

Different Strategies of Self-Confirmation Wang Shuo's Appeal to His Readers

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ABSTRACT

Popular Beijing writer Wang Shuo became especially well-known in 1988 when four of his novellas were adapted by film studios in China. As the most frequently cited example of Chinese Post Modernism, Wang Shuo's writing reworks both serious and light literature and makes no attempt to cover the artificiality of his own work. However, rather than challenging Chinese authority in his writing, he chooses instead to provide momentary comic relief to his audiences, which ultimately reinforces ideological authority. Rather than being a post-modernist in the sense of resistance or challenge to an assumed reality, Wang Shuo's work is much closer in spirit to Matei Calinescu's definition of kitsch.

KEY WORDS

Postmodernism
Encoding

kitsch
"Wang Shuo phenomenon"



In 1988, four of the young writer Wang Shuo's novellas were adapted into movies by different film studios in China. With public attention so unprecedentedly focused on one author, a thirty-year old city slicker in Beijing, the year was dubbed "Wang Shuo Year" in Chinese cultural circles. As the works of the "hooligan writer" remained bestsellers and as Wang Shuo continued to help create hits in TV serials, the "Wang Shuo Phenomenon" became even more widespread. In 1992 *Selected Works of Wang Shuo* came out in four volumes, making the author the first writer whose works were published in such a collection in post-Mao China.

Faced with Wang Shuo's immense popularity with the reading and viewing public, cultural and literary critics in China have dealt with him in different ways. Old-style moralists have cranked out a spate of books and articles to denounce his fiction as "fiction about rascals, by a rascal, and for rascals," as they knowingly or unknowingly ride on the coattails of his popularity. In contrast, elitist critics informed of contemporary Western theories regard him as an irreverent rebel against social order in general and against communist ideology and discourse in particular. For instance, Wang Ning, a leading exponent of postmodernism in China, takes Wang Shuo's fiction as a representative of Chinese postmodernism, epitomizing, in particular, the loss of the self, the rebellion against the mainstream culture, and the intentional obfuscation of the distinction between the elite and the popular.¹

In a recent special issue of *Boundary 2*, devoted to postmodernism in China, Wang Shuo once again becomes the most frequently cited example of Chinese postmodernism.

In spite of the divergences in their evaluations, Wang Shuo's detractors, defenders, and interpreters have reached a consensus about his ideological, if not outright political, subversiveness. In so doing, however, they have ignored a fundamental characteristic of the writer; that is to say, Wang Shuo is a popular writer who consciously adopts a capitulatory attitude towards the needs, desires, attitudes, beliefs, and tastes of his audience in order to enhance his own appeal to the general public. In his self-justification "My Fiction," published in China's leading literary magazine *People's Literature* in 1989, Wang Shuo makes his stance quite clear in the following words:

I feel literature should perform two functions, one purely artistic function and one popular function. . . . If you can find in it something profound, that's all right. (Of course it is a different question as to whether there is indeed something profound.) If you cannot find anything profound, at least you should have some fun. I don't think there is an unbridgeable gap between the two functions. If I have to give up one of them, I would rather give up the first and opt for the second.²

We should note, as a start, that what he means by popular function is more than the entertainment of the audience. Rather, it is an attempt on his part to align himself with the multitude and to satisfy its needs and confirm its values in ways it can readily accept, specifically in not just comic stories, the stories he is best known for, but also in his romantic stories and detective stories, the two other popular genres that he writes in. Aware of the discontent and dreams harbored by the public, Wang Shuo, however, refuses to offer a drastic alternative to its mental habit, for to do so would certainly jolt the public and make him less appealing to ingrained ordinary sensibility. In that sense he should be regarded, not as a radical, but as a cultural conservative. With that in mind, I will proceed to analyze the ways his works contribute to the maintenance of the status quo, particularly the self-conception of the audience.

At the inception of my analysis, I want to highlight a few features of the cultural and literary environment of China in the 1980s to show what Wang Shuo had to work with and react to as a popular writer. To begin with, the reading public had been ideologically and linguistically homogenized, saturated for decades, especially during the Cultural Revolution, by communist propaganda to the point of boredom and exasperation. So at the first signs of ideological relaxation, which came with the government-sponsored economic reforms, it naturally sought relief from the discursive prisonhouse. On the other hand, historical memory, including a fading discourse, was not something the public could easily and completely erase from its mind. Consequently, what resulted in the public reaction to the dominant communist discourse in the New Era was an interesting mix of questions, disbeliefs, irreverence as well as nostalgia, with the latter attested to by, among other things, a spontaneous resurgence of a Chairman Mao fever. To sum up, the public reaction to the communist discourse and propaganda was shot through with affective contradictions.

The same contradictions could be detected in the reading public's reaction to the prevalent moralist tradition in modern Chinese literature. Post-May Fourth literature in China, as C.T. Hsia rightly points out, is by and large characterized by its critical intent and its obsessive concern with China as a morally diseased society unable to change its set ways of inhumanity.³ After the communist takeover moralism and didacticism persisted as the predominant tendency in Chinese literature up till the 1980s. A significant consequence of the ascendancy of this tradition after the early 1930s, when the threat of Japanese invasion implanted a patriotic urgency in the Chinese nation, was the displacement of light literature. In the wake of the economic reforms in the Deng Xiaoping era, the displaced tradition began to rear its head in an increasingly commercialized literary market, stimulated and assisted in no small measure by the influx of works of popular literature such as romances and martial arts fiction from Hong Kong and Taiwan. With the expansion of popular tastes, journals specializing in detective stories or in true-crime stories, for in-

stance, began to appear on the literary scene, often under a thin moralist disguise to avoid censorship. Meanwhile, serious literature experienced a steady decline in popularity. However, just as in the case of the communist discourse, the *ennui* with serious literature did not mean that the moralist tradition had relinquished its hold on public imagination once and for all. Unable to break themselves of a reading habit that they had acquired for so long, a habit that could be traced all the way back to the influence of Confucianism, the majority of readers still stayed under the sway of moralism in their approach to literature, light or serious. As moralism itself remained a crucial sentiment of the public, a popular writer would have to reckon with its residual yet still powerful grip on readers' mentality.

Situated in the confluence of the serious and the popular and well aware of the contradictions and interpenetrations of different cultural formations, Wang Shuo draws on different sources for his fiction and, at the same time, keeps a distance from them, thus staking out a space for himself. Over time his fiction presents a conscious reworking, sometimes a strong antithesis, of formulas operative in certain genres of serious or light literature. Some critics might cite his intentional, flamboyant play with literary codes as a symptom of Chinese postmodernism in that it exposes the constructedness of certain generic myths. One should also note that, as he uncovers the conventionality in literary works in general, Wang Shuo does not try to conceal the artificiality of his own works, preferring, instead, to display the traces of his fabrication in the writing process. However, since he only intends to offer new, unexpected products that would satisfy the reading public's appetite for novelty while remaining easily digestible, his exposure of and departure from literary conventions are not as radical as they first appear. With all its debunking of literary codes and flaunting of its own creativity, Wang Shuo's metafictional consciousness stops short of posing the ultimate questions about the constructedness of the everyday world his readers live in and, more importantly, about the way the readers become what they are. Instead, the readers are encouraged to take their world and themselves for granted as they sit back and enjoy Wang Shuo's works without too

much soul-searching. Wang Shuo's fictional world might be refamiliarized to various degrees, most notably the world of his hooligans, but he refuses to analyze or demystify the constitutions of the readers and their daily world by either leaving them out of consideration or confirming their legitimacy as self-evident facts of life. In the following pages of this essay I will offer an analysis of his strategies to appeal to his readers' deeply entrenched cultural, moral and ideological norms to assure his popularity and the political consequences of his strategies.

Let us start with "Pranksters" (Wanzhu), the most typical example of his comic stories. Written in a farcical mode, "Pranksters" presents a loosely strung series of amusing episodes staged by the members of the "Three T Company" (Troubleshooting, tedium relief, and taking the blame—arranging for a prize-giving ceremony for an unknown third-rate author who pays all the expenses, substituting for a young doctor too busy to go on a date with his girlfriend, serving as a whipping boy for a woman who wants to pick a fight with her husband but cannot get hold of him, etc. In order to sustain the laughter from the reader, transient by nature, Wang Shuo resorts to exaggerated, overdrawn characterization, verbal as well as behavioral surprises and a swift tempo in his depiction of a group of buffoons. However, while presenting a quick succession of antics, he consistently maintains a distance, ethical and otherwise, between his clowns and the average reader, banking on the sanity, sensibility and seriousness of the latter for the comic effect. Because of the distance, the reader's laughter turns into a mindless guffaw solely directed to the farceurs and unreflective of his/her own mode of living. Consequently, the interaction with Wang Shuo's clowns does not result in a reconstruction of the reader's moral or ethical values, as some critics would assume, but in a reinforcement of the reader's sense of superiority to the buffoons.

For all their horseplay, scams, and various acts of indecency, not to mention their scurrilous jokes, Wang Shuo's comic characters run rampant with impunity, thus becoming unfeasible, unlikely behavioral models for the readers in real life. In the meantime, the problems in

real life remain unresolved. Here is an answer from the Three T Company to one of the countless requests for advice it faces in its operation, in this case the customer apparently wants a remedy for insomnia:

Don't go to bed too early. Wait until you really cannot hold out any longer. Wear loose underwear. Buy two iron balls so that you can hold each in one hand. Get up at day-break and jog for ten kilometers. Don't put up pictures of movie stars in your room. As soon as your mind starts to drift, try to think of the hippopotamus and Liu Yingjun (note: a revolutionary martyr of the Cultural Revolution era). If you really cannot control yourself, think of yourself as the only soldier defending the battlefield at Laoshan (note: the best known battlefield in China's war against Vietnam in the 1970s). It is glorious if you can defend it and no less glorious if you can't.⁴

It is clear that the problem, trivial as it might be, is and remains all too real while the solution is a facetious joke couched in a funny mixture of "common sense" and communist jargon distorted out of its usual context. Significantly, instead of exposing the pretentiousness and other fault-lines of the official discourse, Wang Shuo highlights the glaring implausibility and ludicrousness of his farceur who deviates from the standard use of the official language. As he targets the violators of political clichés as the butt of his jokes, the norms of the official language, to which millions of people have been subjected, remain largely uncontested on their own ground.

Far from being an isolated case, the word game cited above illustrates Wang Shuo's use of persiflage, arguably the most important characteristic of his fiction. Taking advantage of the public's familiarity and discontent with the communist discourse for a commercial purpose, Wang Shuo turns much of his fiction into open-ended games of seemingly sacrilegious and daring witticisms and repartees. However, non-purposive except for their aim at a comic effect, the spins

Wang Shuo puts on political clichés only provide momentary comic relief to the readers while diverting their attention from a critique or an alternative. In other words, they do not amount to a devastating subversion of the official culture, as Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu would want us to believe.⁵ Put in a larger social context, they in effect serve as a “safety valve” that releases resentment and enables people to go on with their lives without seeking for a fundamental change of the social order and of themselves as subjects of the social order. This “safety valve” function, in my view, is ultimately one of the reasons why Wang Shuo is tolerated by the still repressive Chinese government.

Despite his reputation as a comedian irreverent to the official language, Wang Shuo is in fact very cautious as far as the serious business of politics is concerned. He carefully sidesteps sensitive political topics and, in “Not Serious at All” (Yidian zhengjīng mei-you), the sequel to “Pranksters,” he even goes so far as to describe a poet who solicits support for human rights as a filthy masturbator and the poet’s petition to the government as a piece of wrinkled paper reeking of urine. Politics aside, he is not a serious challenger to the accepted ways of life in the readers’ everyday world either. Given the clear distinction between his comic characters and his normalized audience, we should note that the latter’s world is by and large a circular one in which things end where they started and the status quo eventually regains the upper hand. A good example is his novel *I Am Your Father* (Wo shi ni baba), in which the two main characters, after a series of “democratic” experiments on the father-son relationship, end up resuming their traditional positions in the family hierarchy. Taking the father-son relationship as an existentially determined, not culturally influenced, phenomenon, as he tries to show the inevitable role of the father in child-rearing on the one hand and the son’s need for protection, guidance and discipline on the other, Wang Shuo naturalizes one of the most important relationships in Chinese culture to which his audience has been accustomed. We could also argue that what is naturalized here is not just an ethical code but the operation of power as well. Knowing fully well that social powers make mistakes

in their operations, Wang Shuo takes up a practical yet impotent position. This position is crystallized in a lecture the father in *I Am Your Father* gives to his son after the latter was scolded in school for pointing out a teacher's mistake in class:

When an authority remains an authority, you can harbor criticism of its mistakes in your heart as you like, but you should not point them out to its face under any circumstances, however irrefutable these mistakes are. When an authority makes a mistake, it is like a fully loaded train getting derailed. You can do nothing except watching it plunge down a cliff. Any attempt to remedy the situation will end up like a mantis trying to stop a chariot with its puny arms and can only lead to your self-destruction.⁶

In a sense these remarks best summarize Wang Shuo as a political realist and, at the same time, a defeatist powerless in front of existing social powers.

The elements of timidity, impotence and conservatism in Wang Shuo's fiction remind us that we should not overemphasize his destructiveness, as many critics tend to do when they focus their attention on the word games in his stories. We should realize that farcical word games, a reaction to the high-minded and high-sounding moralist tradition in modern Chinese literature, only constitute one aspect of Wang Shuo's practice, an aspect that itself is not entirely free from the influence of moralism, as I tried to show in my earlier discussion of the reader's position. Furthermore, we should take note of Wang Shuo's relationships with literary and cultural traditions that are not simply reactive. We should pay attention, for example, to the romantic elements in his fiction such as the mutual attraction between his hooligan characters and innocent, well-bred young women, as the Chinese critic Yan Jingming notes.⁷ Eclectic in his choices of subject matter and techniques, Wang Shuo "serves the people" not only with what they desire, comic relief and romantic love for instance, but also with what they are familiar with. While his comic stories contribute to

the maintenance of the status quo in society by either disregarding the extratextual social realm or by providing patently facetious solutions to the real problems in life, as I have tried to show, his reconfirmation of the familiar and, more crucially, of the implicit or explicit moral order in everyday life in his romantic stories and detective stories further diminishes the prospect of an alternative social order. In the end his readers are further inured to their current state and their habitual mental certainties.

In a recent issue of *Boundary 2* that I mentioned above, several authors point out that *Bright Sunny Days* (Yangguang canlan de rizi), a movie adapted from Wang Shuo's novella *Ferocious Animals* (Dongwu xiongmeng) and directed by Jiang Wen, transforms the Cultural Revolution into sensual, erotic adventures of the young and the restless.⁸ What is interesting to me is that Wang Shuo's original, published in 1991, amounts to a kind of rehabilitation of the Cultural Revolution at a time when the passage of time began to assuage the bitterness in the public memory of the national disaster. A first-person narrative sparked off by the author's personal experience, Wang Shuo's work polemicizes against the conception, initiated by the "Scar in the late 1970s, of the Cultural Revolution as a nightmare. It is, in a sense, a recuperation of the real from the allegorical, albeit from a rather distinct perspective. Thus intended as a retrieval of reality, Wang Shuo's rehabilitation of the Cultural Revolution, enhanced by Jiang Wen's film adaptation even in the title change, satisfies a public nostalgia for a bygone era by showing how life could be savored even under unusual circumstances.

Wang Shuo knows only too well that, inasmuch as popular literature is concerned, pleasure is inseparable from meaning because a work will be a commercial failure if readers cannot make sense of it or relate it in some way to themselves. For one thing, the contemporaneity that marks all of his fiction, in my view, indicates his attempt to yield relevance in one way or another. Whereas in his comic stories meaning is maintained in the background as a contrast to the foregrounded nonsense and antics and in works such as *Ferocious Animals* meaning is produced as a refutation of allegory, in his detective sto-

ries, a genre aimed at making sense of the world, meaning is secured as a moral order that eventually prevails in everyday life.

Talking about Wang Shuo's detective stories, we should first of all note that they are not just about crimes and crime-detections. Instead, they are saturated with quotidian details largely unrelated to crimes or crime-detections. In this respect the most striking example is none other than the detective himself. With the name of Shan Liren, which in Chinese can simply mean a "person," the chief detective that appears in Wang Shuo's various detective stories is characterized most of all by his ordinariness. A middle-aged, stocky and amicable functionary in the police department, Shan does not wear a police uniform and lives his life as an ordinary citizen, haggling with a vegetable store clerk, cooking his favorite stew and watching Peking opera on TV in his spare time. At work he performs his duty in a routine manner and, unlike those classic detectives, such as Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot, with their intuitive knack of always thinking in the right direction, he is prone to follow leads that do not pan out in the end. In "No One Can Harm Me" (Ren mo yu au), he is even roughed up as the first suspect in a rape case. His bumbling, however, is more apparent than real, for he is the one that, with his thoroughgoing work style, solves the cases in the end. In "Refuse in Vain to Confess" (Wangran bugong), for example, he rejects the suspect's false alibis one after another with his painstaking investigation and, when he finally comes up with all the circumstantial evidence and powerful reasoning, the accused, though still refusing to confess to his crime of murder, is already convicted in the reader's mind.

As Shan Liren remains indistinct from ordinary citizens, his triumphs over the criminal elements in society can be taken as people's victories. Meanwhile, what the reader gets from reading about him as a detective is an intimate identification with law and order that embodies justice, not suppression. We should further note that in Wang Shuo's detective stories ordinary citizens can score their own victories rather independently of law enforcement. A case in point is "No One Can Harm Me," in which the victim of a scheme involving sex and money turns around and trumps the plotter and his accomplice

while Shan Liren by and large stands on the sideline. What we see in this story, as well as in Wang Shuo's other detective stories, is the final valorization of a moral order that holds society together with its clear-cut messages about good and evil. As Wang Shuo turns, through the act of identification, his characters and his readers into willing instruments of what is perceived as an equitable or even benevolent moral order, the moral order itself and its messages stay beyond all question.

By now we should realize that Wang Shuo's fiction, in spite of its sometime irreverent facade and regardless of its generic modes, caters to its readers' needs and wishes without revealing, let alone challenging, their position as socio-cultural subjects. Its complicity with the existing social order culminates in the story "Liu Huifang," an outgrowth of an immensely popular TV serial *Yearning* (Kewang), a moralist tearjerker of which Wang Shuo was one of the scriptwriters. Talking about *Yearning*, we should realize that it is not a case of the Party's intentional incorporation of popular culture into its official ideology, as Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu suggests.⁹ Rather, it represents an effort, made at the grass-roots of cultural production by technicians such as the producers, scriptwriters, directors and editors of the TV serial, to create a hit show by tapping into popular moral values, as Jianying Zha tells us in her description of the show's production.¹⁰ It is, in other words, a typical example of deliberately taking commercial advantage of the moral, ethical and literary codes that the audience has already consciously or unconsciously absorbed. As the nation-wide warm reception of the serial bore out, its makers, including Wang Shuo, correctly read the minds and hearts of its anticipated viewers and, backed by the popularity of its predecessor, the success of "Liu Huifang" as popular literature seemed to have been guaranteed in advance.

Writing in a melodramatic mode in "Liu Huifang," Wang Shuo extremifies the problems the title character faces to emphasize her heart of gold and the strength of her character. A student cadre in her school days, Liu Huifang is now not only a divorced, unemployed woman but also contracts a rare disease that causes atrophy of the

muscles on her legs. Undeclared, however, she exercises regularly, learns to be a typist to support herself, raises her adopted daughter—her ex-husband's niece born out of wedlock—with love and discipline and gets along quite well with everyone, including her ex-husband and his sister, the biological mother of Liu's adopted daughter. Apparently unsatisfied with these good deeds as signs of Liu's virtue and strength, Wang Shuo centers his story upon a relationship his heroine has with an old schoolmate that ends with her decision to marry the man after he is fatally injured in his work as a fire fighter sent to put out an oil field fire in Kuwait. Thus idealized, Liu Huifang comes out as an incarnation of a set of clearly spelled out moral and ethical imperatives that the audience, with its past exposure, can readily take to heart.

An admirably dutiful woman in all her capacities—daughter, mother and wife—and, at the same time, a longtime model citizen, Liu Huifang quietly yet determinedly combines traditional feminine virtue and contemporary communist morality. For all the melodramatic plotting of her story and idealization of her character, she still remains to a certain degree imitable to the readers because she lives in their everyday world and faces many problems they also have to face. Hence the sublimity that shines through her is the sublimity of the ordinary, within the reach of the average citizen. If we regard her as a mutant of the hero(ine) in socialist realism and the revolutionary model operas (*geming yanbanxi*), to which she bears an unmistakable resemblance with her heroic exemplariness, we will find that the lessons she embodies as a model citizen in China are closer to the readers' hearts and, therefore, more influential and powerful precisely because of her plainness and lack of lofty ambitions. In a way she reflects the readers' fantasy of their own perfectibility. The lack of a true villain in her world—her old schoolmate and eventual marriage partner, the only seemingly plucky character in the story, does nothing more than crack clean jokes—further facilitating the readers' job to imitate the model character since truly conflicting moral, ethical or psychic forces are erased. As the readers are encouraged to identify with and to emulate Liu Huifang, a narcissistic image, they

are invited to reinforce some of the most important teachings, such as tolerance and self-sacrifice, that they have learned under the communist regime.

To those critics who laud Wang Shuo's subversiveness, "Liu Huifang," with all its unironical idolatry of a contemporary model citizen, must appear scandalizing. That is why most of them simply leave this work out when they talk about Wang Shuo. Given Wang Shuo's shrewd understanding of the condition of his audience and the prior success of *Yearning*, however, it should not be surprising why he writes such a work. Knowing the widespread internalization of longstanding communist propaganda, Wang Shuo encodes his work in such a way so that his readers can easily decode it and fit it in with what they have been indoctrinated or ideologically coded with. In so doing he, as well as his colleagues involved in the production of *Yearning*, consciously adopts a co-optational stance toward the government propaganda machine as he simultaneously draws on and feeds into its products. The symbiotic relationship we see here proves, in my view, that Wang Shuo is popular but not dynamic, because he, for the sake of popularity, refuses to break through the hegemonic grip of communist propaganda on the public. By the same token we can extend our argument and maintain that he does very little to question, let alone to disrupt, the subject position his readers have come to assume after their prolonged subjection to traditional as well as contemporary values, rules, imperatives and requirements. As this position keeps reducing its own recalcitrance and denying itself the possibility of visionary experience, the political effect of Wang Shuo's strategy to reinforce this position is obviously disempowering.

When we read Wang Shuo, we should not overlook the crucial factor that his practice is dictated by the need for a large audience. In "My Fiction," which I mentioned earlier, he states that "I hope my works will have influence and readers. I do not want to discover anything. It is of course all right for some writers to feel that they do not need any reader. But I do as far as I am concerned."¹¹ Demonstrating itself as a conciliatory attitude towards deeply entrenched socio-cultural values and ideological beliefs among the readers, this need or

effort on his part to build a rapport with his readers in effect congratulates the readers on their received identities as normalized human beings. Looking back at Wang Shuo's works, we realize that, regardless of their generic trappings, the subject position of the reader remains a stable, unitary position infused with such certainties as sanity, rationality, justice, truth, virtue and rectitude, though in different circumstances different values are stressed. As the valorization of this subject position offers intellectual and emotional security in a familiar world, the possibilities for alternative modes of life are quietly blocked out. In this respect, if we interpret postmodernism as resistance to or emancipation from an assumed reality, including the received subject position of the readers, Wang Shuo is certainly not a postmodernist. Recalling some of the important features of kitsch that Matei Calinescu points out, which include art as recreation and entertainment, easiness of access, quick and predictable effects, and "trading spirit" on the part of the writer,¹² we find that Wang Shuo is much closer in spirit to kitsch than to perhaps anything else.

NOTES

¹ Wang Ning, "Jieshou yu bianxing: Zhongguo dangdai xianfeng xiaoshuo zhong de houxiandaixing" (Reception and Transformation: Postmodernity in Contemporary Chinese Avant-Garde Fiction), *Zhongguo shehui kexue* 1 (1992): 137-149. Rpt. *Fuyin baokan ziliao wenyi lilun yukan* 3 (1992): 153-165.

² Wang Shuo, "Wo de xiaoshuo" (My Fiction), *Renmin wenxue* 3 (1989): 108.

³ C. T. Hsia, "Obsession With China: The Moral Burden of Modern Chinese Literature," *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, 2nd ed. (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1971) 533-34.

⁴ Wang Shuo, "Wanzhu," *Wang Shuo wenji* (Beijing: Huayi chubanshe, 1992), vol. 4, 47.

⁵ Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu, "Postmodernity, Popular Culture, and the Intellectual: A Report on Post-Tiananmen China," *Boundary 2* 23.2 (1996): 159.

⁶ Wang Shuo, *Wo shi ni baba, Wang Shao wenji*, vol. 3, 224.

⁷ Yan Jingming, "Wanzhu yu dushi de chongtu: lun Wang Shuo xiaoshuo de jiazhi xuanze" "The Clash Between Pranksters and the City: On the Choices of Values in Wang Shuo's Fiction", *Wenxue pinglun* 6 (1989): 89-90.

⁸ See Chen Xiaoming, "The Mysterious Other: Postpolitics in Chinese Film," *Boundary 2* 243 (1997): 135-6; Dai Jinhua, "Imagined Nostalgia," *ibid*, p. 153-4 and Wendy Larson "Women and the Discourse of Desire in Postrevolutionary China: The Awkward Postmodernism of Chen Ran," *ibid*, p. 204.

⁹ Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu, Postmodernity, Popular Culture, and the Intellectual: A Report on Post-Tiananmen China," *Boundary 2* 23.2 (1996): 160-2.

¹⁰ Jianying Zha, "Yearnings," *China Pop: How Soap Operas, Tabloids, and Bestsellers Are Transforming a Culture* (New York: The New Press, 1995) 25-53.

¹¹ Wang Shuo, "Wo de xiaoshuo" (My Fiction), *Renmin wenxue* 3 (1989): 108.

¹² Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1987) 238.