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## INTELLECTUAL MEN AND WOMEN IN THE 1980s FICTION OF HUANG BEIJIA 黄蓓佳

李 Li Meng 李萌

In 1979, Shu Ting 舒婷 published the poem 'To the Oak' (Zhi xiangshu 致橡树), which would become widely popular among women in the 1980s as China was swept by a poetry-writing craze. The poem compares man to the oak and woman to the kapok: two trees strong enough to resist extreme weather, independent, yet potentially capable of supporting each other. This signified the ideal male-female relationship in the post-Mao period, when women desired not only loyalty but also independence and collaboration with men. In stark contrast, the works of Huang Beijia 黄蓓佳 (1955–) depict and consider far less ideal relationships between intellectual men and women.

Huang Beijia was born into a family of intellectuals. In the late 1970s, she began her writing career as a student of Chinese literature at Peking University. She became well known for her romances about intellectual men and women by the 1980s — the heyday of her writing for adult readers.<sup>1</sup> Her fiction was especially popular among college students. In most of her works, Huang, like many women writers in the 1980s, has 'women take the leading roles, [while] men play second fiddle', as Li Xiaojiang puts it.<sup>2</sup> Using gender theory and psychoanalysis, I offer a close reading of the unsympathetic representations of intellectual masculinities in Huang's fiction. In these texts, intellectual women embark on a journey to find a 'real' man and an ideal relationship, but ultimately fail. This overarching theme is what I call a 'utopia to dystopia' process; Huang's fiction depicts how male intellectuals transform from objects of desire in the eyes of intellectual women to undesirable figures because they fail to live up to female expectations. This process is sometimes mirrored in the self-identification of intellectual men in Huang's novels.

My study of the masculinity and femininity of Chinese intellectuals draws on the frequently cited methodologies of Susan Brownell and Jeffrey N. Was-

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<sup>1</sup> Huang Beijia is a prolific writer for both adults and children. However, her achievements in children's literature have long eclipsed her reputation as a writer for adults.

<sup>2</sup> Xiaojiang Li, 'Resisting While Holding the Tradition: Claims for Rights Raised in Literature by Chinese Women Writers in the New Period,' *Tamkang Review* 30.2 (1999): 99–109, at p.108.

- 3 Susan Brownell and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, 'Introduction: Theorizing Femininities and Masculinities,' in eds Brownell and Wasserstrom, *Chinese Femininities/Chinese Masculinities: A Reader* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p.6.
- 4 Brownell and Wasserstrom, 'Introduction', pp.5-6.
- 5 Zhong Xueping, *Masculinity Besieged?* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), p.208.
- 6 Kenneth C. Clatterbaugh, *Contemporary Perspectives on Masculinity: Men, Women, and Politics in Modern Society* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), p.3.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 Raewyn W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p.81.
- 10 Michael S. Kimmel, 'Masculinity as Homophobia,' in eds Michael S. Kimmel and Abby L. Ferbet, *Privilege: A Reader* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2003), p.164.

serstrom. These approaches rely on a now well-known distinction in Anglophone feminist theory and women's studies criticism between feminism focused on equality and feminism focused on difference. Neither of these methodologies treats 'woman' as an epistemic fact isolated from men or patriarchy. The first, concerned with the problem of inequality, advances a criticism of patriarchy. This approach, referred to as 'inequality-patriarchy', takes for granted the immutable existence of two biologically differentiated sexes and examines how power is distributed between the two.<sup>3</sup> The second methodology focuses on the issue of difference while highlighting the construction of gender. Assuming that 'man' and 'woman' are socially and culturally constructed categories that heavily influence the process of gender formation, practitioners of this second approach welcome the possibility of other gender categories, including gender identities that 'stand apart from or combine the elements of the two'; they celebrate gender blending/blurting behaviours and identities.<sup>4</sup> The second methodology, which is extended to discussions of *yin-yang* (陰陽 dark-light), *wen-wu* (literary-martial or 文武 scholar-soldier), and the masculinity of post-Mao intellectual men, can be productively applied to elucidate gendered roles in the Chinese context.

I argue that not only are the intellectual women in Huang's fiction frustrated by patriarchal power, they depict the multiplicity of available forms of gender identity while engaging in the 1980s popular public discourse around 'seeking a real man' (*xunzhao nanzihan* 寻找男子汉).<sup>5</sup> Their inability to find a real man is a key source of their estrangement: they want to find a real man but cannot. A focus on difference juxtaposes the women's journeys with a variety of intellectual men, broadly demarcated into two types: the fragile 'Other' and the father figure. Both types come to the fore during unpleasant moments in their relationships with women, leaving the question 'Where is the real man?' unanswered for Chinese intellectual women.

### *The Masculinity of Intellectual Men*

Kenneth C. Clatterbaugh states that the concept of masculinity consists of three elements: a field of gender roles constituted by 'a set of behaviours, attitudes, and conditions that are generally found in the men of an identifiable group';<sup>6</sup> a stereotype of masculinity, that is, 'a general idea of what most people consider to be the masculine gender role';<sup>7</sup> and a gender ideal, 'a widespread notion as to what the gender role for men should be'.<sup>8</sup> Along similar lines, Raewyn W. Connell distinguishes masculinities in a given society into the hegemonic, the subordinate, and the marginalised. She maintains that 'two types of relationship — hegemony, domination/subordination and complicity on the one hand, and marginalisation/authorisation on the other — provide a framework in which we can analyse specific masculinities'.<sup>9</sup> A number of scholars have drawn similar distinctions. Michael Kimmel, for instance, has mapped out the hegemonic definition of manhood, 'a man in power, a man with power, and a man of power'.<sup>10</sup>

Cultural difference is an important factor when considering the differences in ideas about gender, even dominant ideas about gender. In their study of the nuanced relationship between Chinese masculinity and its Western equivalent, Kam Louie and Louise Edwards put forward the following account of Chinese masculinity:

Chinese masculinity, then, is not a poorer, effeminate version of 'normal' Western masculinity. Nor is its 'difference' from the 'norm' derived from the domination of a more submissive, childlike (more easily oppressed) Chinese femininity. Chinese masculinity has evolved in a historical and cultural context that required no inspiration and gained no benefit from comparisons with the West. Moreover, current notions of the 'impotence' of Chinese men have developed within the 'Neo-orientalism' of the late twentieth century where money represents power, and maleness without economic might signifies impotence.<sup>11</sup>

From this perspective, Louie and Edwards put forward a Chinese masculinity based on the internal *wen-wu* paradigm, which is both a category and a method.<sup>12</sup> *Wen* 文, or refined masculinity, Louie argues, is symbolised by Confucius and the gentleman scholar-official. *Wu* 武, or martial masculinity highlights physical strength and skill.<sup>13</sup> Louie and Edwards consider *wen-wu* a useful distinction since this dyad applies exclusively to men. However, there is a similar paradigm that works within Chinese femininity even though *wen* was denied to women.<sup>14</sup> Using this conceptual framework as a way of exploring the relationship between Chinese and Western masculinities, Louie asserts that *wen* and *wu* were forms of unique maleness that evolved before and outside the Westernised gender schema in which 'Oriental' is associated with 'inferior' or 'exotic' and the scholar is associated with a more feminised masculinity.<sup>15</sup> Associated with education, *wen* symbolises the 'right to power', and as both Louie and Song Geng 宋耕 observe, the Chinese cultural élites' sense of superiority is manifested not only in political power but also in its leadership role in moral dimensions. This conjuncture is exemplified in the Confucian ideal of *junzi*-hood (君子 virtuous gentleman).<sup>16</sup>

In pre-modern Chinese high culture, the privileging of *wen* over *wu* was paramount in the construct of an ideal masculinity. For Louie, the *wen-wu* dichotomy stresses a marked difference between ideal male sexuality in Chinese contexts and that in Occidental ones.<sup>17</sup> Louie notes that *wen* virtues associated with male scholars dominate in countless pre-modern works, especially romances about talented scholars and beautiful women (*caizi jiaren* 才子佳人); one can trace the dominance of the *wen* virtues associated with male scholars. In his discussion of representations of intellectual men in Chinese culture, Song defines their masculinity as 'fragile', which has 'notoriously been considered as a symbol of "lack of masculinity" in Chinese culture by Westerners'.<sup>18</sup> Song deploys terms such as 'effeminate' to accentuate the frailty of male intellectuals in classical Chinese theatre. He offers a genealogical analysis of the literary tradition through which this refined and docile image has become a hallmark representation of intellectual masculinity. Wang Yuejin 王跃进 similarly argues that Chinese intellectuals have long been characterised in mainstream culture as manifesting gentleness and a sober state of mind.<sup>19</sup> These dominant images of ideal masculinity are not only important factors shaping the Huang's narratives and her characterisation of intellectual men, they also reflect the historical negotiation and renegotiation of gender roles in Chinese culture.

The historical context of Huang's fiction was an important transitional period for popular figures of Chinese masculinity. In the next section, I consider how the ideal masculinity of the Chinese intellectual was challenged or imbued with new expectations in Chinese feminist discourse in the 1980s and beyond.

11 Quoted in Song Geng, *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), p.10.

12 Kam Louie, *Chinese Masculinities in a Globalizing World* (London: Routledge, 2016), p.13.

13 Chris Berry, 'Stellar Transit: Bruce Lee's Body or Chinese Masculinity in a Transnational Frame,' in eds Fran Martin and Larissa Heinrich, *Embodied Modernities* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), p.244.

14 Kam Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.17.

15 Song, *The Fragile Scholar*, p.10.

16 Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*, pp.44-45, 95; Song, *The Fragile Scholar*, p.89.

17 Louie, 'Chinese Masculinity Studies in the Twenty-First Century: Westernizing, Easternizing and Globalizing Wen and Wu,' *International Journal for Masculinity Studies* 9.1 (2014): 18-29, at p.22.

18 Song, *The Fragile Scholar*, p.vii.

19 Wang Yuejin, 'Red Sorghum: Mixing Memory and Desire,' in ed. Chris Berry, *Perspectives on Chinese Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 1991), pp.85-86.

- 20 Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*, p.59.  
 21 Song, *The Fragile Scholar*, p.8.  
 22 Zhong, *Masculinity Besieged?*, pp.4-5.  
 23 *Ibid.*, p.40.  
 24 Zhu Aijun, *Feminism and Global Chineseness: The Cultural Production of Controversial Women Authors* (New York: Cambria Press, 2007), p.155.  
 25 Zhong, *Masculinity Besieged?*, p.5.  
 26 Zhu, *Feminism and Global Chineseness*, p.155.  
 27 Wang Deling 王德龄, *Chongdu bashiniandai 重读八十年代* (Beijing: Xuyuan chubanshe, 2009), p.3.  
 28 Quoted in Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*, p.45.  
 29 Zhong, *Masculinity Besieged?*, p.5.  
 30 Quoted in Michael S. Kimmel, *The Gender of Desire: Essays on Male Sexuality* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005), p.71.

### *Seeking the Real Man in 'New Era' literature*

The fragile stereotype of *wen* masculinity that had formed around the Confucian scholar was questioned and challenged in the 1980s.<sup>20</sup> A marked intellectual anxiety over the crisis of masculinity in China manifested in expressions such as 'seeking the real man' and 'searching for the root' (*xungen* 寻根, or male self). Song Geng observes that Chinese men in New-Era fiction are 'disappointedly described as weak, immature, selfish and impotent'.<sup>21</sup> This description also applies to Huang's representations of intellectual men.

In her pioneering work *Masculinity Besieged*, Zhong Xueping 钟雪萍 divides the literature of the 1980s into two major periods based on the debates over Chinese masculinity. In the early 1980s, a number of women writers such as Zhang Jie 张洁 and Zhang Xinxin 张辛欣 began drawing critical attention to men as gendered beings.<sup>22</sup> Their 'not-so-sympathetic representations' called the Chinese public's attention to a phenomenon known as *yinsheng yangshuai* 阴盛阳衰, meaning 'the prosperity of the feminine and the decline of the masculine'.<sup>23</sup> This development was evident in the obsession in literary circles with configuring male sexuality as suppressed, restricted, and disciplined.<sup>24</sup> The *yinsheng yangshuai* phenomenon led to the emergence of 'seeking-real-men literature',<sup>25</sup> which aimed to re-establish male sexual potency.<sup>26</sup> Representations of men in the works of writers such as Zhang Jie and Zhang Xinxin focus on their intellectual and psychological weaknesses rather than lack of physical masculinity. Huang Beijia's representations of intellectual men, however, represent the lack of masculinity in both regards.

Male writers also expressed concern over the masculinity of Chinese men. In 1985, Zhang Xianliang 张贤亮 published *Half of Man is Woman* (Nanren de yiban shi nüren 男人的一半是女人), which is considered a masterpiece of 1980s Chinese literature.<sup>27</sup> The Chinese intelligentsia thus embarked on debate and concern over sexuality, masculinity and femininity. In a different vein, some authors referred to more recent socialist masculinities that leaned more toward the *wu* side of male gender identity. For instance, Cao Wenxuan's 曹文轩 'real men' possess 'a cold exterior toughness, and a spirit that can be obliterated but not defeated'.<sup>28</sup> Male characters that model Cao's ideal are often found in early 1980s fiction by male writers such as Jiang Zilong 蒋子龙, Li Cunbao 李存葆, and Wang Meng 王蒙. In 1986, the 'search for the real man' sentiment was given full voice with the release of Sha Yexin's 沙叶新 drama entitled *Seeking the Real Man* (Xunzhao nanzihan 寻找男子汉), which reflected women's apprehensions about Chinese masculinity. The problem of masculinity thus contributed to the plight of Chinese intellectual women.

As both Wang Deling and Zhong Xueping observe, this nationwide sentiment had effects in other aspects of society in 1980s China. With the influx of Japanese and American films in the 1980s, many regarded the macho images of Sylvester Stallone in *Rocky*, Takakura Ken 高倉健 in *You Must Cross the River of Wrath* (Kimi yo fundo no kawa o watare 君よ憤怒の河を渉れ), and the tough Western Chinese frontiersmen represented in the 'root-seeking' fictions by Han Shaogong 韩少功 and Zheng Wanlong 郑万隆 as embodiments of 'real men'.<sup>29</sup> These images of masculinity all rely on physical virility, echoing the hegemonic definition of manhood in contemporary Western culture put forward by Robert Brannon and Deborah David.<sup>30</sup>

According to Zhong Xueping, the mid-1980s witnessed an explosion of literary experimentation where many male writers began to represent ‘themselves’ in their writing.<sup>31</sup> Zhong maintains ‘there is an ambivalence in the representation of men: they are considered “weak”, but they want to be (and it is thought that they should be) strong’.<sup>32</sup> Huang Beijia follows the same literary fashion in her representations of intellectual men: her male characters yearn for masculinity and anxiously search for it, eager to avoid or escape the modern stereotype of the Other. Within this dimension, intellectual men are represented as disempowered or disabled, either physically or spiritually.

### ‘What Should I Do?’: Intellectual Men as the Fragile Other

The intellectual men in Huang’s fiction, like their female counterparts, endeavour to assume a place in the phallogocentric symbolic order; at the very least they strive to become someone desirable to educated women. The endings of these stories are invariably tragic or traumatic: the women either leave their husbands/partners/lovers or are killed by them. The fragility of these men is exemplified by the helplessness of the question ‘What should I do?’ expressed by the male protagonist Haiyang in ‘Endless Mistakes’ (Yi cuo zai cuo 一错再错).<sup>33</sup> Drawing upon Song Geng’s view of pre-modern Chinese scholars as ‘the fragile’ and Wang Yiyan’s characterisation of intellectuals’ ‘soft’ masculinity, I will explore the image of intellectual men as the fragile Other in ‘Lane in the Rain’ (Yu xiang 雨巷), ‘The Balcony’ (Yangtai 阳台), ‘A May of Sadness’ (Youshang de wuyue 忧伤的五月), ‘Perfect Family’ (Meiman jiating 美满家庭), ‘Endless Mistakes’, and other stories.<sup>34</sup> During this transitional period in traditional China, *wen* masculinity had lost its popularity and the fragile scholar was no longer embodiment of the ideal masculinity.<sup>35</sup>

‘Lane in the Rain’ features characters whose livelihood is music — the father a famous composer and the son a student at a conservatory. The story foregrounds tensions between the father, the son (an unnamed protagonist), and the *femme fatale* (Xiaoshan). Zhong Mingcheng 钟名诚 portrays the character of Xiaoshan as a paragon of Huang’s intellectual women,<sup>36</sup> the winsome and charismatic ‘queen’ of the department, a talented, promising, and productive young musician, but also a *femme fatale*. The body of the son is central to his encounter with her, which drives the father–son tension close to patricide. The son’s biological mother, who died in his childhood, leaves a space taken up by Xiaoshan in ways that clearly echo Freud’s account of the Oedipus complex. This story, and others by Huang published in the 1980s and early 1990s, suggests the usefulness of ‘castration anxiety’ as a conceptual tool for reading her stories and her concerns around intellectual men.<sup>37</sup>

The central narrative trajectory of ‘Lane in the Rain’ can be summarised as the male protagonist’s anxious searching and waiting for Xiaoshan on the day of a Herbert von Karajan concert.<sup>38</sup> The story relies on two strategies to portray his intellectual masculinity. One reveals the son’s fragility due to his attachment to Xiaoshan. He falls prey to her charms during his gloomy childhood in the years of the Cultural Revolution while separated from both his father, who was then being persecuted, and his deceased mother. As Xiaoshan assumes the place of the mother, she sheds light on his memories of childhood loneliness. Upon enrolling at the conservatory, he is overjoyed at encountering Xiaoshan once more. His subjectivity, his very sense of self, has become grounded in her acknowledgement of him, and he glorifies her as ‘spring wind, summer rain, autumn dew and winter sunshine’.<sup>39</sup> Preparing to

31 Zhong, *Masculinity Besieged?*, p.5.

32 *Ibid.*, p.5

33 Please refer to the appendix for abbreviations, dates of first publication and sources of the primary texts used.

34 Wang Yiyan, ‘Mr Butterfly in *Defunct Capital*: ‘Soft’ Masculinity and (Mis)engendering China,’ in eds Kam Louie and Morris Low, *Asian Masculinities: The Meaning and Practice of Manhood in China and Japan* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p.41.

35 Louie, *Chinese Masculinities in a Globalizing World*, p.10

36 Zhong Mingcheng 钟名诚, ‘Huang Beijia yanjiu shuping’ 黄蓓佳研究述评, *Journal of Bijie University* 26.5 (2008): 74–78, at p.78.

37 In my telephone conversation with Huang Beijia, 24 August 2011, she stated that her novellas published in the early 1990s could be deemed as typical of the 1980s.

38 The name of the male protagonist, the son, is not given. He is referred as ‘He’.

39 Huang Beijia 黄蓓佳, *Youshang de wuyue: Huang Beijia zhongduopian xiaoshuo zixuanji* 忧伤的五月: 蓓佳中短篇小说自选集 (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 1996), p.59.

40 *Ibid.*, p.66.

41 *Ibid.*, p.63.

42 Quoted in José Brunner, *Freud and the Politics of Psychoanalysis* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p.152.

43 Huang, *Youshang de wuyue*, pp.64–65.

44 *Ibid.*, p.61.

45 *Ibid.*, p.73.

46 Brunner, *Freud and the Politics of Psychoanalysis*, p.153.

tell her the news that a famous conductor spoke positively of his symphonic poem, he feels it is ‘the first time in all these years that he is fully confident to face her’.<sup>40</sup> But Xiaoshan’s unexpected indifference to his news leaves him embarrassed and self-critical once more.

Another strategy Huang uses to present this protagonist’s masculinity is the other side of his Oedipal drama — jealousy towards his father and a fantasy of attempted patricide. The son’s hostility towards his father increases when he learns of Xiaoshan’s admiration for him. The relationship between Xiaoshan and the father taunts him: ‘Father shelters me from the wind, the rain, and at the same time sunshine’.<sup>41</sup> The protagonist constantly compares himself to his father, and, unable to claim Xiaoshan, ultimately fails to take his father’s place. This is a clear representation of the Freudian image of the father: ‘In the son’s eyes his father embodies every unwillingly tolerated social restraint; his father prevents the son from exercising his will, from early sexual pleasure, and, where there is common property in the family, from enjoying it’.<sup>42</sup> After Xiaoshan leaves their home, the father starts improvising on the piano. This scene, narrated by the son, suggests that in that moment the father is thinking of Xiaoshan:

His father was right. Xiaoshan was like a piece of piano music. This metaphor was far more accurate than any the son had thought of ... it should have been him not his father who composed an impromptu on Xiaoshan. Why was his father able to so quickly capture her image while he could not? Xiaoshan had been on his mind for so many years.<sup>43</sup>

The son tries to escape the father’s symbolic order by ‘not being his accessory’,<sup>44</sup> rather by making Xiaoshan his lover and taking her under his control. Both attempts, however, remain unsuccessful.

The father’s performance of the impromptu piece occurs on the same day the protagonist is desperately searching for Xiaoshan. After the concert, the son spots Xiaoshan and his father together, confirming their relationship. At that moment, he realises his attempt to take his father’s place has failed. Overtaken by an indescribable feeling of frustration and anxiety, he succumbs to the power of his father by resuming his subordination to him. His overwhelming sense of disempowerment can be interpreted as a form of castration. In the final scene, the bewildered son stares at his father’s shadow and begins to make a comparison:

Father walks across the street towards them in a hurry. The street lamps shed orange light on him. The son is totally covered in his father’s shadow. All of a sudden, he cannot help imagining himself standing in the position of his Father. If he were there, would his shadow be big enough to cover Xiaoshan’s shadow, too? <sup>45</sup>

Again, the passage depicts an expression of Oedipal tendencies. Overshadowed by the father’s overwhelming power, the son makes a clear attempt to exert an equally powerful influence on the female protagonist, who is, to him, a mature lover and mother figure. The son is in fact destined to ‘remain all his life bowed beneath his father’s authority and he is unable to transfer his libido to an outside sexual object’.<sup>46</sup> Huang’s larger strategy in ‘Othering’ intellectual men is to represent them as physically and spiritually disabled. This representation is congruent with Song’s observation on the discourse of the fragile scholar in traditional Chinese high culture as ‘weakness, fragility and vulnerability in both physical and emotional dimensions ... that

gives scholars a rather effeminate image of the dominant Western gender discourse'.<sup>47</sup>

Another literary work of this era, 'The Balcony', features a physically disabled intellectual man, Li Yu, who is subordinate to his father, a professor of vocal studies in the prime of his life. Li Yu is marginalised and ignored by his parents, and the story recounts his failed attempts to gain their attention. By treating him as both physically traumatised and powerless, the intellectual parents deny him the expression of his spiritual needs and dismiss his intellectual qualities. When the father hires his student Qingqing as a housemaid, the young woman seduces Li Yu, enabling him to find a new awareness of his own masculinity. Though still trapped by his sense of inferiority, his first (and only) sexual experience is used to compensate for his physical deficiency:

Li Yu looked away from Qingqing. Staring at the floor, he muttered, 'We shouldn't bother fighting. You are prettier, healthier, smarter and happier. You are stronger. So you have to tolerate my bad temper.'<sup>48</sup>

Li Yu insists that he 'was born a loser. It's my fate' and that Qingqing has allowed him to experience 'what a man should be' and thank her for 'making me complete'.<sup>49</sup> At the same time, however, Qingqing, an accomplished singer, is also seducing Li Yu's powerful father, in the hope that he will help her establish a successful singing career. The jealous son secretly observes his father flirting with Qingqing during her vocal lessons, but he remains unable to subvert the power of the father.

It is worth noting that in both 'Lane in the Rain' and 'The Balcony' the fathers are intellectual men. The sons are subservient fragile Others and their fragility reflects castration anxiety, which helps establish the *yinsheng yangshuai* phenomenon in New-Era literature. In both novels, the sons seek to gain power through women but fail. According to Freud, the male child fears that he will never be powerful and experiences the dramatic crisis of realising that the mother, too, is 'castrated'.<sup>50</sup> She signals a kind of threat but has no real power because she lacks a phallus, which is the property of the father. In both stories, it is the ones with a 'phallus', the fathers, who possess the power to claim domination over women which the intellectual sons compete for but fail to win.

Employing psychoanalytic terms in the analysis of Huang's fiction is not, as is often the case with psychoanalytic literary criticism, a matter of reading between the lines. Huang is direct in her dramatic conjunction of events and images that have been central to psychoanalytic theories of subjectivity, gender, and power. The character Fang Fu in 'A May of Sadness' is a vivid example of the Other. Fang Fu appears at the story's outset as an ideal intellectual man, physically and intellectually refined. His childhood was marked by the trauma of sexual abuse by his widowed mother. The mother eases her sexual starvation by exhibiting her nude body to her young son. This oppressive female desire haunts him into his adulthood, even after his mother remarries. The trauma results in impotency, his distancing himself from women, and his hatred of the female body until his late twenties, when he meets Xiaocong who he subsequently marries.

The sexually experienced Xiaocong stares at Fang Fu with both sympathy and contempt when he kisses her hand passionately without realising he has a visible erection. She cannot help belittling him for being so ridiculous and inexperienced. She 'feels disgusted whenever thinking of Fang Fu's sexual



Figure 1

Huang Beijia.

Photo: baike.com

47 Song, *The Fragile Scholar*, p.38.

48 Huang Beijia, 'Yangtai' 阳台, *Renmin wenxue* 人民文学 1 (1989): 143-68, at p.160.

49 *Ibid.*, pp.160-61.

50 See Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.197.

- 51 Huang, *Youshang de wuyue*, p.328.  
 52 *Ibid.*, p.325.  
 53 *Ibid.*, p.327.  
 54 Quoted in Zhong, *Masculinity Besieged?*, p.208.  
 55 Zhong, *Masculinity Besieged?*, p.30.  
 56 Huang, *Youshang de wuyue*, p.333.  
 57 *Ibid.*, p.497.  
 58 *Ibid.*  
 59 Ueno Chizuko, *Yan nü: riben de nü xing xianwu* 厌女: 日本的女性嫌恶 translated by Steve Yang (Taipei: Unitas Publishing Co. Ltd, 2015), p.32. In the same paragraph, Ueno argues that this is also the way a son becomes a man like his father.  
 60 Ueno, *Yan nü*, p.34.  
 61 Ding Zijiang 丁子江, *Zhongmei hunlian de xingxue fenxi* 中美婚恋的性学分析 (Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe, 2006), p.109.  
 62 Zhong, *Masculinity Besieged?*, p.40.

vacuity'.<sup>51</sup> The first days of their marriage reveal Fang Fu's 'shameful sexual failure'.<sup>52</sup> Confronted with Xiaocong's body, he cannot help being overtaken by traumatic memories of his mother's naked body. After their first successful sexual intercourse, the ecstatic Fang Fu submits himself to Xiaocong, 'taking her as his supreme goddess'.<sup>53</sup> Xiaocong takes on the symbolic position of the mother, claiming dominance over Fang Fu, who is sexually inexperienced.

A disastrous train accident extends Fang Fu's disablement into the physical realm as he becomes paralysed and diagnosed with severe cranial injuries. At this stage, Fang Fu's condition could exemplify what Lung-kee Sun calls 'wombnisation' (*mutaihua* 母胎化).<sup>54</sup> Sun regards Chinese men's tendency to be emasculated as ubiquitous, and, taking a Freudian psychoanalytical approach, he describes them as 'not yet weaned'.<sup>55</sup> While specific events have led to Fang Fu's condition, he is also represented as undeveloped in this sense: 'All in all he is a feeble and helpless child, a child with great lack of inner balance'.<sup>56</sup> Believing he is irredeemably defective, Fang Fu ends his life.

Another work that starkly contrasts intellectual men and women is 'Perfect Family', in which Zhiyan, a university lecturer, illustrates the link between scholarly fragility and wombnisation. Zhiyan discovers that he has a brain tumour, and his fiancée, Xiaoyu, returns from the US to take care of him. Zhiyan survives the surgery, but suspects his wife is having an affair with an American professor, 'losing himself in the miserable thought that he is a loser. Whenever he is about to lose his temper, he almost faints. So, does that mean he is forever disabled?'<sup>57</sup>

Xiaoyu's termination of an unexpected pregnancy compels Zhiyan to question her fidelity. He throws doubt on her nonchalance about the abortion, suspecting that she has already undergone several in the US. He acts like a spoiled child and tries to stop her from returning there. When this manipulation fails, he interprets her sarcastic smile as representing contempt.<sup>58</sup> His failed attempt to control Xiaoyu deeply frustrates Zhiyan. On the evening before her departure, he turns on the gas, believing that suicide is the only way he can keep Xiaoyu from leaving him for a place where he would be unable to survive due to his fragility.

Failures in constructing male subjectivity are expressed in the suicidal acts of both intellectual men. According to Ueno Chizuko 上野千鶴子, 'to become a man' signifies 'the ownership of a woman (the sexual object)'. In so doing, man becomes a sexual subject.<sup>59</sup> Tellingly, the two intellectual men deny their wives the status of sexual subjects. Rather, they themselves become the Other or the object in the end, greatly damaging their male pride. The wives, therefore, become sexual subjects, either by exhibiting sexual and physical dominance or rejecting their identification with the image of the child-bearing machine that the husbands hold up. Although no record exists that shows Huang has read the works of Ueno, the quote 'he who is unable to tame his wife should not be called a man', from Ueno's book the title of which translates as *Woman-Haters: Misogyny in Japan*, seems equally applicable in understanding the tragic endings in both 'A May of Sadness' and 'The Perfect Family'.<sup>60</sup>

Both stories resonate with the *yinsheng yangshuai* phenomenon that greatly damaged the self-esteem of Chinese men at the time.<sup>61</sup> This phenomenon emerged after the Cultural Revolution and, along with the 'seeking real men' phenomenon, was echoed in literature of the 1980s.<sup>62</sup> Grounded in traditional Chinese ideas of cosmic order, *yin* and *yang* are two quintes-

sential concepts whose harmonious co-existence is thought to delineate all manner of oppositions and complementarities in the physical and spiritual worlds.<sup>63</sup> *Yin* and *yang* have endless sets of interpretations, described in language using terms such as ‘heaven and earth’. The *yin-yang* binary is often equated to the dualistic paradigm of femininity and masculinity in Western thought. However, scholars such as Li-Hsiang Lisa Rosenlee and Kam Louie have questioned the conventional equation of *yin-yang* with femininity and masculinity, arguing that the former is actually ‘correlative, co-determining and complementary through and through’. Zhong Xueping posits that regardless of the complementary and indivisible nature of *yin* and *yang*, the use of these terms in the 1980s was in ways directly correlated to sexual difference, linking woman (rather than the feminine) to *yin* and man (rather than the masculine) directly with *yang*.<sup>64</sup>

Even if the complementarity of *yin* and *yang* can be seen as analogous to gender complementarity, female writers and critics have pointed out the pervasive presence of gender inequality in Maoist and post-Mao China. Zhong argues that:

[t]he issue is not whether or not men are ‘weak’ and suffer from being ‘feminized’. Rather, it is that men are still more powerful than women, and that male chauvinism is still very much a part of Chinese male subjectivity and is still dominant in Chinese society at large.<sup>65</sup>

Huang’s fiction, however, presents a different case. The interaction between these male intellectuals foregrounds male anxiety over the (perceived) ascendancy of women’s power. Huang’s works specifically illustrate this anxiety and potential for disempowerment when female counterparts appear to be physically, sexually, and intellectually powerful. In many of her stories, the man’s weakness is subjected to female scrutiny.

In ‘Tender is the Autumn’ (Qiuse yiren 秋色宜人), the female protagonist An Qian is under pressure to finalise a daunting report on a young high-achieving male scholar at her university who survived a suicide attempt. Her audacity in revealing the dark side of the institutional system in which they both work, as well as her advocacy for social attention to the mental states of intellectuals earns her more scathing criticism than sympathy and support among her colleagues and peers. Her boyfriend, Lin Lin, believes the gossip about the impropriety of her work and ends their relationship. He suspects that she has feelings for the scholar she is meant to be reporting on and fears that gossip about An will have a detrimental impact on his own reputation. An’s power jeopardises Lin’s power as well as his dignity and symbolic authority in a patriarchal society.<sup>66</sup> His fury towards An points to his anxiety over this threat of disempowerment.

Paired with the much-discussed fragility of the scholarly man, this form of Chinese masculinity is also concerned with power and domination. The possibility, threat, and experience of disempowerment trouble many of the intellectual men in Huang’s fiction. Their power is manifested in sexual control, financial security, and political influence and status brought by career achievement.

‘Journey in Winter’ (Dong zhi lü 冬之旅) relates the vicissitudes of disempowerment for artist Ying Tianming. Ying’s status as an intellectual is acknowledged and thus authorised by people in power. A university council member who loves art admires Ying’s talent and appoints him director of the

63 Potuan Chang, Yiming Liu and Thomas F. Cleary, *Understanding Reality: A Taoist Alchemical Classic* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1987), p.3.

64 Li-Hsiang Lisa Rosenlee, *Confucianism and Women: A Philosophical Interpretation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), p.48. See also Kam Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*, p.239. Zhong, *Masculinity Besieged?*, p.40.

65 Zhong, *Masculinity Besieged?*, p.40.

66 Lim Chin Chown, ‘Castration Parody and Male Castration: Eileen Chang’s Female Writing and Her Anti-Patriarchal Strategy,’ in eds Peng-Hsiang Chen and Whitney Crothers Dilley, *Critical Studies: Feminism and Femininity in Chinese Literature* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), p.137.

67 Huang, *Youshang de wuyue*, p.291.

68 *Ibid.*, p.293.

69 John L. Osburg, 'Engendering Wealth: China's New Rich and the Rise of an Elite Masculinity' (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2009), p.108.

70 Zhong, *Masculinity Besieged?*, p.214.

71 Ueno, *Yan nü*, p.29.

72 *Ibid.*, p.29

university art troupe. With his support, Ying, a dynamic graduate of theatre studies, writes an ambitious musical titled *Song of May Fourth* (Wusi zhi ge 五四之歌). The musical is a tremendous success and the troupe organises a triumphant nationwide tour during the winter holiday. However, Ying's success ends abruptly after the tour with the appointment of a new Youth League director, who manages to get Ying removed from his directorial position. Feeling disempowered after losing the opportunity for career development as well as his reputation as a rising playwright, Ying is assigned minor tasks and languishes in depression. His mistreatment by the new director leads to Ying resigning from his post. His damaged pride and fragile self-confidence are noted in his resignation letter, which states that 'due to the current university leaders' ignorance about artistic activities, I have lost my interest in this position'.<sup>67</sup>

Ying's wife's sexual transgression only exacerbates his sense of disempowerment. Upon her admission to having the extra-marital affair, Ying throws porcelain at her and accidentally kills her. In a closing comment, the narrator expresses regret at this development, inquiring about the motivation for Ying's violence:

Ying was never a heartless person. Why does he resort to violence in response to Hui's unfaithfulness? ... To me, if that successful nationwide tour never happened, he would not have turned violent later. Indeed, that tour left him with triumphant and remarkable memories. Ying is a perfectionist. Hence, he cannot tolerate being significant only once. Even when his popularity at the university began to fade, he always meant to stay clear of sorrow and frustration.<sup>68</sup>

It is worth noting that in the original text, *shizhonggan* 失重感, literally 'feeling weightless', is translated here as 'being a nobody'. It can also be understood as 'being insignificant'. I interpret this as a response to disempowerment, a sense of being insignificant under the symbolic weight of his reputation. John L. Osburg draws a close connection between reputation and power in Chinese elite masculinity. He argues that in the course of building a reputation, a form of power is cultivated that transcends the material and institutional foundation in wealth or bureaucratic positions.<sup>69</sup> This connection between reputation and power resonates with the disempowerment of Ying Tianming in 'Perfect Family'.

Intellectual men's struggle for power is also seen in 'Room of Roses' (Meigui fangjian 玫瑰房间). These power relations mirror what Zhong Xueping calls 'the strong desire for masculinity', manifested in competition for power.<sup>70</sup> According to Ueno, men enjoy affirmation, attention and praise from other men when vying for power in the male homosocial world.<sup>71</sup> Man's success in this male homosocial world is underpinned by power, wealth and honour, culminating in the ownership of women.<sup>72</sup> 'Room of Roses' features two friends, Dali and Li Xiaoming, both junior academic staff competing for an associate professorship. Dali sees the promotion as an opportunity to gain power over his intellectual wife, Xinyue, who is desperately applying to go abroad for further education and a better material life. For Dali, the promotion would make him 'an ideal husband (a real man)' who can better provide for his wife financially, bring material satisfaction, and bring the family out of hardship. Despite his great efforts he is ultimately unsuccessful at stopping Xinyue from leaving him to go to the US, failing to demonstrate power and assert control over his wife.

Still, the senior department staff regard Dali as the most promising candidate, holding more academic achievements than Li. Dali and Li promise to vote for each other in the competition for associate professorship, but on the day of the election, Li is overtaken by 'a sneaking evil thought'.<sup>73</sup> Driven by his lust for power, Li votes for himself instead and his vote wins him the promotion. Feeling guilty, he fears that 'he will never rest in peace' for his 'dishonourable act'.<sup>74</sup> According to the narrator,

Now both the loser and winner suffer. The latter, however, suffers from a more immense trauma as his evil conscience will be forever disdained. The title of Associate Professor is to him a cangue. He will never live in peace.<sup>75</sup>

This scenario depicts intellectual men as constantly under threat. Dali is disempowered by his lack of promotion, whereas Li is disempowered by his devious ascent to power by which he becomes a traitor. His betrayal also makes him infamous in the department. The power struggle between Dali and Li bears similarities to Song Geng's discussion of fame and homosocial male bonds in the Confucian tradition. Song considers manhood homosocial because of the need for men, especially men groomed to serve the state, to prove themselves to each other. Achieving fame in those circles affirmed one's masculinity, and in the Confucian tradition, loyalty and righteousness are linked and celebrated.<sup>76</sup> Song's discussion here is a clear reminder of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's description of a special relationship between male homosocial desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power. Such a relationship is founded on an inherent and potentially active structural congruence.<sup>77</sup> In this sense, Li fails to meet the ideal standard of manhood, and his fall from grace is another form of disempowerment.

As illustrated in these stories, these unsympathetic representations of intellectual men are hardly attractive to intellectual women. Besides, the fragile Chinese intellectual men are frequently represented as undesirable in the context of male homosociality. The 'Othering' of Chinese intellectual men was prevalent in popular literature and films during the 1980s and 90s.<sup>78</sup> Confronted with gender norms from non-Chinese cultural contexts, Chinese intellectual men were distraught with the possibility of losing male pride brought by 'soft' masculinity.<sup>79</sup> However, Huang's intellectual women rarely respond sympathetically to men's distraught feelings. In these stories, fragility is the only feature that these men share with the utopian knowledge élites in the traditional theatrical classics. No longer upholding the utopian image, these men are represented as dystopian Others to the intellectual women. In the following section, an analysis of Huang's other trope, representing intellectual men as the father figure, is discussed.

### 'The One I Used to Admire': De-masking the Father Figure

Huang's representations of intellectual men who might be considered father figures are more senior, both in social status and age, and more powerful in intellect and performance than the intellectual women within the same stories. According to Joan Riviere, it is from the father figure(s) that the intellectual women seek attention and affirmation by means of flirting and developing sexual relationships.<sup>80</sup> The needs of intellectual women in their relationships with the father figures include 'first, direct reassurance of the nature of compliments about her performance; secondly, and more

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p.92.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p.102.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Song, *The Fragile Scholar*, p.173.

<sup>77</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p.25.

<sup>78</sup> See, for example, the protagonist Gao Wen in Huang Jianxin's 黄建新 film *Stand up Straight, Don't Bend Over!* (Zhanzhiluo biepxia 站直咯, 别趴下).

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>80</sup> Quoted in Joan Riviere, 'Womanliness as Masquerade,' in ed. Athol Hughes, *The Inner World and Joan Riviere: Collected Papers 1920-1958* (London: Karnac Books, 1991), p.92.

81 *Ibid.*

82 Huang, *Youshang de wuyue*, p.187.

83 *Ibid.*, pp.264–65.

84 *Ibid.*, p.204.

85 *Ibid.*, p.224.

important, indirect reassurance of the nature of sexual attentions from these men'.<sup>81</sup> These yearnings are explicitly expressed on occasion by the women in Huang's stories.

The charismatic father figure informs the intellectual woman's fantasy of an ideal man. Huang's works feature many scenes in which intellectual women strive to create strong spiritual bonds in their relationships with father figures. Such bonds are the principle focus of their identity and orientation in love and marriage. The 'utopia to dystopia' process is featured in these texts in terms of intellectual woman's identification with the father figure. When the father figure's charismatic camouflage is gradually dismantled during this process, their dystopian natures emerge.

Sexual transgression is used by Huang to configure the relationship between intellectual men and women in a number of stories. The father figure initiates and encourages the sexual transgression of the woman, who is disconcerted by her situation. The father figure camouflages himself as a saviour, but fails to fulfill that role, while the expectations of the female counterpart draw her to him. These expectations also draw her into a kind of bewilderment as she must now negotiate her ambivalence about dominant social values.

The father figures make a grand entrance, radiating charisma that conceals some dark side in their masculinity that will lead to the women's disillusionment. This disillusionment usually culminates in trauma or death. Over the course of these narratives, the intellectual man is first presented as a 'real man' who should uphold an ideal society but is later revealed to be a fraud. For example, in 'Midsummer Night' (Zhongxiaye 仲夏夜), a famous violinist's performance leaves a lasting impression on Mengling, a violin student. The narrator describes his performance thus:

He leaned his head to the violin with such elegant but unthinking grace. Throughout the performance, he kept his eyes closed, just like a praying Christian. Only his trembling lips revealed his surging passion ... Everyone in the music hall remained stock still, as if being mesmerised by Satan.<sup>82</sup>

The Satan metaphor suggests just how charismatic and seductive the father figure is. Since Satan is the embodiment of evil, this foreshadows the trauma the female protagonist will face. Another charismatic intellectual is the poet in 'Journey in Winter', who is described as 'a brilliant star among Chinese poets'.<sup>83</sup>

In both these novellas, the father figure's charisma enables them to become mentors to intellectual women, but they cast a shadow, dominating the desire of the women who position themselves as their students and devotees. For example, in 'Midsummer Night',

The violinist leans forward toward her, speaking to her in an amicable way as if she were a child. Under his gaze, she finds it hard to breathe and feels as vulnerable as a baby.<sup>84</sup>

On transitioning from a mentor to a lover, the father figure arouses the women's sexual desire. In doing so, the intellectual women further submit themselves to the *homme fatale*. In 'Midsummer Night', the violinist initiates Mengling's first sexual experience, saying that he 'just wants to make her happy'.<sup>85</sup>

‘Don’t be afraid, my dear little girl. Just lie there and don’t move, hmm?’ He whispers. He touches her forehead, then runs his fingers down over her eye, cheeks, lips and chin. ‘You are so lovely, as pure as an infant. None of the many girls I know has such a wonderful face as yours. You touch people’s hearts when you look at them. I can’t describe the feeling, my girl ...’ His fingers linger along her neck, shoulders, breast, abdomen, to her thighs. She begins to tremble like a piece of swaying silk, like the blue waves caressed by the ocean breeze.<sup>86</sup>

86 *Ibid.*, p.223

87 *Ibid.*, p.226.

88 *Ibid.*, p.269.

89 Huang Beijia, ‘Jiexin huayuan’ 街心花园, *Zhongguozuojia* 中国作家 4 (1987): 146–52, at p.151.

These father figures leave an indelible mark on the bodies of the women that haunts their intellectual trajectories and sexual lives. A similar scene in ‘Journey in Winter’ shows Hui beginning a sexual relationship with the poet who ‘seduces, or arouses her sexual desire’.<sup>87</sup> He brings enlightenment to the intellectual female body and *jouissance* to her intellect or spirit. But this moment of enlightenment and corporeal and spiritual awakening does not last. The father figures have disappeared by the end of both stories, leaving the intellectual female protagonists to deal with the consequences of their sexual attention alone. Both Mengling and Hui experience pregnancy and must undergo an abortion. At her university, Hui becomes ‘someone dishonoured because of her premarital sexual relationship and abortion’.<sup>88</sup> The father figure proves unreliable as a saviour, to the devastation of the female lives he touches. Ultimately, the father figures seduce the intellectual women into transgressing the symbolic order and abandon them to the abyss of punishment.

Written from the first person perspective of a high school girl, ‘The Promenade Garden’ (Jiexin huayuan 街心花园) highlights the Janus-faced masculinity of the father figure as a sign of the intellectual woman’s estrangement from the dominant social order and of her self-doubt and self-criticism. The story intertwines encounters between the two protagonists: the high school girl (the narrator) and the handsome scholar known only as ‘he’. She falls for his gentle manner and fine taste in art, finding herself in ‘blissful harmony’ whenever she is with him, but the father figure aura quickly fades when his wife appears.<sup>89</sup> The female protagonist comes to realise that the man takes other lovers to escape from his unhappy marriage. In the coda, the man kills his wife and forces the narrator to falsely testify that she witnessed the wife die of a heart attack. The death of the wife also marks the end of the narrator’s relationship with him and crushes her idealised vision of intellectual men.

A similar strategy for de-masking the father figure is adopted in ‘A May of Sadness’ (Youshang de wuyue 忧伤的五月). The story overtly adopts the narrative arc of *Jane Eyre*. An enthusiastic *Jane Eyre* reader, the protagonist Xiaocong always imagined her ideal lover as Edward Rochester, a mature married man who knows women well. While maintaining a relationship with her long-term university boyfriend, Xiaocong falls secretly in love with the charismatic father figure, Weijun, a married man who is a Rochester figure. Weijun’s seduction leads to her sexual transgression. However, Weijun’s charisma disappears when Xiaocong finally recognises that his love for her is actually an excuse to escape his marriage to a wife with mental illness (an allusion to Bertha Mason). The utopian vision of love has become dystopian.

In these four cases, the powerful and charismatic father figure steps out of the intellectual woman’s utopian vision of ‘the real man’ to reveal his dark side. To the dismay of the intellectual woman, the ideal or ‘real’ man does not exist.

90 Huang Beijia, 'Qunian dongtian zai jiaowai'  
去年冬天在郊外, *Shanghai wanxexue* 上海文学  
7 (1982): 12-23, at p.23.

91 *Ibid.*

### Conclusion

I would like to close with an example from 'Winter in the Outskirts' (Qunian dongtian zai jiaowai 去年冬天在郊外) — one of Huang's most celebrated romantic novellas. The story explores the relationships between Laiya, a student of Chinese literature and a promising writer, and two intellectual men: 'Dr X', a pedantic PhD student fully dedicated to his academic pursuits, and Fanyin, a brilliant music student with whom she develops a spiritual bond. In her relationship with 'Dr X', Laiya perceives no space to demonstrate her talent as a writer; whenever they are together, he talks about nothing but his own research. In contrast, Fanyin admires her literary talents and they inspire each other to write. Fanyin infuses his love for Laiya into mesmerising poetry and seems to be an ideal suitor. But Laiya remains dissatisfied with both Dr X and Fanyin. She breaks up with the indifferent Dr X but is not prepared to enter into a new romantic relationship with Fanyin. For Fanyin, Laiya is 'an unattainable phantom'.<sup>90</sup> She is unable to draw closer to him and can only 'be an outsider to him forever'.<sup>91</sup> Laiya's self-orientation as an outsider, an observer of her ideal lover, bespeaks her estrangement within relationships.

Distance and detachment haunts every unpleasant moment in these heterosexual relationships between intellectual men and women in Huang's works. Negotiating between Confucian, Maoist, and contemporary discourses on gender roles, Huang's intellectual women disengage wilfully from the models of women imposed in these discourses. In the meantime, their male counterparts exhibit their own estrangement through their failed attempts to become *real* men.

Referring back to Shu Ting's 'To the Oak', one could interpret her key image of the oak and the kapok standing together as signifying that their roots are entwined below ground. This represents what Shu Ting calls 'great love' (*weida de aiqing* 伟大的爱情). In Huang's representations of heterosexual relationships, however, the relationship between men and women usually results in mutual estrangement and disappointment. As a corollary, the women's journey in search of a *real* man, the men's becoming *real* men, and the establishment of the *ideal* heterosexual relationship all remain incomplete. The message in these texts seems evident: there is no such thing as an ideal relationship or a *real* man.

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## Appendix: Huang Beijia's Stories Discussed in this Article

Chinese Title	English Title	Date of First Publication	Source
雨巷	'Lane in the Rain'	1981	<i>Youshang de wuyue: Huang Beijia zhongduapian xiaoshuo zixuanji</i> 忧伤的五月: 黄蓓佳中短篇小说自选集 (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 1996)
去年冬天在郊外	'Winter in the Outskirts'	July 1982	<i>Shanghai wanxenxue</i> 7 (1982): 12-23
玫瑰房间	'Room of Roses'	1984	<i>Meigui fangjian</i> (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 1995)
秋色宜人	'Tender is Autumn'	1986	<i>Youshang de wuyue</i>
仲夏夜	'Mid-summer Night'	May 1986	<i>Ibid.</i>
街心花园	'The Promenade Garden'	April 1987	<i>Zhongguozuojia</i> 4 (1987): 146-52
冬之旅	'Journey in Winter'	Nov. 1987	<i>Youshang de wuyue</i>
阳台	'The Balcony'	Jan. 1989	<i>Renmin wenxue</i> 1 (1989): 143-68
忧伤的五月	'May of Sadness'	1989	<i>Youshang de wuyue</i>
一错再错	'Endless Mistakes'	1990	<i>Ibid.</i>
美满家庭	'Perfect Family'	1990	<i>Ibid.</i>

