

Fall of the Father: On Literary Influence of Chen Yingzhen's
Early Writing (1959-1965) from Lu Xun to Wang Anyi
by

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Defense Date: April 2nd, 2024

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master
of Arts in the Department of Asian & Middle Eastern Studies in The Graduate School of
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This thesis examines the profound literary influence of Taiwanese writer Chen Yingzhen's early writing, spanning from 1959 to 1965. It explores his journey from initially embracing the legacy of Lu Xun to the reciprocal impact of his collaboration with fellow writer Yu Tiancong, and ultimately, to his recognition by Wang Anyi. By situating Chen within the intricate literary landscape, conducting three comparative analyses of novellas that have adaptations and intertextual relationships, and focusing on the motif of the "fall of the father," both within the texts and in broader contexts, the thesis argues that:

Chen Yingzhen's early novels, characterized by their originality, rawness, and discernible traces of learning, reveal a more obvious adaptation of Lu Xun's works alongside a closer reflection of his childhood. Chen's engagement with Lu Xun commenced with his father's reverence for this literary giant, but it is the shared experience of losing their fathers at an early age that forged a unique emotional resonance and literary bond between the two. Furthermore, Chen's experience of dual fatherhood—both biological and adoptive—enabled him to continue Lu Xun's pioneering narratives of intellectuals returning to their hometowns, albeit with an exploration of the familial traumas and identity confusion in the younger generation, rather than the broader modernist dilemma. Also, the amalgamation of influences from his three fathers—in reality, and literature—shaped Chen's distinctive literary and ideological framework, setting him apart from his contemporaries. While he introduced

Western modernism to Taiwan and absorbed techniques from it, he retained elements of the May Fourth tradition and remained rooted in realistic concern, neither being swallowed by nihilism nor deviating from leftist aspiration. Moreover, Chen Yingzhen himself emerged as a literary father figure, serving as an exemplar or ideal with answers for the subsequent generation of authors from both sides of the trait. It is crucial to acknowledge that despite serving as a literary beacon for the emerging intellectual youth, Chen's status as a literary father was not immune to the barriers of intergenerational, cultural, or temporal disconnects, due to the lack of understanding or inability to communicate. These divides make his figure hardly avoid being detached from the obscuration of imagination or even prejudice, and subjective projection.

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1. Introduction

The acclaimed Taiwanese author Chen Yingzhen 陳映真, known for his pioneering role in and unparalleled contribution to post-war Taiwanese literature, passed away on February 26th, 2016, at the age of 79. Though he had retreated to silence for almost ten years before his passing, the moment the news came out, it sent ripples to the intellectual circles on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Mourning and tributes are pouring in from colleagues, cultural icons, fans, and even political figures, who are expressing their grief and sharing memories of how Chen's work influenced their lives. Not only that, as Chen's writing practices spanned the century, his impact extends beyond contemporary audiences, resonating in the hearts of those who found solace, understanding, and courage within the lines of his words; their influence on successions and aspiring writers is insurmountable, continuously inspiring them to write as new generations who innovated the profound narratives crafted by this literary giant.

On both sides of the Taiwan Strait, efforts have been made to honor and perpetuate Chen Yingzhen's legacy, aiming to promote the reading of his works and a deeper appreciation of his literary contributions, particularly among younger generations. These ongoing discussions, for one, have affirmed Chen Yingzhen's pivotal role and enduring significance in the realms of Taiwanese literature, Sinophone literature, and beyond, world literature. For example, his novels labeled as nativist novels written during the 1960s and 1970s are believed to be hailed as the cornerstone of

the Taiwanese Nativist Literature Movement, leading it to its peak. What's more, at the end of the 1970s, his subsequent famed novel series called "Washington Skyscraper" (華盛頓大樓) is said to unriddle the operations of multinational corporations, exposing and critiquing the nature of the colonial economy and culture prevalent in a capitalized Taiwan. Notably, his magnum opus, the well-known White Terror Trilogy¹, continues his distinctively melancholic and enigmatic literary style, coupled with Chen's profound historical consciousness and a sense of purpose, to chronicle the plight of left-wing activists suppressed by governmental authority. As Professor Zhenghui Lv 呂正惠 lauds (2010), no writer rivals Chen Yingzhen's ability to express his insights with such acuity and to capture the truth or essence of Taiwan's history and reality with an unwavering commitment. In this light, he is the only one who rightfully earns the title of "intellectual"(知识分子) among Taiwanese authors², which is an ideal persona for the educated in Chinese culture that encompasses not merely the knowledge and expertise but also the ability to think critically about complex issues and a strong sense of ethical responsibility towards society and the broader public.

On top of that, the scholarly inquiry has probed into Chen's contribution to literary theory, novel criticism, or aesthetic thoughts, recognizing him as a preeminent

¹ Lingdanghua (Platycodon grandiflorus 《鈴鐺花》), 1983; Mountain Road (《山路》), 1983; Zhao Nandong (《趙南棟》), 1986.

² Lv Zhenghui, Chen Yingzhen, *The Collection of Chen Yingzhen's Works*. 陳映真文選. 2009.12, cover quote.

Taiwanese novelist capable of delving into profound ideological philosophies. For instance, in the authoritative work on Taiwan Literature, Professor Gu Jitang 古紀堂 commends Chen for his courageous theoretical self-analysis, revealing the underlying ethos of his novelistic endeavors³. While in Gu's arguments, he has categorized Chen Yingzhen's concepts as mere "typical realist theory," other themes in his novels like Chen's patriotism, left-wing ideology, and humanitarianism, are further explored in later scholarly discourse. Notably, the most representative orientations lie in Chen Yingzhen's inheritance of the traditions of May Fourth New Literature, especially the pioneer Lu Xun 魯迅, and this will also be one of the main research questions in the following chapter.

Throughout Chen's extensive body of work and scholarly investigations, it is a must to point out that the figure of "father" stands out as a recurring topic and worthy-deciphering motif, wielding significant influence over his literary world and real-world experience – a dynamic that could not be overlooked.

To begin with, the father figure serves as a linchpin in his novels, and often as the focal point of narrative exploration. His novels frequently tell stories of fathers or reminisces about fathers' past through the lens of teenage child, predominantly the son. In addition, they employ the father as a metaphor for history or reality, weaving

³ Gu Jitang, *The History of The Theory and Criticism of New Literature in Taiwan* 台灣新聞學理論批評史, 1993, p. 268-269.

intricate narratives that remain anchored to his parental lineage. Even in his final three novels, Chen continues the narrative orbit of “the father”, taking the father as the pivotal character and writing their unspoken stories and their plight in reconciling and embracing the history and people with whom they had been through the same history .

Furthermore, beyond the realm of fiction, Chen Yingzhen’s real-life trajectory and ideological learnings bear the indelible imprint of his father’s influence. Scholars, including Chen Yingzhen himself, attribute Chen’s Christian beliefs to the impact of his Christian father, and the proverbial edification imparted by his father⁴ is quoted repeatedly in scholarly discourse. Additionally, Lu Xun, revered as the father of modern Chinese literature and also the literary father of Chen Yingzhen⁵, looms large in Chen’s literary landscape, not merely reflected in a stylistic influence, but also as a quintessential spirit, thinking, or soul.

Moreover, Chen himself becomes part of the narrative of “fatherhood”. As the “Lu Xun in Taiwan”, much like how his literary progenitor shaped his own intellectual and creative journey, Chen extends a guiding hand to subsequent generations of young writers, offering a trajectory from literature to philosophical thought and practical

⁴ When Chen Yingzhen was imprisoned, his father came to visit him and reminded him:

“Child, you have to remember carefully from now on: First, you are a child of God; Secondly, you are a child of China, Only then, ah, you are my child.” Chen Yingzhen, *The Collection of Chen Yingzhen’s Works*. 陳映真文選. 2009.12, p.16. Again in p.65.

⁵ “Chen Yingzhen is the first heir of the spirit of Lu Xun.” Zhao Gang, *The Biography of Chen Yingzhen*. 陳映真是如何煉成的? *Journal of Modern Chinese Literature*, Bimonthly NO.4, 2023 Sum NO.85. p.29.

guidance. Since 1960, there have been four-generation intellectuals that regarded Chen Yingzhen as a literary idol and have been countless fans of him within over fifty years.⁶

Viewed through the perspective of such a multilayered relationship, it begs the question: how do we best understand the portrayal of the “father” in Chen Yingzhen’s novels? Do these layers share interconnectedness, do they form a web of internal influence and intertextual relationships? To what extent does the father figure in his stories reflect the personal experiences, and to what extent does it function as a metaphor for broader themes such as the nation or history? Could the depiction of the father figure shed light on Chen’s evolving concerns and reflections on social realities across different temporal landscapes? Besides, does Chen’s narration of the “father” possess a distinctive or singularity significant enough to encapsulate his representative characteristics, potentially rewriting or even birthing a new literary tradition?

These inquiries beckon a deeper exploration of the interplay of the father figures - both fictional and real - in Chen Yingzhen’s writing, as well as his literary influence, namely, how his writing was influenced by literary pioneers or traditions and how his writing impacted the successors. In this way, the thesis’s central question on the “fall of the father” also derives from here. More specifically, how and why does the fallen statue,

⁶ Lv Zhenghui (Cheng-hui Lv), *In Memoriam Chen Yingzhen (1937.11.18 ~ 2016.11.22) On the Formation of His Pro-Unification Left Stance in the 1960s*, *Studies on Taiwan’s Society*. 紀念陳映真 (1937.11.18 ~ 2016.11.22) 論 1960 年代陳映真統左思想的形成 2017.4. p.256.

such as the death or the failure, serve as a commonality of the father figuration in his novels, and further, in comparison with the relevant previous or contemporary novels? Again, does it relate to the author's individual encounter, like the decline of family; or reflect the wider social background, like the collapse of the political power, religious faith, or conscience? Further, how does the author grapple with "the fall" in the novels and does it convey the author's attitude?

On this basis, this thesis aims to examine the literary influence of Chen Yingzhen's early works, which ran from 1959 to 1965. This thesis will not only place Chen Yingzhen back to the literary realm where his early works were being written, uncovering traces and hints of influence or interactions throughout the texts, but will also look beyond the boundaries of patriotism and leftism⁷.

In chronological order, the thesis will first analyze Chen Yingzhen's literary acceptance of Lu Xun's works, taking his cognominal adaptation of Lu Xun's novella

⁷ The existing research demonstrates a gap firstly in a tendential focus on primarily Chen Yingzhen's literary oeuvre and personal achievements, which usually put aside his interactions within the literary community and his direct or indirect interactions with other writers. Furthermore, extra attention on his patriotism and leftism out of the interests of political propaganda potentially led to a utilitarian and dogmatic reading on Chen's works. To illustrate, in the first obituary reproduced by the People's Daily (《人民日报》) and titled "The Death of Well-known Patriotic Taiwan Compatriot Chen Yingzhen (《知名爱国同胞陈映真逝世》)", comparing to those in Taiwan that refer to him as "writer" (e.g. Liberty Times, 2016.11.22) or "the founder of the magazine *Ren Jian*" (e.g. The News Lens, 2016.11.22; Up Media, 2016.11.22) or other titles that downplay the political implication, Chen's identity of a patriot is conclusively emphasized in mainland China and Chen is always portrayed as a model of patriotic commitment in Taiwan. In parallel to patriotism, the other predominant perspective is Chen's leftist ideology or communist beliefs, in this way, he is usually shaped as a champion and fighter of leftist causes - both narratives are more appealing and censorship-friendly in communist China and will potentially lead to the politically shaded position of Chen's influence.

“Hometown” (《故鄉》) as a focal point. Through a comparative study with “Going Home” (《歸家》), the adaptation by Lai He 賴和 (1894-1943), who was the first one to be rendered as “Lu Xun in Taiwan,” the study investigates how the meta-narrative of “intellectual returning to the hometown” (知識分子返鄉), established by Lu Xun, was transposed to the discourse of Taiwan. It delves into how the continuity and divergence in their re-imagination of the story shaped the uniqueness of Taiwan while underscoring the nuances between eras or authors themselves. In this exploration, a striking parallel between Chen Yingzhen and Lu Xun emerges, that is, they shared the traumatic experience of losing their father at a young age. This trauma constitutes a recurring theme or motif in their narratives, particularly in Chen Yingzhen’s works. More importantly, the thesis endeavors to dissect how Lu Xun and Chen Yingzhen’s different approaches to dealing with the “death of the Father” in their creations brewed their literary tastes and styles.

The thesis then continues to examine Chen Yingzhen’s literary influence on contemporary authors. For one, on his fellow Taiwanese writer Yu Tiancong 尉天驄. Intrigued by Yu’s intentional tribute or parody to Chen’s writing, this thesis aspires to take his novella “Light Rain” (《微雨》) as a case study, comparing it with which it shared a very similar story setting, Chen Yingzhen’s second work “My Brother Kangxiong” (《我的弟弟康雄》). It will analyze their divergent acceptance and reference to modernism in spite of the fact that they were working together in introducing

modernism to Taiwan's literature landscape during the 1960s. In addition, seemingly a call back to the chapter about Lu Xun, this analysis notices that both Yu and Chen's novellas include the key plot of the "fall of the father" and replace the "death of the father" with the "death of the son". Hence, it will not merely compare their portrayal of the fallen fathers, but more provoke-thinkingly, explain the aesthetics and meaning of "the suicide/fall of the son" followed by the "fall of the father".

For another, Chen's junior Wang Anyi, a representative author of the post-Mao generation from mainland China. In the final chapter, the paper intends to go deep into Wang Anyi's "Utopian Verses", which is a memoir and also a novella that records her reading of Chen Yingzhen's novella "The Generals" (《將軍族》) and her interactions with him when attending the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa in 1983. It is to analyze why she imaged Chen as her literary idol or utopia and then, why her love-alike affections for Chen Yingzhen turned into estrangement, disappointment, and negation. An interesting question can resonate here: can it be rendered as the "fall of the father" as well? Further, does the "fall" here come from the limitations of Wang Anyi's own experience and perception, or does it just reflect the divide and contradiction between the two generations? The thesis will then focus on the interactions between the two – instead of simply Wang Anyi's unilateral statement – to discuss whether the similarities or commonalities between the two generations, as well as

possible ways to establish active dialogue and mutual understanding between the two, were already disclosed in potential moments.

Ultimately, this thesis hopes to illuminate the intricate web of personal experience, literary influence, and ideological resonance that underpins Chen Yingzhen's enduring legacy. By unraveling the complexity of the literary homage, intergenerational dialogue, and dynamics of literary lineage, it hopes to shed light on the significance of Chen's early writing and their ripple effects across generations and borders.

1.1 Chen Yingzhen's Early Writing

Chen Yingzhen started writing with debut novel "Noodles Stand" (《面攤》) in 1959 and finished his last one "Zhongxiao Park" (《忠孝公園》) in 2000. Spanning nearly half a century, his literary career witnessed various stages and ever-changing styles. Hence, to study Chen Yingzhen's early writing, the chronological divisions, the term "early novel" or "early writing" hold very different interpretations among researchers. Usually, the period before he was arrested in 1968, and when he contributed to advanced magazines like *Bi Hui* (《筆匯》), *Modern Literature* (《現代文學》), and *Literary Quarterly* (《文學季刊》) is regarded as "early", though scholars share no consensus if it comes to specific novellas and defines based on one's research perspective. As a matter of fact, people had long taken "Zhao Nandong" written in 1986 as his very last novel, but since Chen continued to write and published another three

novels from 1999 to 2001, represented by “Zhong Xiao Park”, subsequent scholars have therefore expanded the previous staging classification and some of them broadened the scope to call all his works predating these final three as “early writing”.

Chen Yingzhen himself, in 1975, when writing the preface for two novellas “The General” and “The First Errand” (《第一件差事》) as well as reflecting on his own pros and cons in writing, identified the year 1965 as a significant watershed in his writing practice and thus divided his earlier works into two distinct phases:

1959-1965, sentimental.

1965-1968, the end of the sentimentalism, rational and ironic.⁸

So comparing these arguments, this thesis is not going to pin a final word about the period division, nonetheless, it will refer to Chen’s initial periodization (1959-1968) and thus analyze his novella from “Noodles Stand” to “The Death of The Hunter” (《獵人之死》) published in 1965. In Chen’s words, this period is characterized by “melancholy, sentimental, pale, and bitter” (Chen, 2009, p.3), especially from 1961 to 1965 - a period when he mostly contributed to the journal *Modern Literature*. Given Chen’s continuous criticism of its being over-sentimental and his theorization of an ending point by 1965, which, although, might be due to his “self-denying or self-

⁸ Chen Yingzhen, *The Collection of Chen Yingzhen’s Works*. 陳映真文選. 2009.12, p.3.

erasing"⁹ view of literature, it is suggested that Chen thought negatively about the immaturity at the beginning of his writing and therefore needed a claim of the period being over. Indeed, the quality of these novellas may not match most of his later works, but it is also precisely due to the raw, unrefined, or developing nature of his immature works that, the traces of experimentation, appropriation of words, mimicry or tribute, etc., can remain within the texts, in both conscious and unconscious ways.

By the same token, Chen's early writing played a crucial role in his overall creative trajectory. These initial practices got him prepared for the gradual development of Chen's unique literary style, such as providing him with valuable training to hone his craft and accumulate experiences that would later shape his technique or style. Simultaneously, in offering glimpses into Chen Yingzhen's receptivity of literary influence, it thereby left scholars hints, traces, or spaces as invitations for further explorations: For one, how Chen translates his reading of literature or ideas into his writing resources or creative impetus, furthermore, how he combines them with his concrete life experience; for another, how he selects and adapts the literary influence according to reality through a process of experimentation and self-discovery, how he strives to find a way of expression or narrative that suits to his artistic vision and the world as well as resonates deeply with both himself and his audience.

⁹ David Der-Wei Wang, *Literary Geography and National Imagination: Lu Xun in Taiwan, Eileen Chang in the South Seas*. 文學地理與國族想象：台灣的魯迅，南陽的張愛玲 2013, p.6.

Although Chen Yingzhen's early novels have not garnered sufficient attention, the existing research has marked the significance of the philosophical layers behind the text of these works. First of all, it has been aware of delving beneath the surface of the distinct "romance and pathos" inherent in his stylistic approach¹⁰, and has successfully delineated that Christianity and Leftist ideology marked as the primary wellsprings of Chen's literary contemplations and two keywords to delve into his novellas. On this foundation, Zhang Yan 張炎 elucidates that "The Apple Tree"(《蘋果樹》) is an initial endeavor for Chen to integrate or synthesize Christian and leftist themes¹¹. In subsequent works, such as "Elder Brother He"(《賀大哥》) and "Mountain Road," more tensions between these two ideological currents are revealed as Chen engaged in a deeper exploration of their respective shortcomings and contradictions within his oeuvre, moving forward from compatible to incompatible sides.

Not only that, expanding on conventional analyses from perspectives such as humanitarian, scholars like Peng Mingwei 彭明偉 and Tu Hang 塗航 contextualize Chen's early novellas within the broader socio-political landscape of post-war Taiwan and the inner world of intellectual youth. More specifically, Peng Mingwei interprets these works as the way that Chen Yingzhen, an intellectual, figures out how to farewell

¹⁰ e.g. Li Xinchu, *On Romance and Tragedy in Chen Yingzhen's Early Works*. 論陳映真早期作品中的浪漫與悲情 *Journal of Yichun University* (04), 2023, p.67.

¹¹ Zhang Yan. *Father's Christ and Lu Xun's Left Qing—Two Key Words in Chen Yingzhen's Novels*. 父親的基督和魯迅的左翼——陳映真小說中的兩個關鍵詞 *Journal of Suzhou Institute of Education* (03), 2023, 86-94.

to the traumas of war and colonialism and thus explains Chen's gradual transition from personal romanticism to leftist activism¹². Similarly, Tu Hang contends that the melancholic and mourning disposition of Chen's characters is not the reason that culminates in political paralysis but rather is about looking for the path and hope to vibrate the spirit of leftism with "a sad but not desperate" (哀而不傷) determination or even obsession, at a time when both revolutionary legitimacy and the certainty of human liberation are lost¹³. To add up, Professor Luo Gang 羅崗 from East China Normal University underscores that Chen's narrative in early novellas is Chen himself trying to use his unique ways to touch upon, understand, and grapple with "the problem"¹⁴(Luo, 2021, p.44) faced by the leftist movement, that is, how can the left-wing male subject reconstruct the relationship with female and people (Min Zhong 民眾). By examining Chen's portrayal of gender dynamics and public engagement, Luo creatively illuminates how Chen Yingzhen can be incorporated into the leftist literary discourse within the contemporary mainland Chinese context and prompt its reflexivity.

Motivated by their methodologies, the thesis seeks to also connect Chen's works to the author's personal life events as well as, more broadly, Taiwanese society after the

¹² Peng Mingwei. *Early Chen Yingzhen's Novels and "Post-war" Issues*. 早期陈映真小说与“战后”问题 *Journal of Modern Chinese Literature* (04), 2023, p.48-49.

¹³ Tu Hang. *Chen Yingzhen and the Depression of Left-wing Intellectuals*. 陳映真與左翼知識分子的憂鬱症 *Novella Review* (02), 2023, p.79-80.

¹⁴ Luo Gang. "Left-wing Male Subjects" and "Young People" Came from the "Night" – A perspective to Read Mainland "Contemporary Literature" from Chen Yingzhen's Early Novels. 左翼男性主體與“夜”里來的“年輕人——從陳映真早期小說看大陸“當代文學”的一種面向 *Literary Controversy* (08), 2021, p.44.

war, thus delving into the spiritual or identity crisis of young people. Additionally, it aims to break out of the limitations of studying a single text, but to move deeper into the post-war issues they have covered through approaches like comparative reading, the viewpoint of literary fields and literary influences.

Again, throughout these scholarly inquiries, a recurrent theme emerged: the profound influence of Lu Xun on Chen Yingzhen. Apart from noting the thematic resonances, similar narrative structures, and ideological underpinnings, this thesis hopes to gain deeper insights into the parallels between their works by focusing on Chen's early writing, a period that shows the most traces of him reading Lu Xun.

1.2 Chen Yingzhen's Two Homes and Two Fathers

As maintained by Chen Yingzhen's wife Wang Lina¹⁵王麗娜, Chen was born with a twin brother. His Third Uncle had no kids, so he begged his mother – Chen Yingzhen's grandmother - to ask his brother – Chen's father – to give one of the twins to him. So, as the younger one of the two, Chen was sent to be an adopted son in the Third Uncle's family at the age of two. Unfortunately, at the age of nine, his twin brother died of an emergency and left Chen not only in great sorrow but also in a state of loss, as if he died with his brother at the same time. Once, Chen used his twin brother's name as a pen name with the thought of making his brother alive and living together with him,

¹⁵ Zhao Gang, *The Biography of Chen Yingzhen*. p.29.

surprisingly, he felt “whole” and got a sense of “settling down” by doing so, and then he continued to use it and “Yingzhen” – his dead twin brother’s name - gradually replaced his real name, Yingshan¹⁶映善.

The unusual upbringing of having two homes, two fathers, and even two identities impacted his life and incarnated in the fog of home complex and father complex in his early works with a sentimental and melancholic tone. More quintessentially, these complexes were further evolved into or tangled with his identification and affection for his hometown and later, motherland.

For one thing, the separation between a biological family and an adoptive family made Chen Yingzhen shuttle between the two homes since his childhood. In one of his autobiographies “Backstreet”(《後街》), Chen unconsciously used the term “being a guest” 做客 to describe a visit to his biological family when he was in middle school¹⁷. It demonstrate that he felt the confusion of being belonged to both families but meanwhile, being a “guest” for both. Against this background, the confusion about the idea of “family” or “home” as well as a lingering sense of rootlessness haunted young Yingzhen and developed throughout his life.

This existential uncertainty is reflected in the themes of his early novels like “Hometown”, where the main characters are usually trapped in the plight of finding,

¹⁶ Chen Yingzhen, *The Collection of Chen Yingzhen's Works*. p.13-14.

¹⁷ Chen Yingzhen, *The Collection of Chen Yingzhen's Works*. p.19.

retrieving, and redefining the place where they belong, and are trapped in the quest for the meaning of being and belonging. However, it is precisely from this foundation of personal displacement and childhood traumas that his novels grow out of a will or spirit that transcends the individual's homelessness and seeks to break down the isolation between people, appealing for the establishment of a broader home founded on the principles of tolerance and love. It henceforth enables Chen Yingzhen to bridge the big "home" with his small "home", to bridge the vast expanses of the world and the intimate spaces of his own "home," as Wang Anyi aptly observed, recognizing that "even on an island, a man can feel responsible for the world"¹⁸我後來知道，一個人在一個島上，也是可以胸懷世界的。

For another, the experience of two fathers is tied to that of two hometowns. Nonetheless, it brought Chen Yingzhen the confusion of belonging less as the uncertainty and fear of losing his father, a figure to respect and get guidance and support. Accordingly, Chen might have received much more love from the two fathers than normal kids yet what left him more remarkable impression and were repeated in his memoir were the farewells with his fathers.

More specifically, in "Father", Chen Yingzhen vividly portrays the parting scene in which his biological father escorts him back to his adoptive father's place,

¹⁸ Wang, Anyi. *Utopian Verses*. 烏托邦詩篇 Shanghai: East China Normal University Press. 2011. p.3.

emphasizing the poignant moment when he watches his father disappear into the shadow of the trees. Despite the loving care shown to him by his adoptive family, who treated him very well as if he were their real son, Chen grapples with a profound sense of loneliness upon separation from his biological father, feeling an undeniable bond to him that was born with familial ties. He reflects, “With this loneliness, I watched my father disappearing in the freezing coldness of the spring 我便懷著那寂寞，凝望著父親在那料峭的春寒中。”¹⁹

Moreover, if bidding farewell to his biological father symbolizes the severance of attachment to his blood relatives, akin to cutting the umbilical cord for a second time, then his separation from his adoptive father represents an uneasy and unprepared transition from immaturity to adulthood. It is underscored by the death of his adoptive father due to illness, which plunged the already struggling family into heavier hardship. The timing of this loss, during high school—a period when Chen had never imagined that his father would discuss livelihood issues with him but his father did—heightens his sense of unease and responsibility.

Loneliness or anxiety, Chen Yingzhen writes down these two types of emotions in the face of the parting from the paternal figures in his novellas. The father in these stories is usually dead, unsuccessful, or devastated, leaving the young protagonist

¹⁹ Chen Yingzhen, *The Collection of Chen Yingzhen's Works*. p.161.

wandering. Especially in the first half of his early works, from “Noodles Stand” to “Grandfather and the Umbrella” (《祖父與傘》), which are more apparently derived from or based on his childhood experience. More than that, the motif of father-son relationships recurs throughout his later works. For example, in the 1970s, he employed the father-son dynamic as a metaphor for the national government; in the 1980s, he explores the pressures faced by young people from their fathers and their identity dilemmas in the novella series of “Washington Skyscraper”²⁰(華盛頓大樓); and around the year 2000, he delves into the theme of fathers trapped in the fog of history, unable to reconcile themselves with either their past or any other.

In this respect, as an entry point to read Chen Yingzhen’s early novellas, the father figure and in particular its fallen figuration helps investigate how his “Father(-Son) writing” drew on and translated his personal experiences and traumas about family. To what extent, can one say his writing is modeled after the reality, or, constitutes a supplement to his lack in reality? Since the portrayal of father is never rare topic or motif in literature, what does it mean to his literary world and how did it entangled his readings during the teenage years, and incorporated other resources?

²⁰ Released from prison three years early in 1975 due to the 100-day amnesty for the death of Chiang Kai-shek, Chen Yingzhen immediately devoted himself to literary creation and became a leading figure of the Nativist (xiang tu 鄉土)Literature Movement. According to Professor Lv Zhenghui 呂正惠, Chen’ s employment at U.S. commercial Windsor Pharmaceuticals Taiwan Branch during this period enabled him to have a close observation of the lives of individuals working in Taiwanese multinational corporations, especially senior and mid-level executives, thus providing motivation and foundation for his subsequent famed novel series called “Washington Skyscraper”.

The first chapter, will start with Chen Yingzhen's serendipity with Lu Xun and move on to compare their differences in dealing with the father image in the novellas

2. After Lu Xun: Modernity Melancholy of the May 4th and the Fatherless Identity of the Postwar Period

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Chen Yingzhen and Lu Xun: The Father of Literature?

In his autobiography, interviews, and lectures, more than once, Chen Yingzhen mentioned that he actively read Lu Xun's works, notably *Call to Arms* (*Na Han* 《呐喊》), during his primary school years. Chen was attracted to Lu Xun's stories and particularly impressed by "The Story of A-Q" (*A Q Zheng Zhuan* 《阿 Q 正傳》), as soon as he happened to read them in a large collection left by his father. Since then, as he concluded, Lu Xun had become one of the three most significant writers who had influenced him, with the other two being Anton Chekhov and Akutagawa Ryunosuke.¹

This fateful encounter has been talked about by scholars, the media, and the public, mostly as an entry point into Chen Yingzhen's left-wing and humanitarian stance, not just his writing. Chen Yingzhen himself, in different situations, like writing the three autobiographies to review his own creation before 2000, or attending the lectures in Japan and Taiwan where he accepted invitations to share his literary path and creative ideas, also responded to this experience and further elaborated upon the story. According to Chen's recall, the highlighted points can be summarized into three points. First, Chen Yingzhen's writing style was directly influenced by Lu Xun. Second, Chen

¹ Chen Yingzhen, *The Collection of Chen Yingzhen's Works*. p.39.

Yingzhen got the position, values, and emotions of “motherland” (祖國) from Lu Xun. He believed that Lu Xun gave him the idea of “motherland”, and he learned about the poverty and ignorance of “China”, as well as his love and responsibility for China². Thirdly, the vision of “China” and the vision of the “Third World”, as the Japanese scholar Matsunaga Masayoshi advocates, Lu Xun allowed Chen Yingzhen to be able to look at Taiwan from the perspective of China as a whole. Furthermore, as Professor Qian Liqun 錢理群 has stated, Lu Xun allowed Chen Yingzhen to view Taiwan from the perspective of the Third World³.

Nonetheless, Chen Yingzhen’s connection with Lu Xun, whether in his experience or his narration, is inseparable from the role of his father, and this is rarely discussed in most studies. Chen Yingzhen’s father was born into a poor family. Though he was so talented that he always stood out in class, unfortunately, the family could not support his study out of poverty. Despite that, his father succeeded in passing the qualification through diligent self-study and worked as a teacher and later a primary school principal. Since then, this man who had suffered the pain of not being able to get support for his education had devoted himself to education, to support other kids for the rest of his life.

² Chen Yingzhen, *The Collection of Chen Yingzhen’s Works*. p.29-32. p.33-41.

³ Chen Guangxing, Su Shufen. *Chen Yingzhen: Thought and Literature*. 2011.

In his father's era, there were still frequent and close cultural exchanges between mainland China and Taiwan, and Taiwanese intellectuals studied Mandarin and mainland literature with great enthusiasm. Thus, Taiwan was affected by the tradition of Chinese "New Literature" established since the May Fourth Movement, for example, scholars also initiated heated and in-depth debates like "How to rebuild Taiwan's New Literature". Chen Yingzhen's father was without a doubt one of the progressive youths. On the one side, he came from an underprivileged family and was naturally attracted to the left-wing literature of the 1930s that claimed to represent the underclass or the people; on the other side, he was smart, progressive, studious, so he followed the trends of the times and actively read the latest and advanced works of the time, including May Fourth literature, Japanese novellas, and communism⁴.

When the horrible time came, in order to avoid political implications, his father burned almost all the banned books, but he couldn't bear to burn some of the masterpieces and left them in a large collection, which includes Lu Xun's *Call to Arms*. Chen, who grew up in the "pale and barren years" of martial law, was thus able to be introduced to Lu Xun and experienced a profound and fatal-like influence that could shape the trajectory of his literary journey.

⁴ Chen Yingzhen, *The Collection of Chen Yingzhen's Works*. p.29, p.36.

Then, this is how the narrative of reading *Call to Arms* usually goes, the story that is constantly quoted or retold to study what Lu Xun meant to Chen Yingzhen. However, a detail that often goes unnoticed is Chen's recollection of his father's determined efforts to promote the teaching of Mandarin in Peach Town's primary school. It is recalled that his father not only helped recruit talented educators proficient in Mandarin and Chinese history, and geography but also sought to innovate and revitalize existing methods or modes of teaching⁵. For example, during a visit to his father's school, Chen watched a vivid play without realizing that it was adapted from Lu Xun's novella "Storm in a Teacup" (《風波》). It was only many years later, as he matured, that he discovered this connection and then felt amazed by the aspiration, creativity, and enthusiasm of those teachers like his father - After all, that was a time when the use of Mandarin in Taiwanese society was still rudimentary and rigid.

In this sense, this anecdote highlights the significance of Chen's father, meanwhile, the generation to which his father belonged, which is usually overlooked or understudied. It becomes clear that the starting point of the connection between Lu Xun and Chen Yingzhen is not necessarily the so-called left-wing stance or patriotic fervor under a kind of nationalistic narrative, nor the happenstance encounter with the literature itself. Instead, it originated from a literary milieu in Taiwan where intellectuals

⁵ Chen Yingzhen, *The Collection of Chen Yingzhen's Works*. p.34-35.

actively studied mainland Mandarin Language, literature, and intellectual currents from the 1930s onwards, spanning the period from the Liberation to martial law. Guided by his father, Chen was exposed to this intellectual landscape, traversing both temporal and spatial boundaries, and was inspired to read more literature about the May Fourth movement and beyond. The coverage of his reading thereafter extended from mainland China to East Asia (Japan) and Europe (Russia), through which he not only witnessed the dynamism of literary exchange and development within the Chinese literary world but, more crucially, he felt the burning passionate intellectual awakening and pursuit of ideals among individuals across different cultures and regions.

Unfortunately, what was particular and painful about his acceptance is that he was in Taiwan and also in a restrained and stifling environment at that time. On the one hand, there is a natural gap between him and the mainland in terms of geography, history, language, and culture, which made it challenging for him to join revolutions outside Taiwan in real life. Also, most second-generation younger writers like Chen Yingzhen were “completely” cut off from the literary heritage of leftist writers and lacked great literary models to emulate⁶. On the other hand, Chen has not yet been able to discover and actively transform his Taiwan experience, to write works that can show

⁶ Hsien-Yung, Pai (Bai, Xianyong). *The Wandering Chinese: The Theme of Exile in Taiwan Fiction*. The Iowa Review 7, no. 2/3, 1976, p.207.

the spontaneity, specialty, and vitality of Taiwan on the basis of its specific historical situation under the inspiration of new literature from the mainland and the world. Indeed, this mission is an exploration process inevitably shrouded in the fog of loneliness, of not being understood or even misunderstood, nevertheless, this was what he committed to throughout his life.

Once this starting point is clarified, connections that are symptomatic and that could vibrate Chen's individual experience can be seen beyond the solely accidental, or "fateful encounter" between Lu Xun and Chen Yingzhen. In this way, as scholars generally take Lu Xun as the literary father of Chen Yingzhen, it has to be addressed that before that, Lu Xun was the literary father of his father and his father's generation. Chen Yingzhen was not "directly" influenced by Lu Xun by himself but, his acceptance of Lu Xun was based on his father's literary tastes and ideals, that is, his father's acceptance. Similarly, as will be discussed in the following chapters, Chen's Christian belief, fraternity, and tenderness were also rooted in his father's faith in Christianity.

Moreover, along with or after this fatal encounter, Chen Yingzhen alternately accepted other readings other than Lu Xun. So, except for the intentional choice and narration in his midlife, the reason why Lu Xun became a unique, phenomenal, and deeply rooted imprint in Chen Yingzhen's literary career starting from 1959 is, inseparable from his family background and social environment. The latter shaped Chen's personal temperament, spiritual traits, and life pursuits, even in an unknowingly

way, making him in alignment with Lu Xun's personality and pursuits. Besides, the shaping of these outer factors could be tangled with the fact that Chen consciously followed or moved closer to Lu Xun because of his father's influence. In short, under a kind of passive influence and active acceptance, Lu Xun became a true literary father of Chen Yingzhen from the model for language choice and artistic style, to the ultimate ideal of both literary creation and life.

Last but not the least, uncovering the layer of the foundation of his father also hints at the importance of studying the relevant literature that presents the acceptance of Lu Xun in or before his father's generation. It is where the thesis discovered the author Lai He, "Lu Xun in Taiwan" and the pioneer of Taiwanese New Literature during a time close to his father's generation. Lai He also wrote adaptations out of Lu Xun's novellas, and what can be tentatively presumed is that, compared to Chen Yingzhen, Lai He was concurrently and more directly influenced by May Fourth Movement from mainland China and therefore might have preserved a sense of originality in the ideologies or aestheticism. Hence, before going to Chen's texts and analyzing his adaptation of Lu Xun's works, the first chapter will start with a comparative reading between Lu Xun and Lai He, mainly on their "homecoming" narratives.

2.1.2 From “Hometown” to “Home”

2.1.1.1 Lu Xun arrives in Taiwan

In the early 1920s, China's May 4th New Culture Movement was raging in mainland China, and its outbreak and development also affected Taiwan at almost the same time - even though Taiwan was still under the rule of Japanese imperialism. Not only were the background and dynamics of the movement, as well as emerging outstanding writers and works introduced to the Taiwanese literary world but also were a wave of enlightenment events set off by passionate Taiwanese youth. As a standard-bearer at the peak of his career, Lu Xun was naturally a heavyweight.

On March 1, 1925, the “Taiwan People's Daily” published an article “Books to read to study the new literature” (《研究新文學應讀什麼書》) by Zhang Wojun 張我軍, the fuse lighter of the Old and New Literature Polemics in Taiwan's Japanese Rule Period. In the book list given in the article, *Call to Arms* (《吶喊》) ranks first among short story collections. Indeed, the progressive-minded young people were attracted by Lu Xun, admiring, and yearning for him. For one, they read Lu Xun's novels industriously, and on the other hand, they drew on Lu Xun to reproduce the works. For example, some Taiwanese authors borrowed characters from Lu Xun's novellas to make their own pen names, like Lin Quantian used “Kong Yiji” (《孔乙己》) as the pen name to publish the poem “Flags Under the Sun” (《日光下的旗幟》); or Xu Kunquan 徐坤泉 used “The Brother of A Q” (阿Q之弟) and his representative work is “The Reef” (《暗

礁》), so both are named after the moniker of typical figures in Lu Xun's novella "Kong Yiji" and "The Story of Ah Q" (《阿 Q 正傳》).

Among these figures, Lai He, often referred to as "Taiwanese Lu Xun", must be mentioned. Similar to Lu Xun's transition from medical studies to literary pursuits (known as "棄醫從文"), Lai He also had a medical background but never fully abandoned medicine while delving into writing. He went to Xiamen to work at the Gulangyu Boai Hospital (p.4) in 1919⁷, during which coincided with the May Fourth Movement and witnessed the changes of the era. However, due to the unrest and separatism caused by warlords, he resigned in the following year and returned to Taiwan. Back in his homeland, Lai He observed Japanese-educated students spearheading the wave of the New Culture Movement and he was subsequently invited to join the Taiwan Literary Association in October 1921, where he committed himself to advocating for equality, freedom, and rights for the Taiwanese people. Embracing the spirit of the May Fourth Movement, Lai He regarded literature as a force to promote social progress and championed the use of vernacular literature to give people, including those who were unable to receive an education, access to reading in the hopes of enlightening and educating people. In this way, his innovative efforts significantly contributed to Taiwan's new literature.

⁷ Sung-Hsien Huang, *Loa Ho's Literature and His Era(1894-1943)* 賴和的文學與他的時代 (1894-1943), *MingDao Journal* 9(4):01-22(2015), p.4.

From 1921 onwards, Lai He worked for the official newspaper of the Taiwan Literary and Art Association, the “Taiwan People’s Daily”, later assuming a role in its literary section. This newspaper frequently reprinted Lu Xun’s works during that time, including translated pieces. First, it is not difficult to imagine that Lai He would pay attention to, learn about, and read Lu Xun. Not only that, Lai He and his fifth brother Lai Xianying 賴賢穎 pursued further studies in mainland China after 1922. Lai Xianying also sent various new literary magazines such as Yusi (《語絲》), Oriental (《東方》), Novella Monthly(《小說月報》) and so on to brother Lai He⁸. Furthermore, with these inspirations, Lai He intentionally emulated Lu Xun and created numerous vernacular novellas that depicted the situation of colonized and modernized Taiwanese society bearing striking resemblance to the literary output of left-wing writers from mainland China.

The following section is going to compare one of such novels, namely “Going Home”(《歸家》), written after Lu Xun’s “Hometown”⁹.

In 1921, Lu Xun penned the novella “Hometown,” which depicts the journey of an intellectual youth returning to his hometown after leaving his hometown. The novella received plenty of attention as soon as it came out. Notably, literary critic Mao

⁸ Huang Wuzhong, *Impressions of Taiwanese Writers* 臺灣作家印象記. Zhongwen Taipei: Books Publishing Company 衆文圖書公司. 2008.

⁹ There are also translations like “My Old Home”.

Dun 茅盾 praised “Hometown” as the standout among all novels featured in “Novella Monthly” over the past three months. In his critique, Mao Dun also pointed out Lu Xun’s sorrow about the “misunderstanding and estrangement between people” as the central theme of the novel¹⁰. More significantly, the setting of the story inaugurated the narrative of intellectuals’ return to their hometowns in Chinese modern novellas.

“Hometown” was soon reprinted by “Taiwan People’s Daily” in 1925. In 1931, Lai He drew inspiration from “Hometown” to craft his own novella titled “Going Home 歸家”, situating the context of homecoming within Taiwan. Professor Wang Dewei emphasized that the question here lies not in whether Lai He successfully imitated Lu Xun, but in how Lu Xun’s narrative was “transplanted” to Taiwan, sparking unique literary creations tailored to Taiwan’s concrete historical situation¹¹. Interestingly, after Lai He, in the 1950s and 1960s when Lu Xun was banned and the May Fourth tradition was dominated by Western modernism, Chen Yingzhen once again used Lu Xun’s novellas as a resource. He departed from a basic imitation of the story, instead crafting a new homecoming narrative belongs to the new generation of Taiwanese intellectuals, represented by his “Home” (《家》) and “Hometown” (《故鄉》) that were are similar in theme, language, and temperament to Lu Xun’s “Hometown”.

¹⁰ Mao Dun, “Comments on Works in April, May and June” published in Volume 12, Issue 8, “Novella Monthly” August 10, 1921.

¹¹ David Der-Wei Wang, *Literary Geography and National Imagination: Lu Xun in Taiwan*, Eileen Chang in the South Seas. p.15.

So going back to Professor David Wang's analysis, the two formed a kind of mirror image or connection across time and space, expanding the question discussed from the Taiwanese localization of "Hometown" to the different narratives behind different adaptations. In other words, it is not just how Taiwanese authors accept and rewrite Lu Xun's novellas, how they give new context to this literary tradition of "Hometown" and the narrative of returning home, but how they search for Taiwanese subjectivity in the process. Moreover, how does such acceptance present diversities in the text? Why are they different? It provides a glimpse into the characteristics of Taiwan in different eras and its integration with the author's personal circumstances.

For the overall study of Chen Yingzhen's literary connection with Lu Xun, the introduction of Lai He is a key figure, on the one hand, to explore Chen Yingzhen's interaction with his era and the special factors in his personal experience in parallel comparison; on the other hand, because Lai He's introduction to the May Fourth coincided with Chen Yingzhen's father's youth, who was also a young man inspired by the Enlightenment ideas, it can also be used as a case study to supplement the understanding of Chen Yingzhen's literary starting point, i.e., his father and his father's generation. On the one hand, because Lai's introduction to May Fourth coincided with the youth of Chen Yingzhen's father - who was also a young man inspired by the Enlightenment at that time, and to a large extent was of the same generation as Lai, it also serves as a case study to supplement the understanding of Chen Yingzhen's literary

beginnings with Lu Xun, that is, the infection of his father and his father's generation.

On this basis, his particularity and creation can be better discussed.

2.1.1.2 Sadness versus Fearness: Different Emotional Starting Points of Returning

Longing for a hometown is a major theme in literature, and Lu Xun's Hometown is not like the nostalgia poetry tradition of "children (in my hometown) who meet me but do not know whom I am 兒童相見不相識". It is a no longer sentimental song about returning to the old place and lamenting the changes in things and people but, creates a new model and writing paradigm of intellectuals returning to their hometown in the changing era. As the circumstances of modernity had given new meaning to "hometown" and hometown writing. To elaborate, first, a "hometown" is no longer a place that can be interpreted less as space than as a spiritual residence, just as analyzed by Professor Wang Furen 王富仁, the so-called "hometown" is the current and "realistic" hometown that also includes the past "hometown" in the past, in the memory, in the future, in the imagination¹², and even in the nihilism. In short, spiritual hometowns are much more than physical states.

The narrator, who is usually a young intellectual who goes back to his hometown after leaving for a long time, is no longer a lyrical subject wrapped in nostalgia and native complex, but a subject of reflection and criticism in the modern sense. From the

¹² Wang Furen, *The Loss of the Spiritual "Hometown"- An Analysis of Lu Xun's Hometown*, Chinese Teaching Communication. 2021, p.28-29.

shock and lost about the drastic difference between the past and the present, in reflecting on the backwardness, ignorance, and obsolescence of the hometown from the perspective of enlightenment, including exposing the dark reality of society and criticizing the “nation character”(國民性); not only that, but on a deeper level, reflecting on one's own existence and destination, and discovering that the essence of the journey is to rethink where you come from and where you are going after being "homeless", and even to reconstruct the intellectual himself.

Therefore, borrowing Lu Xun's narrative model of the intellectual returning to his hometown, Lai He also wrote about what the new intellectuals see and feel after returning home and compared it with the past. However, the two texts are similar in neither language nor style - compared to the later analyzed Chen Yingzhen's text, which clearly bears the imprint of Lu Xun in Chen's early creation - so without being reminded of Lai He's imitation of Lu Xun, readers cannot intuitively connect the two. More importantly, Lai He did not simply replace the plot and situation of the novella "Hometown", but grasped the emotional loss and spiritual dilemma behind the novella at a deeper level, and in the process of rewriting, conveyed the experiences and thoughts that transcended the tradition of "Hometown" and was unique to Taiwanese society that he has experienced.

The difference between the two shows up in the very beginning of the novella, the intellectuals go back for different reasons. The narrator in Lu Xun's "Hometown",

Brother Xun (迅哥兒), was in his middle age and someone who had gone through vicissitudes of life. He returned to his hometown after being away from his hometown for more than twenty years. And Lu Xun seemed to intentionally add many negative factors to this return and reunion, such as the cold winter season, the gloomy weather, the narrator's illness ("suffering the severe cold") and his bad mood, which all foreshadowed the sad undertone of return and reunion. Moreover, the protagonist knew before he left, " This time I had come with the sole object of saying goodbye" (我這次是專為了別他而來的) - before he set out for home, he knew he would leave. Although it was for practical reasons, it still implied the inability to stay in the hometown and the inaccessibility of the "hometown". However, even though the narrator has been expressing his indifference and lack of expectations for the hometown right from the start, and even deliberately attempts to maintain the nobility and self-promotion of some progressive elements through the emotionally alienated and nihilistic hometown that is assumed to be backward and "has not improved"(沒有進步) - or, he had a premonition that this trip was destined to be disappointing, so he comforted himself and buffered his sadness and loneliness by lowering his expectations – in whichever cases, the narrator has an emotional attachment to his hometown. Such an attachment is supported by his beautiful childhood memories or positive impressions, his family and friends, although it is at the same time blurred and diminished by the fading memory and the critical

perspective of intellectuals on traditions. He undoubtedly has a passionate yet conflicting affection for his hometown.

While, in "Going Home", the narrator becomes a young student who has just graduated and returned home after studying for years in a foreign land. More than ten years of student life have made him stay far from his hometown and feel "estranged" from everything. Therefore, the first thing the novella expresses is an uneasy feeling of being rejected or abandoned, which is based on real livelihood issues like employment, so at this point, it has not yet penetrated or is not aware of the level of cultural crisis or spiritual dilemma that transcends individual experience to reflect on the contrast between the past and the present. From this perspective, in the metaphor at the opening of the story, the narrator compares himself to a "commodity" and worries that he will not be accepted by the people and society in his hometown just like a product being eliminated without bargains in the market.

A product that is not up to standard in the factory can still be modified and remanufactured. However, once it is sent to the market, if it cannot be used and does not meet the customer's wishes, it will be abandoned forever. When I graduated from school, I went back to my hometown uneasily because I was afraid of being abandoned.

一件商品，在工場裡設使不合格，還可以改裝再製，一旦搬到市場上，若是不能合用，不稱顧客的意思，就只有永遠被遺棄了。當我在學校畢業是懷抱著怕這被遺棄的心情，很不自安地回到故鄉去。¹³

The protagonist is not like the narrator in Lu Xun's novel, who clearly knows the ending of leaving before his returning; instead, he holds a breath of hope of being accepted in an uncertain state of mind. Interestingly, after waiting for a few days in his hometown and realizing that there is no opportunity, he somehow lost his fear of being abandoned and retrieved the courage to leave.

When it comes to Lai He, his narrator still retains many vivid and beautiful memories of his childhood life back in his hometown, such as "spinning tops, flying kites, catching crickets, and picking up snails" with his companions, echoing Lu Xun's descriptions of catching birds in the snow, picking up shells on the beach, and catching "melon thieves"¹⁴ on a moonlit night with the partner Runtu 闰土. However, it is just that those living memories of his hometown in Lai He's piece are overshadowed by the uncertainty of fear of being abandoned.

Hence, the difference worth pointing out here is that Lai He chose to portray the intellectual as younger, simple, and inexperienced. He does not have the conflicting or

¹³ Lai He, Lin Ruiming, *The Complete Works of Lai Wo (I): Fiction Volumes*, 賴和全集（一）：小說卷, 2000, p.21.

¹⁴ Lu Xun called it 獾 in the text. It is an animals like badgers.

even repressed emotions about his "hometown" that Brother Xun has experienced after many ups and downs in life. On top of that, he does not have a very strong criticism about his hometown but rather wishes to be recognized and accepted by society. In comparison, Brother Xun is obviously an outsider in terms of the way he perceives himself and the way he is treated, and he does not expect to be accepted. Moreover, the ending of being destined to run away also allows him to maintain an alienated and detached gaze at everything in his hometown.

But, although Lai He also presents the perspective of an "outsider" in his novellas, he is always anxiously concerned about how the people in his hometown look at him. In other words, he is always watching the others who are watching him, from his parents to his siblings, to relatives, to childhood friends, to strange vendors. In particular, he is concerned about the expectations of parents. In view of the desolate situation of the people under colonial rule during the Japanese occupation period in Taiwan, in most families, the fathers are usually absent or frustrated, so these young people have been placed with deep and even high-pressure expectations since they were young. They are burdened with important tasks and a sense of mission to be outstanding and to support the family, and they are very terrified that they will disappoint the parents. Interestingly, this fear of expectation or trauma from family continues in Chen Yingzhen's novella and becomes more severe due to the greater oppression during the civil war and white terror period after the Japanese occupation.

Secondly, both returnees experienced "shock" at what they saw, heard and experienced when they finally returned, but their occurrence and cultural connotations were different. Regarding the current situation of his hometown, Brother Xun was shocked at its desolation and lifelessness at first sight: "'Was this the place I had kept nostalgically alive in my thoughts these past two decades?"¹⁵ (阿! 這不是我二十年來時時記得的故鄉?) But this was not completely beyond his expectations, evidenced by what he said to "rationalize" or just to comfort himself in the shock, "Home was always like this, and although it has not improved, still it is not so depressing as I imagine." (故鄉本也如此, ——雖然沒有進步, 也未必有如我所感的悲涼) That is to say, as he has a measure of the opposition between tradition and modernity in his mind, before his trip, he naturally expected that the hometown he has not yet seen would have a backward or even miserable appearance.

Nonetheless, what truly shocked him was the moment in which his companion Runtu called him "Sir"¹⁶ (老爺). More specifically, the reunion with his childhood friend brought back his memories of his beautiful hometown but declared its destruction right at the next second. Also, it is precisely his attachment to the former, the beautiful memories, that made the latter, the delusion more difficult to accept. In this way, the spearhead behind this shock was the traditional feudal ethical consciousness, or the

¹⁵ Lu Xun, *The Real Story of Ah-Q and Other Tales of China: The Complete Fiction of Lu Xun*, p.122.

¹⁶ Lu Xun, *The Real Story of Ah-Q and Other Tales of China: The Complete Fiction of Lu Xun*, p.127.

thick barriers that harm the communication and understanding between people, which made Brother Xun feel alienated from his hometown and feel hopeless, and thereafter pinned his remaining hopes on the younger generation represented by Hong'er 宏兒 and Shui Sheng 水生.

Intriguingly, in contrast to Brother Xun's shock, the shock of the narrator in Lai He's article started from an unexpected joy. Instead of rejecting him as he predicted, the villagers treated him abnormally friendly and polite. Secondly, his hometown appeared far less backward than he had imagined, having gradually developed into a modernized town. For example, he was taken aback to find that the Mazu Temple had been demolished, interpreting it as a sign of progress and the abandonment of feudal superstitions. What's more, learning about all preschool children attending public schools led him to believe that education had been universalized and more accessible to all. Under such circumstances, Lai He's work depicts a unique landscape of the "hometown" that was returned to, contextualized within the backdrop of the Japanese occupation of Taiwan.

During Japan's colonial rule, Taiwan underwent significant changes, distinct from the turmoil and strife in the countryside that characterized the aftermath of the Revolution of 1911 and warlord conflicts. Rather than witnessing widespread ruin, Taiwan experienced the introduction of a capitalist economy, advancement in education (albeit Japanese-centric), the dissemination of progressive ideologies, and so on. Japan's

colonial administration, while imposing political oppression, simultaneously facilitated modernization efforts in Taiwan. This transformation aligned Taiwan's society more closely with the ideals and aspirations of intellectuals, reflecting a nuanced landscape of colonial influence and societal change.

Unfortunately, as the observation of his hometown moved on, the narrator slowly realized that the apparent "progress" was merely superficial – a revelation that delivered a second shock to the protagonist. When the narrator saw the demolished Mazu Temple, he initially mistook the act as a sign of the villagers' bravery and progressiveness in shedding superstitions independently, but the truth is that the demolition was solely a prelude to its reconstruction. Similarly, the narrator's initial satisfaction with the spread of education was marred upon discovering that the Japanese education initiatives were driven by a policy of cultural assimilation with colonial undertones. This was not only impractical for people's everyday lives but also inflicted significant damage on the preservation of Taiwan's culture. As complained by a character in the story, it leads to a decline in the number of people who can read Taiwanese characters.

In general, while the narrator pleasantly found solace in the modernity in the hometown, he soon became aware of the oppression lurking beneath the façade of civilization and progress. This revelation came through the voices of the street vendors and other members of the lower class, as well as through the collective nostalgia

expressed by the populace for the past Taiwanese society. Consequently, beneath the narrator's initial shock lies a deeper, unspoken astonishment - the realization of the erosion and destructions of Taiwan's social history and culture under Japanese colonial rule, camouflaged behind the veneer of modernization.

Comparing the two works, Lai He's novella not only illuminates the distinctive features of Taiwanese society at that time, influenced by the Enlightenment discourse of "tradition versus modernity" stemming from the colonial intervention, but also points out the cultural crisis and mission confronting young intellectuals in Taiwan. What stands out is Lai He's departure from the negative and detached attitude towards the traditions represented by "hometown" in the context of Taiwan, as seen in the May Fourth intellectuals' disdain for the feudal traditions in old China. Instead, he emphasizes the importance of protection, inheritance, and reconstruction of Taiwanese traditions in the colonial context. Therefore, even though the "hometown" appears to accept the student before the reconstruction task was completed, in reality, he was abandoned as he felt feared, and was "homeless" and destined to have no hometown to return to, sharing the same destiny as Brother Xun.

2.1.3 Back to “Hometown”

2.1.3.1 Abandon (not Abandoned by) “Hometown”

Chen wrote “Hometown”, a narrative that followed the journey of an intellectual returning to his hometown. The protagonist, much like the narrator in Lai He's story,

had stayed away from home for four years. Nevertheless, Chen's narrator appears as a cynical figure, described as "lazy and playful"¹⁷ ("懶惰而荒嬉"), rather than harboring fears of abandonment by his hometown. On the contrary, his "abandoned" his hometown physically and psychologically.

From the novella's start, the narrator expressed his disdain for his hometown, voicing his repulsion at the mere thought of returning. He clarified that he was not worried about whether he could find a job, he would have no future, or he had to enroll the military training. He denounced any semblance of fond childhood memories associated with the "hometown," with him saying that "no way to say it¹⁸ is somewhere beautiful, charming, or it is missable"¹⁹. In this sense, the deliberate negation or removal of positive reminiscences downplayed the "shock" in the contrast between the past and the present. Despite that, Chen Yingzhen's story about the return still holds a strong symbolic weight, albeit with a shift in focus from confronting outdated traditions and navigating modernity to facing and exploring personal experience and family sentiments. As a returnee, the narrator goes back not for the mission of confronting the backwardness or seemingly progressive villages and people under colonial rule, but to face the family decline, parental expectations, and childhood trauma.

¹⁷ Chen Yingzhen. *The Collection of Chen Yingzhen's Works - Novels*. 陳映真文集——小說卷. 1998.11. p.22.

¹⁸ The hometown.

¹⁹ Chen Yingzhen. *The Collection of Chen Yingzhen's Works - Novels*. p.22. "怎樣看葉無法說它是個美麗迷人的，或者說可思念的"

Born in a declining middle-class family in a small town in Taiwan, the narrator idolized his elder brother who has studied abroad in Japan. Upon returning, his brother chooses to work as a health physician in the coal factory during the day and went to volunteer in the church, without sparing attention to his father's disappointment and villagers' gossips. And these acts made the narrator admire him even more. Yet, his elder brother's descent to gambling - that is, when their father fell ill and died, his brother opened a gambling den due to debts - and his marriage to a prostitute shattered the young man's idealized image. Witnessing such a downfall of his model and ideal, the little brother never visited him again and chose to flee his hometown.

Inevitably, he went back home after graduation because he had no other choice, then he saw the depravity and chaos of his brother's family. However, amidst the mass, the narrator unexpectedly discovered the facets of his brother's characters, such as brother's difficulty, his kind nature and his love for his younger siblings. All of these challenge the narrator's long-believed perception. Overwhelmed by the conflicting emotions, the narrator decides to flee his hometown. So in this moment, when the returnee shouts that he will never come back and feels that he "has no home", it is no longer about the loss of one's hometown, a hometown in the past, or the memory that they cannot return to, due to the objective modernization process. Instead, it reflects a subjective deep-seated rejection and isolation stemming from the traumatic experience of growth amidst objective social changes. At this point, the admiration and

disappointment towards his elder brother, his uneasiness towards his sister-in-law, and the resentment towards the villagers' ridicule complicated his feelings for his hometown. What's worse, he, an immature and inexperienced young man, failed to have the capacity to solve the problems. He then would rather run away and wander than identify with anything in his hometown.

On top of that, the narrator in Chen Yingzhen's "Hometown" is like a combination of the narrators of Lu Xun and Lai He: a young man feigning maturity, yet grappling with profound internal struggle. He is as young as Lai He's the narrator, but has faced more adversities, for example, the loss of his father at a young age, the embarrassment of poverty, the harshness and indifference of the villagers, the collapse of faith, etc. On the other hand, he experienced a lot depression akin to Lu Xun's narrator, but he remained entrenched in a state of emotional immaturity and rebellion. More crucially, he was forced to grow up by the changes in the outside world, yet without the requisite maturity or experience, therefore finding himself developing an unhealthy and distorted state in the incompatible age and experience. That is, the narrator either indulges too much in sentimentalism, or he chooses to escape and self-exile. Ultimately, he was still unable to escape his personal pain and adopt a societal perspective on the country's development and progress.

Hence, "hometown" in Chen Yingzhen's story constitutes the emotional fetter and internal growing struggle that the protagonist is unwilling to confront. Unlike the

narrative of Lu Xun and Lai He, this emotion is more individualistic and self-centered, shifting the foci from concerning about the societal inheritance and transformation to an introspect of one's experiences and emotions, though it still reflects the social backdrop through the lens of individual's eyes. Vivaly, such a shift from society to individual also signifies the adaptation and evolution of Lu Xun's "hometown" narrative in Taiwanese context. It ought to be noted that Chen Yingzhen's generation further expanded and reinterpreted Lu Xun's theme with a strong realist concern. Nevertheless, the original theme of the crisis of the modernity and social transformation rooted in the endeavor to salvage the nation, gradually faded away. In the context of the civil war and post-war white terror, the new narrative evolves to encompass an examination of the loss of the ideal, the confusion in the spiritual or national identification among the people, especially the younger generation.

Both in the background of Taiwanese society, Lai and Chen touched upon Japanese language education and returning students from Japan in their novellas, which also form an important part of Taiwan's "home returning" narrative. It is worth noting that the attitudes towards Japanese in the two texts exhibit a compelling contrast. The former stresses the "uselessness" of Japanese and its detrimental impact on local languages through the mouths of ordinary people, portraying a critical and confrontational reflection in the colonial context, emphasizing the essence of Japanese as a means of cultural colonization.

Conversely, Chen's novella situates the setting of a student returning from Japan as the protagonist's brother. He not only brings back knowledge (many books), but also finds religious belief (Christianity), making Japan more of a place of enlightenment. Additionally, the story depicts how the young brother was fascinated with his brother's well-spoken Japanese, which reveals the narrator's pro-Japanese orientation apart from highlighting the elder brother's role model for him. Symbolically, the elder brother, who was tall, strong, knowledgeable, and idealistic, took over the role of a father figure on account of the fallen authority of their father as seen in the fact that his business was becoming smaller and smaller. As stated by the narrator, he was confused and could not distinguish his brother's voice from his father's voice or the sound of their footsteps for a long time²⁰. In view of the aforementioned conflicting attitudes towards the Japanese, the elder brother is in this way the narrator's second "father", not solely under the traditional structure of Chinese morality, but also in the dimension of colonial politics. The young man's admiration for his brother symbolizes Taiwan's nostalgia sentiments for Japan, its colonial power, amidst the decline of the Nationalist government.

Nonetheless, both novellas delve into the identity confusion about the nationality and modernization of the younger generation under the shadow of post-colonialism, government incompetence, colonial remnants, the terror of the civil war, the February

²⁰ Chen Yingzhen. *The Collection of Chen Yingzhen's Works - Novels*. 陳映真文集——小說卷. 1998.11. p.23.

28th Incident, and other post-war social backgrounds and histories. This emphasis on the individual is one of the commonalities among second-generation writers in Taiwan, owing to the more severe government censorship they had to circumvent. Different from their May Fourth predecessors who made frontal attacks on the ongoing controversial political and social issues, they turned to the individual psyche, such as “their problem of identity in Taiwan; their cultural deprivation, their sense of insecurity; their claustrophobic fears on a small island; and the bewilderment that comes with being used as a hostage for the sins of their fathers.”²¹ Together, they paint a portrait of the quest for a new form of identity and a sense of belonging in the oppressed environment.

2.1.3.2 The Passing of the Father

In particular, what distinguishes Chen Yingzhen from the others is that he depicts the confusion and struggle about identification more from the angle of family, and he further explores and reveals the special features and intergenerational influences of family relationships shaped by Taiwan's post-war history and society.

Primarily, the control and the guidance that the elders give to the young in the family, usually serve as a symbol of the governing and political power, as there has long been a traditional isomorphic relationship between the family and the country. What's more, in Taiwan, the younger generation has indirectly endured the pressure and

²¹ Hsien-Yung, Pai (Bai, Xianyong). *The Wandering Chinese: The Theme of Exile in Taiwan Fiction*. p.207.

anxiety from history and society through family relationships, especially the traumatic growth experiences with their parents, since the end of the civil war. From this point of view, the young man and their parents or other family members in the novella constitute a metaphor for intergenerational subjects, namely the first generation and the second generation; and their relationship reflects the problem that remained unsolved and causes an intergenerational burden for long.

Among all, the relationship between the father and the son is rarely absent in Chen Yingzhen's novels and continues until his last one, and their tension is always quintessential in understanding his writing as well as the influence of his experience on his writing. More specifically, there is always a decline of the father. The father figure becomes weak and potent and ultimately his failure or death brings about the decline of the family. Tracing back to Chen Yingzhen's own experience, this plot appears repeatedly in his novellas. Apart from feeling the pain of losing his father, the son has to take on the heavy responsibility of supporting the whole family and has to make a compromise between his ideals and reality. Just like the elder brother in "Hometown", though he had such a strong faith and devotion to society, he gave up after the death of his father.

Coincidentally, it is also this experience and writing about this experience that established a special connection between Chen Yingzhen and Lu Xun that was different from ordinary literary influences. Lu Xun lost his father when he was little. Lu Xun

mentioned that when his father was ill for more than four years, he went in and out of pawn shops and pharmacies almost every day, first exchanged money from the counter that was twice his body height, and then bought medicine for his father. Unfortunately, his father died of illness in the end. In the process, young Lu Xun saw "soon enough what the world really thinks of it" and learned the cruelty and indifference of the world. Then he decided to leave his hometown to "to go in search of different people, different paths"²². In a similar way, Chen Yingzhen also said in his autobiography that in 1958, his adoptive father passed away and his family fell into decline, and "the sorrow of this decline brought "gloomy" memories, "emotions of frustration, defeat and humiliation" to his vulnerable youth.

Furthermore, the two's same trauma of losing their father provided Lu Xun and Chen Yingzhen with an emotional and spiritual anchor, allowing them to complete the echo, connection, and complementarity through literature. This common bond, however, does not solely manifest in the thematic unity of the passing of the father. While Lu Xun infrequently directly addresses the death of his father in his works, his stories often imply a state that his father had already passed away. For instance, in the original version of "Hometown", Brother Xun returns hometown and only talks about his father in the recollections of the past, stating that "my father was still there at that

²² Lu Xun, "Preface to *Call to Arms*", *The Real Story of Ah-Q and Other Tales of China: The Complete Fiction of Lu Xun*, p.62.

time"²³. As for another novella that shares the narrative of an “intellectual returning hometown”, namely “The New Year's Sacrifice”(《祝福》, 1924), the narrator can only temporarily stay at his Fourth Uncle²⁴'s house when he returns to his hometown, which also hints at the father's absence and a lack of a “home”.

So, in most of Lu Xun's novellas, the position of the father is directly depicted as an absence, particularly for the narrators in adulthood or midlife, where it is already a default state and fact, and will neither be specially explained nor serve a metaphor or a symbol. In contrast, in Chen's text, the absence of the father often serves as a pivotal plot point, evoking shock and catalyzing significant familial changes. Furthermore, the loss of the father profoundly impacts the son's life, both practically and spiritually. In addition to the heavy responsibility for the family, for one, the father's absence causes the son to recall all kinds of interactions with him before.

Set the novella “Home” as an example, one of Chen's early writings written before “Hometown”. The main character, also a young man preparing for graduation, experiences the sudden loss of his father not long before his entrance examination. Shocked at the fact that he suddenly becomes the head of the family, he stares at his father's profile and reflects on his interactions with his father from time to time, mourning his absence. For another, the loss of the father leaves the young narrator in a

²³ Lu Xun, *The Real Story of Ah-Q and Other Tales of China: The Complete Fiction of Lu Xun*, p.123.

²⁴ Mr. Lu, the fourth son of the narrator's family.

situation with a heavy burden but meanwhile strips the father's guidance or role modeling, necessitating an impossibly rapid maturation and prompting a spiritual crisis as he seeks to redefine his ideals, beliefs, and value.

3. With Yu Tiancong: The Void of Modernism and the Exhaustion of Idealism

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Chen Yingzhen and Yu Tiancong

In 1958, Yu Tiancong, known as the “Pioneer of Taiwanese Literature”, was a junior at that time and in charge of a monthly literature issue named *Bi Hui* (《筆匯》) with his friends and held an ambition to advance the modernization of literature and art. To challenge the established literary figures, they intentionally sought young authors to contribute to the publication, among whom included Chen Yingzhen. It was exactly in *Bi Hui* that Chen published his first story “Noodle Stand” and set out his writing career. The two young men, Yu and Chen, were schoolfellow at Taipei Success High School but they were not acquainted until this collaboration. Gradually, they became co-managers of the issue and more significantly, like-minded friends.

As their relationship deepened, their creative trajectories got intertwined. Yu Tiancong commented that Chen’s works during this early period were distinctive, intense, and infused with the fervor of life and poetic melancholy⁴⁵, just like a romantic nihilist, Chen Yingzhen silently had his influence permeating Yu’s writing. While working for *Bi Hui*, Yu Tiancong helped revise many of Chen’s works for publication, he

⁴⁵ Yu Tiancong, *Looking Back at Our Times 回首我们的时代*. New Taipei City: INK Printing Literature & Life Magazine Publishing Co. 2011.p.216.

confessed that, however, his writing was subtly impacted by Chen's tone, to the point that their novellas were so alike that even Chen's brother could not distinguish some of them.

According to Yu Tiancong's memoir, when publishing his first work collection, he purposely selected a story that was reminiscent of Chen's style as the first in the volume, "Light Rain" (《微雨》), in tribute to their friendship. This work tells the story of an idealistic young man who committed suicide by jumping off a building after his much-admired father had been sent to prison because of political implications. The story's first-person narrator, however, is his elder brother, who experiences unbearable sorrow, shock, disorientation, and nihilism in the wake of a family collapse involving his father's failure and the death of his younger brother.

This setting and storyline can immediately remind the audiences of Chen Yingzhen's "My Brother Kangxiong", which identically reflects the journey of an elder sister mourning the younger brother who killed himself and getting to know more about him through the diary he left, and particularly, about why he was concerned about and why he ended up killing himself in despair.

Such intertextuality becomes more precious and significant as Chen and Yu once shared an extraordinary bond. Looking back at their times, they not only lived and worked together but also have been to hell and back together, although they gradually took different values and paths after the failure of their communist dreams, partly

exemplified by Yu's later memoir of Chen, in which he describes Chen as a person "so lonely, so monotonous"⁴⁶.

Therefore, this chapter aims to make a comprehensive comparison between the two stories, from the perspectives of language styles and aesthetics, especially the image of their fathers and the son's and the daughter's reaction of the fall of the father. Why Yu used the death and suicide of the son to replace the death of father? How to understand this adaptation? On this basis, it attempts to gain insights into the unique traits or writing resources in Chen's creation and writing resources, and further examine how they viewed and accepted modernism differently during a period when modernism had a great influence on both young men and that they together tried to introduce it.

3.1.2 The Suicide of an Idealistic Youth

As Chen Yingzhen (2009) remarked on himself after his second release from prison in 1975, in his early writings from 1959 to 1965, he appeared to be very "melancholy, sentimental, pale and bitter", and that his "pale and bleak green tone"⁴⁷ – in line with Chen's vivid visual description by himself - was at its thickest when he contributed to Yu's issue *Bi Hui*. This coincidentally and subtly pointed out one of the commonalities between the two stories, more precisely, this is the main feature of "My

⁴⁶ Yu Tiancong. *Looking Back at Our Times* 回首我們的時代. 2011, p.218. "憂悒、感傷、蒼白而且苦悶"

⁴⁷ Chen Yingzhen. *The Collection of Chen Yingzhen's Works*. 陳映真文選. 2009.12, p.3-4. "蒼白慘綠的色調"

Brother Kangxiong” while the figurative or objectified representation of the rain depicts such atmosphere in Yu’s piece.

In short, both stories are about an elder sister or brother’s heart-breaking grief towards the young brother who chose to end his life. Filled with idealistic dreams, their little brothers all held passionate aspiration and a strong responsibility to involve and change the real world. For example, Kangxiong’s diary explains that he used to establish many hospitals, orphanages, and schools for the poor; while the younger brother in “Light Rain” inherited his father's heroic aspirations and declared that he would one day be top-notch and be famous, “writing his name in the sky”⁴⁸. So, given such innocence and vitality in them, as well as the hope and love placed on them by both elder siblings and the father, their suicide in depression is with doubt shocking and unacceptable.

Despite the same tragic death, the differences between the two stories primarily lie in the two family’s different background, including origins, finance, politics, etc., and through which reveal the two authors’ different concerns. Hence, the next section will start this comparison with the father figures.

⁴⁸ Yu Tiancong. *People Who Go to Fanlin Dun*. 到梵林墩去的人. Taipei: Da Lin Bookstore. 1970. p.3. “也許我也應該在天空中寫下自己的名字”

3.2 In “Pale and Bleak Green”

3.2.1 The Father and The Past

Chen Yingzhen’s story is set in a poor family, seen in not only Kangxiong’s suspension of schooling out of poverty but also his elder sister’s compromise to marry a wealthy man for a better life. Concerning Chen’s life journey, this context has a strong basis in reality because he was born into a rural and declining family and had witnessed the fall of his father’s generation, then a sense of failure and dismay left a great impact on his sensitive teenage years, including his writing, driving him to let out his negative emotion in the novellas. From this perspective, intriguingly, in this one, the elder sister and Kangxiong represent the two sides of Chen’s complex to poverty in the materialized world, on the one side, the entanglement or paradox between the contempt of the rich, maintaining dignity or acting proud as the idealist; and the failure or to the desire and vanity of money. On the other side, Kangxiong’s death and the elder sister’s change, which together signify the bankruptcy of idealism, reveal Chen’s doubt, weakness, and impotence in this dilemma. The “unhealthy sentiments” like these are thus something that Chen criticized himself harshly when reviewing his writing practices, and he pointed out the unrealistic and nihilistic nature behind it.

In comparison, Yu Tiancong placed the characters in a reputable family. The father was well-educated and respectful, and the young brother was able to study abroad at a prominent university. It is too vague to tell whether the family is from

mainland China, as Waishengren 外省人, or native to Taiwan, as Benshengren 本省人. However, what is certain is that they came from a family with a long history, well-known fame, and even honored deeds. That explains the father's ambition to build familial achievement, why the news of his father's jail spread to society so wide and quickly; and also explains the brother's respect for the father, as well as his nostalgia and yearning for the shining past. In one of the letters, the brother recalls introducing the giant Chinese guardian stone lion or the multi-shaped gatehouses back in the hometown to other people⁴⁹.

Moreover, in "Light Rain", this nostalgia is shared among the two sons and shown in their worship of the father. In other words, the father is not only a blood relative and the embodiment of loving emotions, but also a symbol of past status, authority, achievements, etc. Growing up under the protection of their prestigious and wealthy father, the brothers without a doubt enjoy better conditions and opportunities than Kangxiong. They also admire their father infinitely, especially the younger brother, and inherit their father's lofty dreams. Unfortunately, all of a sudden, his father's arrest and imprisonment announced the collapse of what they relied on and believed in. Not only that, but it also shook the powerful and great image of his father and the past, making it unacceptable for the younger brother. Thus, he for one lost in massive self-

⁴⁹ Yu Tiancong. *People Who Go to Fanlin Dun*. p.5. "我們門前那對巨大的石獅子" "故鄉多姿的門樓"

doubts and depression; for another, desperately called for the rescue of his father, he said, "There is only one thing left in this world that we must do, and that is to save our old father"⁵⁰.

As a result, Yu Tiancong conveyed a very different theme in an akin storyline and the same strong sentiment. In addition to the plight of poor families, Yu offered an insight into more privileged backgrounds but thus confined in the past-day history or memories, writing about their anxiety about the family's fall caused by political upheavals, the void nature of their ambition for restoring or rebuilding the past, and aware of their inability in the strike from reality. Consequently, the death of "idealism" here is not about the dilemma of the noble spirits or qualities, or religious beliefs which will be further discussed in the following sections, but about pessimistically indulging oneself in the glorious but unretrievable and unreliable history.

Notably, Yu demonstrates more techniques in the portrayal of the character's emotions and thoughts, which falls more into the "pale and bleak green tone" that Chen continuously criticized. For instance, the narrative is more apparently featured by symbolism, most ironically, Yu used the "rain" to not only create a misty and gloomy atmosphere that symbolizes the mourning and pain in the narrator's heart but also to

⁵⁰ Yu Tiancong. *People Who Go to Fanlin Dun*. p.3. "在這個世界上，我們只剩下一件必須要做的事，那就是去拯救我們年老的父親"

utilize it as a metaphor for his spiritual loss and realistic predicament. However, the limitation also becomes evident here because the protagonists' subjective feelings dominate the narrative with such sentiments-immersed environmental depictions along with psychological depictions, particularly those passive perceptions of the world. Moving back to the metaphor of the father, it is also the overpowering emotion that largely obscures his personality, his identity, and eventually the meaning behind his image. For the entire family, there are barely any hints that point to their background, which leaves their identity, such as Waishengren or Benshengren, unclear and lacks the overarching topic that they aim to explore or retrospect. Comparatively, though writing those stories with a taste of modernism, Chen maintains scrutinizing eyes on either sentimentalism or nihilism, both of which are typical features of modernism, just like the elder sister learns and scrutinizes Kangxiong through his diary, and Kangxiong also scrutinizes himself in remorse, prayer, and repentance.

In spite of the differences, the two stories fail to jump out of Chen Yingzhen's criticism after many years, that is, both are limited in the discourse of the decline of the family and the depravity of the individual, "solely staring at the fragile and small heart of a lonely person, dripping with miserable green blood, hurting and pitying oneself"⁵¹

⁵¹ Chen Yingzhen, *The Collection of Chen Yingzhen's Works*. p.4. "家庭的沒落、個人的墮落，也隻是一味地凝視孤獨地個人的，滴着慘綠色之血的、脆弱而又小小的心，自傷自憐"

Their protagonists, the young men, are always immersed in personal sentimentality, retreating and escaping, but lack realistic power of taking actions, or have no such an ability at all.

3.2.2 Nihilism or Idealism

To begin with, aside from his identity as a progressive youth, Chen's father is also a devout Christian. Chen makes subtle allusions to the impact of his father's Christian beliefs on him throughout the majority of his autobiography and memoirs, among which the most concentrated and detailed one is the prose "Father" (《父親》) written nearly forty years ago. Influenced by this, Chen once mentioned that as a young man, he was a devoted Christian as well, constantly criticizing himself, reflecting on his shortcomings, and pleading with Jesus for forgiveness a hundred times⁵². This is also the prototype of the episode in which Kangxiong endlessly confesses to God.

My brother, Kangxiong, reluctantly moved to a sanctuary. The diary followed were full of voices of self-loathing, curses, torment, and agony. "I asked for a fish and got a snake, I asked for food and got a stone." My brother Kangxiong howled in despair: "I didn't realize that I hadn't escaped the moral law of religion after so long pursuing nihilism." ⁵³(p.12)

我的弟弟康雄終於勉為其難的住進了一間聖堂。此後的日記僅是自責、自咒、煎熬和痛苦的聲音。“我求魚得蛇，我求食得石。”我的弟弟康雄絕望地嚎叫著：“我沒有想到長久追求虛無的我，竟還沒有逃出宗教的道德的律規。”

⁵² Chen Yingzhen, *The Collection of Chen Yingzhen's Works*. p.52.

⁵³ Chen Yingzhen. *The Collection of Chen Yingzhen's Works - Novels*. p.12.

However, it is worth noting that in his later life and career, his father's religious influence has seldom been implemented in the form of specific religious texts or rituals, but has more embodied in a spirit or essence of fraternity and equality. That also explains why, while attempting to think about his emotion and writing resources, Wan Anyi, a contemporary mainland China writer who was massively inspired by Chen Yingzhen during their study at the Iowa Writers' Workshop in 1983, took considerable time to imagine the figure of Chen's priest father⁵⁴.

On this basis, if go back to "My Brother Kangxiong", it is made explicit that the criticism Chen has of religion does not contradict the values that his real-life father has instilled, also, it does not imply that he is attempting to rebel against the father figure and his religious belief, but for the critique of those greed, vulgarity, and nihilism disguised by the mask of religion.

Indeed, Kangxiong's father in the novella has turned to Christianity for six years, yet his principles do not come from faith or love but are more about the purpose of saving a frustrated self from the failure of utopian socialism. On the one hand, he superficially adheres to religious rituals, etiquette, and regulations; on the other hand, he persuades his daughter to marry a rich man for a richer life; in fact, he also invisibly puts the authority or the confine of religion on his son, leading to the son's suicide.

⁵⁴ Wang, Anyi. *Utopian Verses*. 2011, p.12-13

Perhaps for this reason, her daughter, Kangxiong's elder sister, does not reveal the admiration and respect that the two brothers have for their father in "Light Rain" but refers to her father as the unfortunate old man with pity, such as "my poor father", and "my poor father, in his old age, in the throes of losing his son"⁵⁵.

In such circumstances, the one who genuinely reflects the ideals of Chen Yingzhen's father may be Kangxiong, who, though, appears to have committed suicide due to being too weak and nihilistic. Zhao Gang stated that even though Kangxiong frequently claims himself to be a nihilist in his letters and diaries or that his elder sister called him an "Anarchist" ("安那琪"⁵⁶, 天使), he is not a nihilist because he had "a strong moral or religious conviction and an exceptionally strong commitment to the worth of human life"⁵⁷. What Kangxiong desires is a world that is more humane, kinder, tolerant, and reasonable; he knows what he wants and does something to put it into practice. Hence, Kangxiong is not addicted to nihilism per se, but rather feels nihilistic due to his incapacity or the hopeless reality to bring about this beautiful ideal and future; or, he calls himself out of self-mockery, for he is aware that he is a nihilist or anarchistic in the eyes of other people.

⁵⁵ Chen Yingzhen. *The Collection of Chen Yingzhen's Works - Novels*. p.10-11. "我那在老年失去兒子的重苦中的可憐的父親"

⁵⁶ Chen Yingzhen. *The Collection of Chen Yingzhen's Works - Novels*. p.10.

⁵⁷ Chen, Su, 2011, p.148

From this, one shall be allowed to differentiate the “nihilism” of Kangxiong from that of the brothers in “Light Rain”. The latter sees emptiness as the result of history or authority or dream collapsing, symbolized by the fall of their father. Particularly, the younger sibling overshadowed the significance of his own life because of his utter adoration and dependence on his father. For instance, when he was still in middle school, he wrote, "There is no one greater than my father in the world."⁵⁸ He then followed in his father’s footsteps and attended the same university as his father, he also made the same dream of heroism as his father.

Nevertheless, even when he looks to his "father" or such glorious past as all his value and guidance, he doesn't even know what it means. In addition, as was already indicated, due to Yu Tiancong’s modernist techniques, the story is drenched with melancholy feelings, which further blurs the connotations for the audience. Therefore, it creates an enchanting double nihilism both inside and outside the text: not only the characters are unaware of the things they lost or feel obsessed with, but also the readers may find it challenging to get the significance of the nostalgia and obsession with the past that Yu is attempting to represent.

Further, when his father is arrested and imprisoned, his brother's meaning and faith are stripped away, and all he can think of is to rescue his father. Whether it is the

⁵⁸ Yu Tiancong. *People Who Go to Fanlin Dun*. 1970. p.4. “世界上，沒有比父親更偉大的了”

younger brother's desperate cry or the older brother's futile work, they all highlight their dependence and attachment to their father. That is to say, they have nothing after this, and this is the real nihilism. Unbearable of such a denied past, his younger brother doesn't dare to revisit the old dream, he says, "From now on, I dare not revisit my old dreams in my childhood."⁵⁹ Worse still, he couldn't bear the nothingness beneath it, and he ended up being swallowed by nothingness.

Thought-provokingly, compared with the brothers' rescue of their father, Kangxiong's sister's surrender to her father and Kangxiong's suicide together constitute the two contradictory selves in an individual. The elder sister and Kangxiong manage to come out of the anguish and bewilderment that engulfed the two brothers like a drizzle, but they choose different paths. One chooses to die for his ideal; the other gave up the ideal and turns to the pursuit of reality's glory and wealth. From this angle, it can be said that the elder sister's memorial to Kangxiong is like saying goodbye to or even killing, the self of her that strives for lofty ideals. She was once influenced by her brother, in her words, "the cynical little painter", and she maintains dignity and pride in poverty. Ultimately, though, she agrees to give in, selling herself to the wealthy. And she becomes a panderer who relies on wealth and power. She hopes to build a lavish grave

⁵⁹ Yu Tiancong. *People Who Go to Fanlin Dun*. 1970. p.5.

for Kangxiong, nevertheless, it is of essence to soothe herself so that she would be content to start enjoying a life of luxury.

In brief, Chen Yingzhen's religious upbringing lays the foundation for the story's central theme or undertone—a humanistic love that derived from but transcends religious decorum and fraternity. It also makes his writing transcend self-deprecation and ultimate emptiness despite a sort of mimics or parodies of Western nihilism during this period.

3.3 Lu Xun and Hope

His second story, "My Brother Kangxiong" preserves Chen Yingzhen's evident admiration for Lu Xun. Before that, the plot concerning the sick child in his debut work "Noodle Stand" already draws significant inspiration from Lu Xun's story, "Medicine" (藥, 1919). Chen Sihe 陳思和 remarked on the spirit or the breath of life (生命氣息) from Lu Xun in Chen's story. For this piece, he connected it to the triple narrative structure – simply, the brother's diary, the sister's notes, and the narrator's narration – drew a parallel with Lu Xun's "Grieve Over the Deceased" (《傷逝》, 1925), both works employ handwritten notes, imbuing a confessional element in their narratives. Another work, "The Lonely Man" (《孤獨者》, 1925), shares similarities in

the narrator's confessions and their sympathetic gaze toward the deceased, as well as the depiction of the dead body⁶⁰.

In fact, more and varied connections could be established between the two authors' novellas based on different perspectives. What sets "My Brother Kangxiong" apart is its direct excerpt and rewrite of Lu Xun's original text. More specifically, the portrayal of Kang Xiong's funeral evokes a sense of solitude reminiscent of similar scenes found at the end of Lu Xun's *Medicine*.

My brother Kang Xiong's funeral was one of the loneliest in the world. We didn't even have half a dozen distant relatives in Ping Yang Mount. The only people in the procession behind a crude coffin were an elderly man and a nondescript girl. No one cried. This menial procession made its way through the streets of Ping Yang Mount and through the wilderness on the outskirts of town. The cemetery after the funeral left two fathers and daughters sitting opposite each other, trailing lonely shadows in the autumn sunset. The wilderness was covered with a pale sheet of reed flowers. Crows pierced the purple-gray sky like arrows. Walking down to the cemetery, I looked back at my brother Kangxiong's new home: a newly refurbished cab, a new tombstone, and it was ugly! So another crow pierced the purple-gray sky like an arrow.

我的弟弟康雄的葬儀，是世上最寂寞的一個。平陽崗裡，我們連半個遠親都沒有。一個粗製的棺木後的行列，隻有一個年邁的老人和一個不倫不類的女孩子。沒有人哭泣。這個卑屈的行列，穿過平陽崗的街道，穿過鎮郊的荒野。葬禮以後的墳地上留下兩個對坐的父女，在秋天的夕陽下拖著孤伶伶的影子。曠野裡開滿了一片白綿綿的蘆花。烏鴉像箭一般的刺穿紫灰色的天空。走下了墳場，我回首望了望我的弟弟康雄的新居：新翻的土，新的墓碑，很醜噁的！於是又有一隻烏鴉像箭一般的刺穿紫灰色的天空裡了。

(My Brother Kangxiong)

⁶⁰ Chen Guangxing, Su Shufen. Chen Yingzhen: Thought and Literature. 2011, p.20-21.

Looking where she pointed, Old Chuan's wife saw that the grave in front had not yet been overgrown with grass. Ugly patches of soil still showed. But when she looked carefully, she was surprised to see at the top of the mound a wreath of red and white flowers.

Both of them suffered from failing eyesight, yet they could see these red and white flowers clearly. There were not many, but they were placed in a circle; and although not very fresh, were neatly set out. Little Chuan's mother looked round and found her own son's grave, like most of the rest, dotted with only a few little, pale flowers shivering in the cold. Suddenly she had a sense of futility and stopped feeling curious about the wreath.

.....

The breeze had long since dropped, and the dry grass stood stiff and straight as copper wires. A faint, tremulous sound vibrated in the air, then faded and died away. All around was deathly still. They stood in the dry grass, looking up at the crow; and the crow, on the rigid bough of the tree, its head drawn in, perched immobile as iron.

.....

They had not gone thirty paces when they heard a loud caw behind them. Startled, they looked round and saw the crow stretch its wings, brace itself to take off, then fly like an arrow towards the far horizon.

華大媽跟了他指頭看去，眼光便到了前麵的墳，這墳上草根還沒有全合，露出一塊一塊的黃土，煞是難看。再往上仔細看時，卻不覺也吃一驚；——分明有一圈紅白的花，圍着那尖圓的墳頂。

他們的眼睛都已老花多年了，但望這紅白的花，卻還能明白看見。花也不很多，圓圓的排成一個圈，不很精神，倒也整齊。華大媽忙看他兒子和別人的墳，卻隻有不怕冷的幾點青白小花，零星開着；便覺得心裡忽然感到一種不足和空虛，不願意根究。

.....

微風早經停息了；枯草支支直立，有如銅絲。一絲髮抖的聲音，在空氣中愈顫愈細，細到沒有，週圍便都是死一般靜。兩人站在枯草叢裡，仰麵看那烏鴉；那烏鴉也在筆直的樹枝間，縮着頭，鐵鑄一般站着。

.....

他們走不上二三十步遠，忽聽得背後“啞——”的一聲大叫；兩個人都悚然的回過頭，隻見那烏鴉張開兩翅，一挫身，直向着遠處的天空，箭也似的飛去了。

(Medicine)

Comparing these two excerpts, Chen Yingzhen's acknowledgment of Lu Xun is marked by the use of symbolism. Apart from replicating text and language, the style is permeated with Lu Xun's compelling sense of despair and confusion during that era. However, in Chen Yingzhen's writing, this theme is even more enveloped in an aura of death. For instance, the imagery of white flowers and crows, which in Lu Xun's works may either convey comfort to the deceased or resemble the appearance and dialogue of the dead, harbors the underlying sentiment that Lu Xun sought to give hope to others amidst his own despair—a solemn emotion of hope. While it is uncertain whether Chen Yingzhen's reading includes this layer, his narrative leans towards a solitary interpretation. Therefore, for him, the use of white flowers and crows is more likely as a portrayal of this lonely, cold, and isolated atmosphere or mood.

In comparison to Yu Tiancong, it can be observed that Chen Yingzhen's utilization of the two images closely mirrors Yu Tiancong's use of rain. This is particularly evident in the dominance of expressing a similarly somber atmosphere and emotion. Nevertheless, irrespective of the comparison, Lu Xun's readings have evolved into a distinctive and invaluable literary resource for Chen Yingzhen. During this period, he appears to be undergoing a spiritual growth reminiscent of Lu Xun, involving the absorption and dissemination of Western thought and literature, and grappling with the limitations of his own comprehension, as he said, to overcome “the tones of exhaustion,

pallor, and melancholy are very Chekhovian”⁶¹. In this way, as the literary progenitor of his artistic spirit, Lu Xun undergoes a gradual transformation from a “templet” to becoming a vital source of inspiration in Chen Yingzhen's creations. Most significantly, Chen Yingzhen progressively discerns his own style and establishes his unique literary practice.

⁶¹ Chen Yingzhen, *The Collection of Chen Yingzhen's Works*. 2009.12. p.4.

4. To Wang Anyi: Transcendent Christian Love and the Chinese Experience in the Face of Cosmopolitanism

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Chen Yingzhen and Wang Anyi

In 1983, invited by the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa directed by Paul Engle and Hualing Nieh Engle 聶華苓, Chen Yingzhen, together with many influential Chinese contemporary writers from both mainland China and Taiwan, traveled to Iowa, living, studying, and writing for over three months. It was a few years after Chen Yingzhen was arrested and released from prison⁶² in 1979 for the second time, he devoted himself immediately to literary creation and became a leading figure of the Nativist Literature movement in Taiwan. During the workshop, not only did Chen Yingzhen first has the chance to reunite with and communicate with intellectuals and authors "from across the straits, from the other side of my fractured homeland"⁶³, but he also exerted a profound impact on the youngest member Wang Anyi, exemplified by the series of novellas, memoirs, or essays based on their encounters and interactions. At that time, Wang Anyi, young and talented, accompanied by her mother Ru Zhijuan 茹志鵬, experienced new lifestyles and new perspectives in a modernized society in the USA.

⁶² On October 3, 1979, Chen Yingzhen was arrested by the "Bureau of Investigation" on a warrant for "suspected rebellion, arrest and prevention of escape", and was released on 36 hours later.

⁶³ Chen Yingzhen, *Thinking of Wang Anyi* 想起王安憶 Season of Literature (文季) 2, no. 3: 102. 1984, p.102.

Wang first wrote "Utopian Verses" (《烏托邦詩篇》, 1991), in which she stated that she chose "this man (Chen)" as the power to save herself⁶⁴, regarded Chen Yingzhen as a noble and perfect idol and even an imagined lover. Then she recalled their friendship again after twelve years in "The Internationale" (《英特納雄耐爾》, 2003). Here, although it is also mentioned that Chen was like her idol and she has always been chasing after his footsteps (p.91) with similarly deep emotion, a giant shift to estrangement, disappointment, and negation in her attitude becomes evident.

Later, hearing that Chen fell ill and was too sick to recover, Wang Anyi participated in Chen Yingzhen seminar held in Taiwan and submitted a long essay "Chen Yingzhen in 'Renjian'" (《陳映真在<人間>》, 2008) on Chen's practices on the issues *Renjian* that he has run since the mid to late 1980s, in which she not only sorted out and categorized the period of his past issues, but also examined the changes in both the content and the style, thus navigating the transitions of Chen Yingzhen's thoughts and spirits.

It is demonstrated in such contrasts that Wang Anyi's admiration and love for Chen Yingzhen was based on the shelving or suspension of many differences, disagreements, incomprehension, estrangements, or a lack of communication. However, the contrasting changes can rather be the result of the changes in the problems Wang Anyi faced at different periods or different life stages. However, it is her objectification of Chen

⁶⁴ Wang Anyi, *Utopian Verses*, 2011, p.17.

Yingzhen and her transformation of the imagined figure of Chen into her motivation and resources to overcome the challenges in both writing and confronting the reality of mainland China that remain consistent.

This chapter is not to repeat this point of view or to confirm how Wang Anyi imagined the figure of Chen Yingzhen, whether imagining him as her literary father or imagining him as the collapse of utopia, but it intends to further explore why such imagination is needed for Wang and how it was constructed, as well as whether such imagination represents the shared confusion or beliefs of the youth of Wang Anyi's generation. This chapter will also go deep into the text to explore the divergent positions or opinions between Chen and Wang that have been obscured and never realized by this imagination, further, the reasons behind them. Did the confusion here come from the limitations of Wang Anyi's own experience and perception, or did it just reflect the divide and contradiction between the two generations? The chapter will then focus on the interactions between the two – instead of simply Wang Anyi's unilateral statement – to discuss whether the similarities or commonalities between the two generations, as well as possible ways to establish active dialogue and mutual understanding between the two, were already disclosed in potential moments.

4.2 From “The Love of Gods”(神靈之愛) to “Loving Heart”(愛心)

4.2.1 The Shock of “The Love of Gods”: Exploration and Reflection on Secular Love

Wang Anyi first met Chen Yingzhen when she read his novel “The Generals”. *The Generals*, one of Chen Yingzhen's representative works in his early writing, tells the poignant story of two nameless low-level characters in Taiwan, “Triangle Face”(三角臉) and “Little Skinny Girl”(小瘦丫頭兒). From a deep estrangement to genuine love, they finally commit a double suicide and die together for love. According to Wang Anyi, what impressed her about the novella was that “the author wrote about the situation of mutual support in such a touching way”⁶⁵, she was thus full of curiosity and interest in the author, especially speculating on the emotional source of the author's writing.

As a teenage girl (in the novella) who was young, ignorant, and onset of puberty, Wang Anyi naturally mixed her admiration for the author with the part about “fantastic love”(“夢幻的愛情”) - so it is not difficult to understand why she chose to use a feeling that like romance love to describe her attachment to Chen Yingzhen. This is one of the “games” out of innocence and curiosity about love, and it is also her process of understanding and learning love. On the other side, Wang Anyi also resorted to romantic love and used it as a frame of reference to understand Chen Yingzhen's emotions, thereafter, to interpret Chen's affection as an “affection similar to the love of

⁶⁵ Wang Anyi, *Utopian Verses*, 2011, p.7. “作者將相濡以沫這一種情狀寫得感人至深”

gods 類似神靈之愛的情感。”⁶⁶ The so-called "gods" here are relative to her views of "secular" love. As she said, love is worldly love, which is everywhere and easy to obtain, but the love of gods is scarce and noble.

This standpoint also deepened her admiration and "love" for the imagined Chen Yingzhen. Based on this, it can be argued that Wang Anyi's writing her nostalgia for Chen Yingzhen in "Utopia Verses" as a kind of "love" that is like love and not like love, is also an attempt to get a kind of "the love of gods" or "divine love" that she yearns for, although this positioning has, to a certain extent, dispelled the sublime feeling of "the love of gods" to her.

However, what is certain is that, regardless of whether "the love of gods" is what Chen Yingzhen cherishes and tries to convey in the novella, such an understanding itself is based on Wang Anyi's own writing experience, and her thinking and practice played an indelible role. Tracing back to Wang Anyi's life journey, when she wrote "Utopia Verses" in 1991, she was no longer an innocent girl, but a more mature writer who was an expert in writing secular love, evidenced by her representative three novellas on forbidden carnal love, the "Three Loves"(三戀). Therefore, there is no denying that she is aware of her naive girlish feelings in the past. What's more, at the era when she cherished the memory of this kind of affection, in addition to the shock that Wang

⁶⁶ Wang Anyi, *Utopian Verses*, 2011, p.7.

experienced when she initially read about the poignant love in "The Generals", there was also the shock from the "love of gods" that could transcend the mundane world, as in the 1990s, Wang Anyi, read a lot and got tired of the story of secular love.

As a result, Wang Anyi understanding's of "the love of gods" can be reasonably presumed to be based on her own exploration of secular love, and not only that, her reflection and warning on the secular and utilitarian atmosphere of the entire 1990s. From this perspective, the encounter with Chen Yingzhen happened to become a response to her question, providing her with the possibility of "the love of gods", thus providing her with the possibility of love in literature, such as how to write love, and why to write love. This is something Wang Anyi, who claims to have grown up in the secular world without religious belief, who has created many secular stories has never experienced before.

4.2.2 One Possibility of Love: The Yearning and Inability of Universalism Beyond Utilitarianism

Wang Anyi showed the talent and sensitivity of a young writer when she initially read about "The Generals", seen in her conscious questioning of Chen Yingzhen over his emotional resources right after feeling moved by the story. Notably, Wang Anyi does not seem to have failed to grasp the political metaphors about cross-strait relations behind "The Generals", or even Chen Yingzhen's concerns and expectations in this regard. Moreover, she was not unaware of Chen Yingzhen's left-wing stance and

revolutionary ideals – even though at this stage she did not have a deeper knowledge about it, or she was still stagnated at the level of imagination.

For example, at this time, Wang Anyi and her mainland contemporaries, the younger generation usually noted as a generation without belief, were very likely to have heard about Chen Yingzhen's admiration, passion, and yearning for China's socialist practice. Nonetheless, as a generation that had not only personally been through the Cultural Revolution, gradually been aware of the limitation of socialist dogmatism, but also experienced the impact of Western modernization, it is difficult for them to shake off their personal experience and reach the understanding and identification or agreement with Chen Yingzhen's ideals. Consequently, in Wang Anyi's writing, she would write, "The spectacular scenes of vigorous mass revolutionary movements on the land across the Taiwan Strait made him think that his dream had come true in part of the world"⁶⁷. In addition, in her impression, Chen Yingzhen at Iowa "was like a young pioneer, and liked to listen to my mother telling heroic stories during the wartime. He longed for life in the base area, where people lived together like brothers and sisters, which made him feel relaxed and happy."⁶⁸. And Wang positioned herself as someone to "point out his ideological shortcomings sharply at the most critical

⁶⁷ Wang Anyi, *Utopian Verses*, 2011, p.24. "海峽對岸的陸地上，那一些轟轟烈烈的群眾性革命運動的壯觀場麵，使他以為他的夢想在世界的一部分地區實現了"

⁶⁸ Wang Anyi, *Utopian Verses*, 2011, p.25. "像個少先隊員似的，喜歡聽我母親講述戰爭年代裡的英雄故事。根據地的生活令他向往，人們像兄弟姊妹一樣生活在一起，令他心曠神怡"

moment" (p.25), that is, to use the lessons from the problems that occurred during the socialist transition period to prove that the sacrifices made by individuals like her mother have led history to go astray. Further, Wang Anyi might not have realized—or might have known—that Chen Yingzhen was aware of the inadequacies of the socialist revolution. However, because of political or personal factors, she did not intend to go into depth on these issues but to turn the story of *The Generals* into a secret hidden deep in her heart, and would "always turn around and walk away, never participate"(p.8) when people discuss this story.

Hence, as Wang Anyi avoided touching upon the story at the national level, let alone the fact that her understanding must be missing a key link, it is crucial to inquire about how she dealt with it and what she had captured or disregarded. That is, she turned to Chen Yingzhen's religious background. Indeed, religion is Chen Yingzhen's unique ideological resource. She did not, however, go too far into religious concepts, doctrines, and beliefs because she did not have a religious background. Rather, she dug out—in fact, extracted—a universal, fraternal, spirit of selfless dedication that corresponds to her definition of "loving heart (愛心)" in the article. She stressed that it was after finding this name that she dared to recount the story. More importantly, the ideal that transcends personal and utilitarian pursuits, that she worships and longs for, eventually found a place in him.

The breath of Christianity in Chen Yingzhen comes from his father's faith. He mentioned his father's influence on him more than once in his autobiography and lectures, especially in his essay "Father" in which he recalled his father in his later years. In his second autobiography "About Chen Yingzhen" (《關於陳映真》) in 1976, he recorded what his father, a priest, reminded him of when he was imprisoned.

Child, you have to remember carefully from now on:
First, you are a child of God,
Secondly, you are a child of China,
Only then, ah, you are my child.

(Chen, 2009, p.16)

Chen Yingzhen specifically pointed out that it is never easy to achieve the value behind "God", no matter what it would be interpreted as, either "truth" or "love". And it was precisely for this reason that he regarded these words as his motto or life philosophy. Simultaneously, this passage is often cited to understand Chen Yingzhen's politics and literature, so did *Utopia Verses*, it became a vital entry point for Wang Anyi to understand Chen Yingzhen. According to her, "After many years, this has become the essence of my poems and the core part of my poems"⁶⁹. It can be seen that her interpretation and acceptance of this proverb is based on "love" - One of the three

⁶⁹ Wang Anyi, *Utopian Verses*, 2011, p.13. “在多年之後，這成了我的詩篇的精髓，是我的詩篇最核心的部分”

proposed by Chen Yingzhen - and it transitions the love of "love of gods" to "loving heart" and expresses it in terms of more universal and humane values.

Intriguingly, Wang Anyi acknowledged the universal facet of this "love", perhaps when she reflected on Chen Yingzhen and his father's "misreading" of her speech. As a young writer who was unwilling to be overshadowed by her well-known mother, a prolific Chinese writer, or to gain attention because of her mother, Wang Anyi felt extremely happy about the praises from the writer she once liked, but also feels infinitely anxious, worrying that she would fail to live up to the expectations of this beloved idol and his father.

This worry came about in Wang Anyi's reading, is because she realized that what she expressed in her speech was her anxiety in the face of the contradiction between society and the individual, the wide common experience and special but limited personal experience. At that time, she was not only sensitive about the threat to personal experience caused by the rapid social development and the impact of international culture after the reform and opening up(改革開放), but also realized the necessity and importance of persisting in personal experience. Therefore, the question that needed to be answered urgently was how to reconcile the relationship between the two. The solution she thought of at this point was to refer to personal experience through the vast experience of the public to generate understanding.

In this way, it is not difficult to determine that Wang Anyi was essentially talking about a literary issue in her speech. In her words, Wang is considering "how to make our novels more profound" ⁷⁰. Or even a personal issue, it is about a writer's thinking and investigation when confronting personal anxiety and dilemmas in her creation. As a consequence, in Wang Anyi's imagination, Chen's father and his religious fraternity and selfless dedication expectations for her seemed so lofty, solemn and heavy in comparison, and she also consciously felt a sense of shame that she could not live up to the expectations. From here, it can be stated that Wang Anyi recognized or further understood her own narrow-mindedness and problems through such a self-reflection, such as her individualism and utilitarian thinking that will be discussed below - these cannot be compared with the "love of gods" or the "loving heart" at all.

Nonetheless, a more in-depth and reasonable statement would be, that Wang Anyi was fully aware of her own insecurities and shortcomings at that stage. She is, after all, a keen, active, ambitious young writer who is eager for attention and appreciation. She also always keeps a clear and critical perspective on both herself and her writing. Evidence can be found in what she said in an interview with *China Weekly News*, "I will read the criticisms from my friends." Despite that, "To be honest, nobody can be as harsh as me when it comes to criticism. That's because my standards are unique to me." So she

⁷⁰ Wang Anyi, *Utopian Verses*, 2011, p.15.

can pinpoint her problems, " I've got a serious mindset about fame and fortune, and I am eager to be outstanding"⁷¹ and she seems to be sober. She was conscious that she irresistibly maintained the identification with, and the pursuit of the values she wanted to criticize. For instance, she bluntly stated her utilitarian interpretation of literature. On the one hand, she admitted that she writes for fame and fortune; on the other hand, she also utilitarianly regards literature as a source that can rescue her from experience, although she was sad to find that his literature lacked such power because it was full of something eager for quick success and instant benefit.

In this sense, Wang Anyi's imagination of Chen Yingzhen in "Utopia Verses" stems from Wang Anyi's self-criticism and self-motivation when writing this novella, out of her own desire for an "ideal literature" as a role model, her need for a literary idol. Stated differently, she recognized that her limited and dull experiences would not allow her to overcome, and she found the transcending emotions and spirit that were precious to her eras, such as fraternity, humanity, and criticism of modernization in Chen. Thus, Chen Yingzhen is portrayed as the value and ideal itself, as a person who can save her or has the capacity to save herself. Looking back at Wang Anyi's admiration and admiration for Chen Yingzhen, it becomes evident that it was more than just a young writer admiring his superior; it was also a constrained individual facing an ideal. This

⁷¹ Wang Anyi, *Utopian Verses*, 2011, p.9.

also explains, in addition to the conjecture of the "love of gods", why she believes that the memory of Chen Yingzhen is "a perfect kind of happiness, a purely spiritual activity that does not ask for rewards or fame or fortune" and "is only related to oneself" and can "enjoy the excitement and joy of transcendent materiality".

The handling of nostalgia, or more accurately, Wang Anyi's imagination, is best reflected in a passage in the novella when she speculates about and describes Chen Yingzhen's "disappointment and boredom" towards her. She mentioned several instances where she was concerned Chen Yingzhen would not like her, including her wheeling a grocery cart, going on a picnic with the group, and watching American football with the group. It first goes against her claim that she doesn't care what he thinks of her. Not only that, but it is also evident from these scenes of modernization, popularization, and deliberate satire on vulgar taste that Wang Anyi and his generation were critically analyzing and self-critiquing in the face of American modernization. Personal experiences from the 1950s are among their growth experiences.

Wang Anyi, who has been affected by Western ideals of freedom and individuality since the 1980s, examines the flaws in societal orthodoxy and the new and old parts of herself; at this moment, it appears as though she places her critical and penetrating gaze on Chen Yingzhen, as though she is expressing the dissatisfaction of herself through Chen Yingzhen. Huang Wenqian 黄文倩 concludes that, to understand why Wang Anyi did not engage in business or cultural administration in the economic

tide like many right-wing intellectuals but could persist in writing for decades, "not giving up highly emotional literary imagination and pursuit", and maintaining "vitality, spirit and will"⁷², the relationship and literary influence of Wang Anyi and Chen Yingzhen can offer a potential explanation. Regarding Chen Yingzhen's criticism and inspiration written by Wang Anyi, what is entangled in it is, whether they are result from her anxiety about facing the older generation represented by Chen Yingzhen; or her real experience in the 1980s and 1990s after returning to China, such as struggle with creativity; or more thoroughly, her subjective projection of self-criticisms on Chen; they all play an important role and influence on Wang Anyi's creation.

Yet, of course, Chen Yingzhen in reality cannot be summarized by any certain value. It remains to be seen, then, how big the discrepancy is between Chen Yingzhen and her fictional idol Chen Yingzhen, and if Wang Anyi has ever noticed it and addressed it.

⁷² Huang, Wenqian, 2011. *Return, Nativist, and The Metaphors of Sickness-Chen Yingzhen's Reception and Derivation of Lu Xun's Reflections on Nationality in His Early Novels* 重返、鄉土、病的隱喻—陳映真早期小說對魯迅的國民性思考的接受與衍義. *Times Review*, (4), 56.

5. Conclusion

This thesis examines the profound literary influence of Taiwanese writer Chen Yingzhen during the early years of his career, spanning from 1959 to 1965.

In the first chapter, the thesis reexamines Chen Yingzhen's initial encounter with Lu Xun, arguing that Chen's reading of Lu Xun began with more than a simple narrative that he happened to read *Call to Arms*, however, his biological father's influence on him and his parental generation's acceptance of Lu Xun cannot be ignored. By conducting a comparative reading among Lu Xun's "Hometown", Lai He's "Going Home", and Chen Yingzhen's "Hometown", the thesis contends that Chen Yingzhen contributes to translating Lu Xun's pioneering narrative of intellectual returning home in post-war Taiwan and he delves into the identity confusion about the nationality and modernization of the younger generation. What's more, Chen emphasizes the special features and intergenerational influences of family relationships, establishing a "Father-Son" dynamic in his literary world. From here, the thesis finds out the shared experience of parental loss between Chen and Lu Xun, which connected them with a special emotional resonance and literary bond. Meanwhile, Chen Yingzhen's adaptations, such as using a young man as the narrator as well as extending the plot of the death of the father, also reflect his exploration of his own literary style.

Together, the influences from his three fathers shaped Chen's distinctive literary and ideological framework, setting him apart from his contemporaries. Therefore, in the

second chapter, the thesis compared Chen Yingzhen's novella "My Brother Kangxiong" with Yu Tiancong's "Light Rain", which shares similarities in both narrative and style. The analysis explores their acceptance of modernism during that period, with a focus on their expressive techniques, particularly symbolism, as well as their different portrayal of the devastated father. While looking into why the death of father is replaced by the suicide of the son, it points out that while Chen was introducing and absorbing Western modernism, he retained elements of the May Fourth tradition and remained rooted in realistic concern, neither being swallowed by nihilism nor deviating from leftist concern. Though writing those stories with a taste of modernist, Chen held a very clear, or at least clearer negative attitude towards modernism.

The 1970s and 1980s onwards, Chen Yingzhen himself emerged as a literary father figure, serving as an exemplar or ideal with answers for the subsequent generation of authors who followed in his footsteps. Hence, the final chapter investigates Wang Anyi's memoirs and also novellas "Utopian Verses" and "Internationale", and compares the image of Chen Yingzhen. It discovers that Wang Anyi's imagination of Chen Yingzhen as a literary idol or utopia in "Utopia Verses" derives from Wang Anyi's self-criticism and self-motivation during at time, out of her own desire for an "ideal literature" as a role model, her need for a literary idol. Chen Yingzhen's writings provided her with creative resources from Christianity, nativist, and Chinese perspectives, but what she learned was mostly based on one-sided reflections

and practices. Later, her love-alike affections for Chen Yingzhen turned into estrangement, disappointment, and negation, which was largely due to the changes in her evaluation or recognition of value as well. It continues to argue that the “fall of the father” of idol Chen, resulted from a subjective but disappointing choice made by a generation due to the lack of communication and the suspension of historical issues.

In conclusion, this thesis underscores the significance of the father in shaping Chen Yingzhen’s literary universe. His childhood experiences left a void and a sense of disorientation in his life due to the “loss” of his biological father, prompting him to seek solace, resolution, or fulfillment through his literary pursuits. For example, he turned to literary father figures, and he established “Father(-Son)” writing, to express his emotions, to find healing, and to navigate the complexities of his identity. Fortunately, Chen was able to receive invaluable literary guidance from his father, which empowered him to embrace and revitalize the shattered remnants of the May Fourth tradition. Moreover, Chen became a literary father for the new generation, like a beacon of inspiration for emerging writers, thereby perpetuating the legacy of intergenerational guidance and support in the literary realm.

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