society through the experiences of Xu Sanguan. When Xu
Sanguan raises money to send Yi-le to the Shanghai hospital to cure his hepatitis, he
visits blacksmith Fang and He Xiaoyong's wife to borrow money. Both Fang and He's
family had conflicts with Xu's family years before, but neither of them hesitates to lend
money to Xu. On his way to sell blood to Shanghai, Xu Sanguan receives various kinds
of help and assistance from strangers along the way. In Linpu, when people see Xu

\textsuperscript{141} Mo Yan 莫言, "Dry River" 枯河 in \textit{The Transparent Carrot} 透明的胡萝卜, Beijing: Chinese Writer Press,
作家出版社, 1988, pp. 32-56.

\textsuperscript{142} Frieman, Pickowicz & Selden, \textit{Chinese Village, Socialist State}, p. 268.
drinking freezing river water in the chilly weather, they voluntarily send him hot tea and salt. In Baili, he falls into a swoon after selling his blood and is sent to a small inn by strangers. At night, in the small inn, an old peasant puts a piglet into Xu's quilt to warm him. In Huangdian, he encounters two young boatmen, brothers, Laishun and Laixi, on whose boat Xu stays several nights. Accompanied by Xu Sanguan, Laishun and Laixi have their first experience selling their own blood. Since Laixi is young, his blood thick, he decides to sell one bowl of his blood to Xu so that Xu can sell it in two bowls later in Qilibao. Before Laixi sells his blood, he refuses to drink water, because he thinks it is not fair and decent to sell diluted blood to a friend. All the people Xu Sanguan meets on his way to Shanghai will likely never reappear in his life, but their generosity and kindness will be preserved in Xu's memory forever.

Yu Hua employs a number of writing techniques in order to involve readers in an effective fashion. Yu Hua used to be infatuated with his writing style and technique. In *Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood*, however, he tries to find a more simple and easy manner to express his theme. The narrator is "nullified." Yu Hua explains his treatment of the narrator in the preface:

Here, sometimes the writer has nothing to do because at the very beginning he has realized the fabricated figures also have their own voices. He thinks he should respect these voices and let them find answers in the wind. Hence the writer is not an intrusive narrator anymore; he is a listener, a patient, careful, considerate and understandable listener and works hard at it. When narrating the story, he tries to efface his identity; he feels he himself should be a reader, and in fact he is, after he finishes writing his book, he finds he knows no more than others do.¹⁴³

Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood is an "authorless" work. In the text, the narrator is deprived of his speaking authority. In his book Rhetoric of Fiction, Wayne Booth calls this "authorial silence": "by the kind of silence he maintains, by the manner in which he leaves his characters to work out their own destinies or tell their own stories, the author can achieve effects which would be difficult or impossible if he allowed himself or a reliable spokesman to speak directly and authoritatively to us." In Yu Hua's novel, the narrator becomes a listener and spectator. His way of existing in the text is by listening and watching instead of by speaking. He attempts to introduce the story's figures and plot as briefly as possible, not toiling to create atmosphere and settings, depicting psychological activities or transmitting conceptions. He allows his protagonists to speak their own stories. This novel is full of voices from Xu Sanguan, his wife, his children and neighbors instead of the narrator. Readers can find such indicators to this choice in "Xu Sanguan says," "Xu Yulan says," "Yi-le says," "Er-le says," "San-le says," "People say," or "Chairman Mao says" everywhere in the story. Thus, we may say that Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the polyphonic novel can be applied to Yu Hua's work, Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood

According to Bakhtin, "language lives only in the dialogic interaction of those who make use of it," and "life by its own nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to response, to agree, and so forth." Bakhtin's prime interest is in the novel and he sees Dostoevsky as the "creator of the polyphonic novel." He contrasts the dialogical discourse of the Dostoevsky novel with the monologism of traditional authorial discourse in which one voice attempts to dominate all others.

indicating that the characters in a polyphonic work have been created by the author, but once they come into being, they partially escape his control and prevent him from knowing in advance how they will answer him. The polyphonic novel is therefore characterized by a "plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voice."

The novel *Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood* is a work full of this type of independent and valid voices. Yu Hua applies complicated dialogues to narrate the plot, frame the story, reveal the experiences of individuals, depict historical events, clarify time and create a psychological and imaginary world. Through the dialogues of the protagonists and other characters, readers understand what is happening, what people are thinking and doing. For example, in chapter five, the secret of Yi-le's birth is disclosed by the gossip of neighbors and dialogues between Xu Sanguan and Yulan. At the beginning of Chapter 18 and 25, there are long speeches and comments given by Xu Sanguan on occurrences in the streets. Through Xu Sanguan and Yulan's dialogues, readers learn about the Great Leap Forward, the establishment of the People's Communes, and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

In addition to the dialogues within Xu's family, the dialogues between other ambiguous speakers also play an important role in the story. Yu Hua uses "they say...." as a third-person narrator to supplement the lack of narrative and further develop the plot. For example, in chapter eight, blacksmith Fang's son is sent to the hospital after Yi-le cracks his skull. There are two paragraphs beginning with "they say" to describe the son's urgent condition in the hospital. With the help of these two paragraphs, readers

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learn of the progress of the son's medical treatment as well as the pressure on Xu's family to raise money to compensate Fang.

In this novel, the combination of polyphonic narrative and authorial silence breaks the authority of the author's single voice and produces an effect of naturalness and objectivity. The polyphonic narrative is accomplished through one basic action of talking. In addition to this, walking and weeping are further important acts Yu Hua assigns to the people in his story. Yu Hua has his characters speaking and walking to develop the plot of the story and weeping to express the emotions and psychological conflicts of the protagonists. He often combines the actions of walking and weeping together in the story. In chapter 21, after Xu Sanguan sells his blood, he takes everyone in the family except Yi-le to eat noodles in the Victory Restaurant. Yi-le is excluded because he is not Xu's own son. After finishing one small roast sweet potato at home and weeping for a while, Yi-le decides to go to the restaurant to eat noodles with his family, but he does not find them. The next day, he goes to Xiaoyong's house to ask his real father to buy him a bowl of noodles. After Xiaoyong turns down his request, Yi-le walks down the road weeping. "People see a twelve- or thirteen-years-old boy walking toward the west with his head down. The child's tears drop on the earth, drop on his shoes." Yi-le's action of walking and crying express his sadness: he can neither eat noodles with his foster father nor be recognized by his real father.

Similarly, in the last chapter of the story, after Xu Sanguan fails to sell his blood at the age of sixty something and is ridiculed and insulted by the young Blood Chief in the

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146 Yu Hua, *Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood*, "...看到一个十一, 二岁的孩子，低着头一路想西走去，他们看到这个孩子的眼泪不停地掉到了地上，有时掉在鞋上。” p. 147.
hospital, readers find Xu Sanguan undertaking the same actions of walking and weeping. "He walks through the primary school, cinema, department store . . . turbid tears spill out of his eyes and stream down his cheeks to his neck and his chest." The description and narrative are exterior acts, but the inner emotion is much more moving. This failure to sell blood means the loss of Xu's vitality. Selling blood has always helped him out of difficult situations; it is his only weapon to resist the world. Now, his blood no longer has value. For Xu Sanguan, there is nothing more sorrowful and serious than this.

Another apparent technique in the story is repetition. This repetition achieves a unique narrative effect -- endowing the fiction with a jumping and bounding rhythm and melody. Yu Hua employs repetition to create rhythm and avoid a rigid and stiff narrative. Xu Sanguan sells his blood twelve times in his life. But as explained above, each time, the reason, process and emotion of selling blood is different. There are thus variations within the repetition. In a further example, after each sale, Xu Sanguan orders stir-fry-liver and yellow rice wine -- both blood-builders -- in a small restaurant. The author adds fresh emotional meanings with each repetition of this meal. Initially, A Fang and Genlong take Xu Sanguan to the small restaurant and teach him why and how to order the meal. Xu Sanguan thinks A Fang and Genlong are very arrogant. Twelve years later, he sells his blood again and sits in the small restaurant by himself at which point he slaps the table, shouting to the waiter, "A dish of stir-fry-liver, a two-ounce glass of yellow rice wine . . ." He feels something is lacking in his words and later remembers

147 Yu Hua, *Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood.*“走过城里的小学，走过电影院，走过百货店...“浑浊的眼泪涌下眼眶，沿着两侧的脸颊流，流到了脖子里，流到了胸口上...” p. 270.
the last part of the formula "... warm the yellow rice wine for me." After the sixth time he sells his blood, Xu Sanguan and Genlong sit beside the window in the same restaurant and order the same dishes. This time, they cannot finish their meal because Genlong suddenly faints and later dies in the hospital. At the end of this story, the repetition of this meal reaches a climax. Yulan takes Xu Sanguan to Victory Restaurant, asking Xu Sanguan three times what he wants to eat. Each time, Xu Sanguan orders stir-fry-liver and yellow rice wine. As a result, there are three dishes of liver, one bottle of yellow rice wine and two two-ounce glasses of yellow rice wine on their table. Xu Sanguan says, "Today's meal is the best one I ever had in my life!" This conclusion is a statement of Xu Sanguan's own life. The lyrical melody and emotional rhythm are highlighted by repetition.

Yu Hua claims that Bach's music greatly influences his writing. He says that he deliberately allowed music to enter *Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood*. Since this work is full of dialogues, the characters not only speak, but also need to push forward the plot, the melody by which the theme is formed. This is the effect Yu Hua intentionally pursues. In Bach's music, he also finds the greatest narrative which applies the simplest technique to express the richest theme. In much the same way as Yu Hua, Milan Kundera states that it has always been his ambition to bring together the extreme gravity of the question

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148 Ibid., "一盘炒猪肝，二两黄酒。" "给我温一温。" pp. 83-84.

149 Ibid., "我这辈子就是今天吃得最好" p. 274.

150 Xu, *Discuss is the Way*. "我比较刻意让音乐进入作品的是《许三观卖血记》。因为全部是对话，组成叙述比较困难，不仅人物在那儿发言，同时还要把叙述往前推，叙述往前推有一种旋律，这是我刻意追求的。"

151 Ibid., "我寻找到一种最单纯的方式，这种方式主要来源于我对巴赫音乐的喜欢。他的《马太：受难曲》有三个多小时，却只有一首歌的旋律。我反复听，寻找到了一种最伟大的叙述，就是用最单纯的手法写出最丰富的作品，这个力量震撼人心。"
and the extreme lightness of the form. 152 *Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood* is exactly this type of work -- the application of the simplest form to examine the most serious themes of human existence. Yu Hua extols the vitality of the ordinary people; he shows the goodness of traditional Chinese values; he resurrects common individuals in history and shows their struggles against a malicious historical background; he reveals a vigorous popular society full of kindness, tenderness, and sympathy as well as cunning, gossip and chaos. This is another noble (*gaoshang*) work; a Chinese ballad with jumping and bounding rhythms; a ceremony of existence fulfilled by selling blood.

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Conclusion: A Poetic Meditation on Existence

Through an overall analysis of the above three novels written by Yu Hua, we can perceive the connections between his early short stories and later long novels. Some critics regard the writing of *To Live* as Yu Hua's betrayal of experimental writing. Yu Hua, however, does not agree with this analysis, considering *To Live* and *Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood* as the continuity and extension of his personal writing. As such, there is a natural progression in Yu Hua's writing from his early short stories, through *Crying out in the Drizzle*, *To Live* and *Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood*.

Yu Hua's early short stories are replete with images of violence and death. In his later novels, the theme of death is continued, with hardship and adversity in life regarded as much more enduring forms of violence. As a matter of fact, both his early short stories and later long novels examine similar themes of human existence. The primary difference observable from his earlier to later works is his changing outlook on the world during these two writing periods. In his early short stories, for instance, Yu Hua employed death and violence in order to disclose the dark side of reality, to reveal the hatred and brutality which he believed to be the true nature of the world. In *Crying Out in the Drizzle*, however, Yu Hua broke free of this superficial violence and death, and started to explore a series of deeper themes. In this novel, he employed violence as a medium to reflect teenagers' inner fears and anxieties; violence is merely a tool to vent their inner disturbances, anger and loneliness. Death is also treated in a much milder manner, regarded as an eternal rest which escapes the control of time. It is apparent that by employing violence and death in *To Live* and *Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood*, Yu Hua has tried to express the vitality and loftiness of human beings under harsh political and
material conditions. Because the protagonist Xu Sanguan is even endowed with an optimistic and humorous character in the face of death and violence, the novel Xu Sanguan Sells His Blood possesses a more positive tone.

In the three novels, family is portrayed as the basic unit through which human relationships develop and grow. In Drizzle, however, Yu Hua's perspective on family is quite negative as the characters are alienated from, or abandoned by, their families. Family is not a symbol of warmth and peace any longer. Yu Hua reveals that under the Maoist dictatorship, economic and social disruptions are accompanied by cultural turmoil. Family, as the key concept of traditional Chinese culture, is similarly disrupted. He intends for people to consider or reconsider the configuration of the relationship between political movements and Chinese culture.

To Live and Xu Sanguan present a more positive family model, returning traditional Chinese values to the family. In these two novels, family is a port of refuge; families turn inward to preserve what they cherish. In order to survive, maintain dignity and avoid impoverishment, families act in even more patriarchal and autocratic ways. For example, Fugui, as the father and husband of the family has to take patriarchal responsibility, never giving up no matter what adversity he encounters. Faced with the successive deaths of his family members, he has to become increasingly strong to protect other members who are still alive. Similarly, Xu Sanguan sells his blood twelve times in his life in order that his family can make it through poverty and adversity. These actions reflect the deeply structured elements in Chinese culture which resist change, which hold firm when attacked by the CCP's political movements or totalitarian
Common also to these three novels is their employment of specific narrative techniques. In his earlier writings, Yu Hua believed the characters should not have their own voices, representing just symbols (fuhao 符号) in his stories. Within these works, then, he applied the omniscient narrator to govern the narrative. In Crying, however, he began to realize that the characters have their own voices, voices which are far richer than that of the author. With this realization, the author began to use multi-level first-person narrators to enrich his narrative. As a result, he permits the protagonist to tell of his own childhood experiences. At the same time, he breaks the chronological sequence and employs flash back and flash forward techniques to render the structure of the story more delicate.

In To Live and Xu Sanguan, Yu Hua utilizes chronological narrative to lay out the stories. While To Live impresses readers with its plain language, Xu Sanguan is a polyphonic work combined with authorial silence. In the latter work, Yu Hua applies repetition to create a jumping rhythm and melody in the story. In these last two novels, Yu Hua attempts to use the simplest techniques to express the richest themes. In comparison to To Live, however, Xu Sanguan has a much more relaxed and humorous narrative style. When writing To Live, Yu Hua stated that he did not think much about narrative style, but simply tried his best to find accurate words and sentence patterns to describe the characters and to complete his narrative. In fact, his writing of To Live was a process during which he endeavored to shed his previous narrative method. When he composed Xu Sanguan, he had more experience in dealing with new narrative methods,

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153 For more detailed information on this topic, see Frieman, Pickowicz, and Selden's *Chinese Village, Socialist State.*
and had abundant time to consider narrative style.\textsuperscript{154} It is this additional time and experience which leads Yu Hua to use a brighter tone in the narrative of the latter work compared with that of the former.

Yu Hua is a sincere, passionate, thoughtful and creative writer who employs innovative techniques to express his understanding of the past, present and future. Writing to him is meaningful. He takes the elements of readership into consideration, attempting to communicate with readers through his fiction. Yu Hua himself has stated the following about writing:

\begin{quote}
I think a writer must retain two kinds of passion: one is heartlessness, you have to put the characters into certain situations even though it is painful to you or you cannot bear to do so. Sometimes I feel very bad about this, but the work demands that I do it. Another is affection. A writer has to love all his characters, especially the protagonist. You must love him deeply. Only in this way, can a writer produce works that move his readers.\textsuperscript{155}
\end{quote}

In writing \textit{To Live} and \textit{Xu Sanguan} Yu Hua reflects these two passions as he put his two protagonists Fugui and Xu Sanguan into endless situations of suffering; in the meantime, he is also full of affection toward them, declaring that Fugui and Xu Sanguan are his friends, friends whom he has encountered in the past and will meet again in future.\textsuperscript{156}

Fugui has endured too much suffering to separate himself from it. Consequently, he lives for the sake of living itself, without thinking of possible resistance or rebellion. Though he has more reason to die than others, he continues to live. For Fugui, to live is a victory. Xu Sanguan is something other than this. From time to time, he steps out to fight life's

\textsuperscript{154} Yu Hua, "As Long As I Write, I Return Home", in \textit{Can I Believe in Myself?} p. 241.

\textsuperscript{155} Xu, \textit{Discussion is the Way}, "我以为一个作家要保持两种激情，一个是冷酷，你必须把人物放在某一个位置，虽然你于心不忍。有时候我很难受，但作品要求我这样做。另一个是作家要对人物充满了感情，你要爱你笔下所有的人，特别是主人公，你必须深深地爱着他，这样的作家才能写出激动人心的作品。"

\textsuperscript{156} Yu Hua, "To live is the Only Requirement of Life", in \textit{Can I Believe in Myself?} p. 219.
hardships with his simplicity and innocence, never realizing his failures and optimistically facing this world. Both Fugui and Xu Sanguan are important for Yu Hua because he pours his passions into them.

In *The Art of the Novel*, Milan Kundera gives a definition of the novel: "A novel examines not reality but existence. And existence is not what has occurred, existence is the realm of human possibilities, everything that man can become, everything he's capable of."\(^{157}\) Yu Hua is just such a novelist, a novelist whom, in Kundera's words, is "an explorer feeling his way in an effort to reveal some unknown aspect of existence."\(^{158}\) Yu Hua's world does not imitate known reality; it is, rather, the extreme and unrealized possibilities of the human world. He makes us see what we are, what we are capable of.

While not overt political criticism, Yu Hua's three works endeavor to identify how obscure individuals survive or fail to survive in Mao's China. He renders the Mao era and related political events of this time as the existential situation of the characters in his novels, thereby fulfilling one of Kundera's principles of treating history in the novel -- history itself must be understood and analyzed as an existential situation.\(^{159}\) The three novels discussed above share the same historical period, roughly from the early 1940s to the late 1970s. In his works, Yu Hua deliberately fails to provide a clear explanation of historical events, but instead involves them in the fates of his characters. Sun Guanglin, Fugui and Xu Sanguan are all ordinary individuals, remaining in marginal positions during the various political movements in Mao's China. Yu Hua resurrects these individuals in history by permitting them to have direct relationships or conflicts with

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158 Ibid, p. 144.

159 Ibid, p. 38.
historical events. The tragic lives of individuals much more clearly reflect the historical
catastrophe of Mao’s China.

Among the younger generation of writers, Yu Hua, Ge Fei, Ma Yuan and Su Tong
were regarded by critics as the leading figures of experimental writings in the 1980s. However, with the passage of time and different life experiences, their literary careers
deviated considerably in the 1990s. Lacking a breakthrough of his own narrative
technique and life experience, Ma Yuan was forced to constantly repeat his so called
"avant-garde" writings and finally lost his readership. With the completion of The Flag of Desire, Ge Fei tried to rid himself of his obsession with a pure language maze and turned instead to a more realistic narrative. In comparison to Yu Hua's novels, however, Ge Fei's narrative seems both hasty and messy. He intentionally inserted many modern philosophical themes into his story in order to enhance the supposed profundity of his writing. Unfortunately these philosophical themes had no close connection with the fates of the characters in his stories and, thus, destroyed the unity of the novel. Reviewing Su Tong's later works, those touching spiritual experiences which readers garnered from his early works gradually disappeared. His mature narrative techniques and imagination, paradoxically, led his writing to become more conventional.

Compared with the above-mentioned writers, Yu Hua is one of the few who stuck to


their literary ideals and constantly sought to explore the great themes of existence by means of experimental selves (characters). Both his early experimental writing and latter realistic narrative reflect his poetic mediation on human existence. The primary difference in Yu Hua's writings is that in his early works, he applied violence and death to reveal his views of human existence; whereas in the latter novels, he examines this individual existence against a broad historical background -- Mao's socialist China.

Though scholars in the field of modern Chinese literature have paid attention to, and highly praised, Yu Hua's writing, literary criticisms on his works which provide scholars deep insight are insufficient. In order to give a complete picture of Yu Hua and his fiction, the following aspects of Yu Hua's works are worthy of further study. First in this vein would be a comparative study of Yu Hua and other modern and contemporary Chinese, as well as foreign, writers' works. Some scholars have in fact started this kind of comparison, as, for example, Yu Hua's early works have been compared with Lu Xun's short stories by several Chinese critics. There remains much to be done in this regard. The second void in scholarship which might be filled is the study of Yu Hua's literary criticism and theory. Yu Hua has published an anthology of his literary criticism. He is not only a thoughtful and creative writer, but also an insightful literary critic. Unfortunately people have thusfar only been attracted to his talent in fiction, failing to notice his unique critical abilities. Third is a detailed examination of Yu Hua's narrative techniques, important because Yu Hua is a writer who pays great attention to, and is constantly exploring, new writing techniques. An more thorough analysis of his

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narrative techniques would help us to further understand his themes of existence. All these are tasks for another time and place.

164 Yu Hua, Can I Believe in Myself? 我能否相信自己，All the information in this paragraph is on p. 168.
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