

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

At the end of the 20th century, a Shanghai-born woman writer, Zhou Wei Hui, took China's literary scene by storm with her shocking story and writing style. Her novel was immensely popular with China's new generation of readers, the so-called "Generation X," (Xin Xin Tenlei, "literary new human beings") (Lu 168). Some critics argue that she is a spokesperson of the Y-Generation born in the 1970's and represents a fresh start of the new generation of Chinese Literature. These facts encourage me to analyse one of her novels, Shanghai Baby.

Wei Hui's sexually explicit novel Shanghai Baby has been "banned and burned in China," and the author herself was recently denounced as "decadent, debauched and a slave of a foreign culture" ("Bridget Jones With Blow Jobs"). Despite the controversy, negativity and attacks on Wei Hui's novel, Wei Hui shows a great skill of writing. She uses a nuanced, dense, subtle and complex

language that “captures the moods, sensations and feelings of the contemporary Shanghai.” (Lu 171). For this reason, I am greatly interested in analysing Shanghai Baby in my thesis.

I would like to analyse the characteristics of the protagonist for the reason that it can “enhance and deepen our understanding of human character and human life” (Roberts 66). Therefore, I want to share my understanding of the protagonist of the novel so that the readers can understand and appreciate not only the protagonist but also the human life itself. As stated by Edgar V. Roberts, “character is a verbal representation of a human being as presented to us by authors through the depiction of actions, conversations, descriptions, reactions, inner thoughts and reflection and also through the authors’ own interpretive commentary” (Roberts 66). Thus, I will analyse the protagonist of the novel, *Coco*, to reach an understanding of her characteristics.

To achieve a better understanding of the characteristics of the protagonist, I apply sociological approach that examines social groups, relationships, and values as they are manifested in literature (“Glossary of literary terms, Sociology”). I find that this theory is suitable to help my study of the protagonist as it can be used to explain that “literary works, especially novels and plays, faithfully reflects the social environment of its time” (“How to Analyze a Work of Literature”). By applying this approach in my analysis, I would show how Wei Hui observes and describes the world of Shanghai in the 1990’s through the subjective point of view of a female.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problems are stated as follows:

1. How is the protagonist portrayed in the novel?
2. How does the protagonist represent young women in contemporary Shanghai culture?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Based on the statement of the problem above this study is done:

1. To show how the protagonist is portrayed in the novel.
2. To know how the protagonist represents young women in contemporary Shanghai culture.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

I start the research for this thesis by library research, first by reading Shanghai Baby as the primary text. Secondary readings such as Writing About Literature and also included in doing research. I also read and compile some texts that are taken from the Internet. Finally, I draw a conclusion from the research I have conducted.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The thesis is presented in three chapters and preceded by the Table of Contents, and the Abstract. The first chapter is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problems, the Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the discussion of Shanghai Baby, and the last chapter is The Conclusion. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which contains the Synopsis of the novel and the Biography of the Author.