

University of Alberta

**From Print to Cyberspace:
New Developments in Chinese Literature in the Age of the Internet**

by

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ABSTRACT

The advancement of the Internet significantly re-configures the landscape of Chinese literature. This thesis is a preliminary study of current Chinese literature in the age of the Internet. In this thesis, the author takes an empirical view of the pioneering role of the Internet and its impact, and aims to offer a technical, historical and cultural perspective identifying and describing the new developments of Chinese literature in the age of the Internet and how network technologies help to foster and enhance the function of Chinese literature as a social and cultural institution.

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Introduction

In the age of the Internet, new forms of literary writing, reading, publication, and distribution and responding are emerging with the advancement of digital technology. The rapid digitization of world literature is spurring many changes such as online publishing, non-sequential and interactive literary writing in the form of hypertexts or hypermedia, collective writing, new roles for literary institutions, and free forums for literary discussions (Murray 2000, Becker 2004, Coover 1999 & Finneran 1996).

As I am writing this thesis in Canada, broadcast of classical Chinese poems with background music from a radio station in Changsha, my hometown in South China, streams through the Internet to play on my computer in Edmonton. Novels by *Jin Yong* (金庸), my favorite martial arts novelist located in Hong Kong, *Analects* (论语) by Confucius, the ancient sage, and more poems, novels, essays, dramas and prose by established or anonymous Chinese writers worldwide, are online and available in various websites for viewing, downloading, keyword searches, comments and criticism. In addition, numerous dynamic and interactive Chinese literary works are emerging online made possible by the digital technology (see 1.2 for more about this type of literature).

The above examples are new developments in Chinese literature in the age of the Internet. Network technologies have greatly influenced Chinese people's literary experience and they have the potential to change the landscape of Chinese literature. I will argue that a growing corpus of Internet-based literature and new developments in Chinese literature in the age of the Internet share many features with new developments in literatures of other languages but there have been localized practices and characteristics of Chinese literature that distinguish it from that of other significant

groups. It is of great importance to analyze Internet diffusion, identify its impact upon the Chinese literary world and describe characteristics of new developments in Chinese literature in the age of the Internet, because more than 20% of people living on this planet read the language.

This thesis is a preliminary study of new developments in Chinese literature in the age of the Internet or more specifically what the Internet means for Chinese literature. Although there are many Chinese literature websites located outside Greater China, I will confine my study to the Greater China region, for the simple reason that it is the place where major developments of Chinese literature are happening. Greater China includes the People's Republic of China (the Mainland), the Republic of China (Taiwan), Hong Kong, and Macao. They all use Chinese as the language for literary creation and share the same literary tradition. Because of the small size of Macao and its limited importance in Chinese literature (with a population of 439, 000 and an area of 27.3 sq. km), it is not closely examined in this thesis.

As with literatures in other places of the world, the genre, style, form, structure, textuality, plot, character, authorship and audience of Chinese literature all have experienced tremendous change. Hockx has observed 'Chinese literary websites employ the latest publishing technologies to foster and enhance the traditional function of literature as a social and cultural institution' (2004: 106). I will attempt to describe and identify new developments in Chinese literature in the age of the Internet and how network technologies help to foster and enhance the function of Chinese literature as a social and cultural institution.

Based on views of some literary theorists on literature and technology advancement, observations of some scholars concerning computer-mediated writing space and Appadurai's theory of modernization and globalization, this thesis aims to offer a technical, historical and cultural perspective identifying new ways of production, publication, distribution and communication of Chinese literature provided by network technology, which have potentially far reaching consequences for the way Chinese literature will function in the future.

This thesis tries to identify and describe these new developments in Chinese literature by addressing the following questions: What are the new developments in Chinese literature in the age of the Internet? What impact do the inherent characteristics of the Internet have upon Chinese literary creation and publication in the age of the Internet? In what ways do the distinctive features of the Chinese writing system impact Chinese literature in the age of the Internet? Due to Internet diffusion, what are the function of various literary institutions and the impact of the evolution of these literary institutions, if there is any, upon Chinese literature in the age of the Internet?

The structure is as follows. The first part is the introduction. In Chapter One, I will describe briefly the history of technological advancement in literature and its impact upon literary writing, reading, distribution and publication. In Chapter Two, I will review the Internet development in Chinese societies in Greater China. In Chapter Three, I will attempt to provide a brief history of Chinese literature in print. In Chapter Four, I will focus on the importance of the Internet and its impact upon Chinese literature and the importance of the new media to the future of Chinese literature. Chapter Five provides a

general discussion of Chinese cyberliterature. And I will then draw a conclusion in the last section.

While writing this thesis, I will adopt both top-down and bottom-up approaches to explore the changing landscape of Chinese literature. In particular, I will employ both document analysis and online participation for my research. First of all, to examine the history and developments of Chinese literature and its present situation, I will use document analysis, namely analysis of historical records of Chinese literature, textual analysis of Chinese literary works in print and in cyberspace and analysis of statistics of Internet diffusion in the region. To help understand the impact of the Internet upon Chinese literature, especially Chinese cyberliterature, I will examine some websites specializing in literature in the region.

Chapter One: Technology and Literature

‘Science and technology multiply around us. To an increasing extent, they dictate the languages in which we speak and think. Either we use those languages, or we remain mute’ (Ballard 2005). The famous saying by the British author informs us that science and technology play an indispensable role in human civilization. They are a continuous driving force that pushes human society from primitive to advanced, from low level to higher levels. Throughout human history, great advancements in literary production have been reshaping the face of human literary experience, which was made possible by each successive breakthrough of technology. The inventions of writing, paper, mechanical printing and electronic text are the four major breakthroughs of technology in the history of literature.

From age to age, it is the cumulative effect of technology that accelerates the advancing steps of literature. The advent of a new technology of literary creation and publication is a significant event in world literature, because it propels the emergence of new possibilities and new genres of literary creation and stimulates the emergence of new forms of literary communication and publication.

Never in world literary history has humanity seen more radical and dramatic change than witnessed over the last two decades. Only a decade ago, the principal medium of literary creation, reading, communication, and publication was the printed page. However, the literary world is quickly evolving from one that thrives on traditionally printed books to one that relies increasingly on the virtual and almost endless spreading of literary works through the Internet.

The Chinese literary world has also benefited tremendously from the irresistible encroachment of information technology and its transformation is by all means marvelous. Essentially, the remarkable advancement of information technology beckons creation, reading, distribution and publication of Chinese literature all toward a new realm of endless possibility, which is unfolding clearly as the Internet technology advances and diffuses.

To understand new developments in Chinese literature in the age of the Internet, we need to examine the technological aspects of its production, reading, publication and distribution. A look at the impact of technology upon new developments in literature as a whole from a historical perspective will provide valuable information when examining Chinese literature, as it is located in the broad context of development of world literature. In the following, I will examine briefly the history of the technological advancement of literature and its impact upon new developments in literature.

1.1. A Brief History of the Technological Advancement of Literature

Many literary theorists have studied extensively the inter-connection between technological advancement and literary development. One of the classical theoretical texts in the analysis of the impact of new media and new technology on the arts is Walter Benjamin's essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935). Using the technology of lithography, film and mechanical printing as examples, he claims that 'the level of technological development of an age determines artistic production and communication at that time' (1935). His observation about the inter-relation of technological and artistic development is a frequent reference for literary critics. His

observation also reminds us that technological change is similarly a driving force or momentum for new developments in the literary world.

Bolter (1991) examines 'writing as technology' and 'hypertext and the remediation of print'. He believes that 'each writing space is a material and visual field, whose properties are determined by a writing technology and the uses to which that technology is put by a culture of readers' (1991:12). McLuhan (1962) discusses the impact of printing technology upon human civilization. In his words, 'tribal man' gives way to 'individualized man' as the result of the development of media technology. In addition, many Marxist literary theorists who believe in 'technological determinism' have discussed extensively the inter-connection between literary development and technological advancement. They believe that technology is the fundamental determinant in literary development. Their studies of 'technological determinism' in literature can be found in books by Eagleton (1976) and Williams (1977).

The technology of literary writing, reading, publication and distribution keeps marching forward throughout the history of world literature. According to the technological development of literature, Gutchess (2001) divides the history of literature into four stages: 'the age of memory', 'the age of the manuscript', 'the age of the book' and 'the age of the Internet'.

Based on the research of these scholars, this section will discuss the impact of new media and new technologies on literary creation, reading, publication and distribution from a historical perspective. The discussion in this section will pave the road for further discussion about the impact of the digital technology upon new developments in Chinese literature in the age of the Internet.

1.1.1. The Age of Memory

Oral literature is the common origin of world literature. This age can be dated back to the time when human beings acquire language as their central communicative tool. It was not until writing was invented and popularized that the age of memory began to be replaced by the age of the manuscript. In this age, ‘literature is no more than performance, varying by performer, though attempts are made through music, dance and ritualization to preserve important words’ (Gutchess 2001).

Due to the limitation of human memory, the genre, distribution and complexity of literary creation are limited. In addition, it is very difficult to retain lengthy literary creation and creators can only distribute their productions within the hearing distance of their listeners. Oral literary works were able to be passed on to later generations, but very few literary works have survived, as when the creator dies, literary creation kept in human brains will be lost permanently unless another person could remember it by heart or put it into writing.

Although a limited number of long works such as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have survived, literary creation tends to be short in this age. Short lyrics, songs and ballads are the most common literary forms. Only privileged tribe heads and noble men could afford to retain oral literature in human memory and use it for entertainment and, more importantly, for rituals. Representative works of this age are *The Iliad* in Greek and *Book of Songs* (诗经 *Shi Jing*) in Chinese. They were oral literature when created. The invention of writing and paper helped retain oral literature like them and created more possibilities for literary creation and publication. As written literature became the major form of literary creation and publication, the age of the manuscript arrived.

1.1.2. The Age of the Manuscript

The invention of writing ushered in the age of the manuscript, which starts from the emergence of the use of handwritten words to the invention of mechanical printing. In this period, all literary works can be retained in a medium other than the human brain. By inscribing literary writing firstly on rocks or on animal bones and then on paper, literary creation becomes fixed for the first time and therefore can be carried far away from the creator and passed on to later generations.

According to archaeologists, writing, ‘a symbolic representation of language’, can be traced back to a group of small bone or ivory labels dating from 3300 to 3200 BC in Egypt (Devitt 1999). European literary writing began perhaps as early as 1100 BC and European mechanical printing began about 1455 AD (Bolter 1991). The age of the manuscript was replaced slowly by the age of the book when Gutenberg invented mechanical printing in the mid-15th century. Chinese literary writing began as early as 1500 BC when people began to inscribe songs, epics, ballads and lyrics on animal bones, bamboo spalls, and silk and bronze containers (Wang 2002). *Cai Lun* (蔡伦 63-121 AD) was the first in China to invent paper around 105 AD and *Bi Sheng* (毕升 around 990-1051 AD) was the first in China to invent mechanical printing around 1050 AD (Lin 2003). Writing and reading skills become more and more important in this age.

In addition, compared with literary works in the age of memory, the length of a written literary work in this age is less of a problem, as it liberated writers from the limitation of human memory and oral literature. A writer didn't have to remember every word he had created to keep the literary work. Written literature can also be distributed to places further than the hearing distance and the writer or a people who wrote the

literary work did not have to be there when the literary work was presented to its audience.

Literary creation and distribution have fewer restrictions. Thus, more genres come into being. Written literature gradually replaces oral literature and performance. Handwritten copies are the most important means of literary publication in this age. To some extent, every copy is unique and original. However, literary creation and reading are still 'restricted' in this age, as literacy is confined to a small elite class and groups with wealth, status and education. In addition, literary copies are still limited in number because mass production has not yet been realized. Gutchess has observed, 'politically powerful or wealthy patrons supported most writers at that time. Literature typically is priestly, courtly, or aristocratic' (2001). Classical poems, songs and prose in *Qin* (221-207BC), *Han* (206BC-220AD) and *Tang* (618-907AD) dynasties in China, and medieval and classical literature in the West represent the age of manuscripts in world literature.

1.1.3. The Age of the Book

The age of the book starts with the invention of the mechanical printing press. Printed books are still the dominant form of literary publication even today as the Internet is being popularized. It is a milestone in the history of world literature. Many scholars claim that the invention of mechanical printing has reshaped the knowledge base, access to information, and learning process in world civilization (McLuhan 1962, McCorduck 1985 & Murray 2000). It is in this age that mass production and distribution of literary works become possible for the first time in the history of world literature. Thus, there is a great increase in the number of literary works available. In addition, although there were

already a wide variety of literary genres in this age, the invention of mechanical reproduction further extends the range and genre of writing and literary creation is diversified, as noted by Gutchess (2001) that ‘the low cost and ease of publishing permits an explosion of different kinds of literature, different kinds of authors, different stories, translations into different languages, and specialization in every direction’. One example is that popular literature in magazine and newspaper has become a very important form of literary creation.

Consequently, together with other factors, like the rise of the middle class, literacy is popularized and becomes an essential skill in society. In this age, it is of paramount importance for the writer to meet the taste and requirement of readers at large, which will ensure his or her success, financially and professionally. For writers, patrons were not as important as before, as mechanical reproduction makes mass and commercial distribution possible. Consequently, the taste and interest of average readers are taken into more consideration and writers have more freedom to create, as noted by Gutchess (2001), ‘literature engages in social criticism, humor, humble subjects, fantasy and pure entertainment’. Renaissance to contemporary literature in the West represents the age of the book and literature in the *Ming* (1368-1644 AD) and *Qing Dynasties* (1644-1911AD) (明清) to contemporary literature in China, especially Chinese novels and popular literature up to very recently, represents this age.

1.1.4. The Age of the Internet

The past decade has witnessed one of the most phenomenal transformations in human history: the advent of the Internet. The age of the Internet started from the invention of electronic text and continued with the popularization of the Internet about a

decade ago. The Internet is a global arrangement of networks made up of millions of individual computers. Its primary use is through a technology for simplified document sharing known as the World Wide Web. It can be traced back to 'ARPANET' in fall 1969 when the US Department of Defense laid the foundation of the Internet in University of California at Los Angeles (Sterling 2005).

Despite its short history, there are now millions of websites worldwide. Today, networked computers are becoming pervasive and ubiquitous and are playing increasingly significant roles in people's lives. Internet's impact upon people's life style, arts, politics, indeed all aspects of human communication has been truly radical (Herman 1998, Li 2004 & Jones 1995). The Internet has already become an important vehicle for literary creation and publication. Computing and networking technologies have created a new mechanism for the writer to create, and for the reader to access, evaluate and communicate more effectively (for details and examples, see 1.2).

In addition, together with new network applications, improved computer hardware, better Internet infrastructure and possibilities augmented by multimedia, writers throughout the world are making use of the affordances provided by the new technology to create a new type of literature that is both interactive and dynamic (for details and examples, see 1.2).

Before we come to examine new literary developments in this specific geographical area, it will be of great importance to have a look at the impact of the Internet on literary developments as a whole, as Chinese literature in the age of the Internet is located in the context of world literature. A good understanding of the impact

of the Internet upon world literary developments will shed valuable light upon new developments in Chinese literature.

1.2. Literary Writing, Reading, Distribution and Publication in the Age of the Internet

For a long time, paper and the like were the only choices for us besides the human mind to store literary creation. The invention of the film and cassette in the late nineteenth century made it possible to store not only signs and illustrations but also sound and moving images. From then on, literary works began to be presented in various media. The latest literary form began to emerge more than a decade ago when the computer began to emerge as an important tool for information, expression and knowledge. It is hardly surprising that poets and writers have revealed an interest in using digital technology as an important tool in literary creation and have integrated the new possibilities brought by digital technology to their writing, for example, *XYLO*, an animated and visual poem in Flash by Peter Howard, (URL: <http://www.wordcircuits.com/gallery/xylo/index.html>), and *About Time*, a digital interactive hypertext fiction by Bob Swigart (URL: <http://www.wordcircuits.com/gallery/abouttime/>). There are even many websites specializing in interactive and dynamic poetry, hypertext poetry and fictions, for example, *Links to Computer Animated Poetry* (URL: <http://cetic.ufp.pt/Eng/animated.htm>) and *Word Circuit*, an online gallery of hypertext poetry and fiction (URL: <http://www.wordcircuits.com/gallery/index.html>). They both provide links to hundreds of computer animated literary works.

The examples above show that more and more literary works are created and published solely on the Internet. There are an increasing number of pioneer cyberwriters now are making use of multimedia to create interactive literary works. 'Multimedia refers to the integration of visual imagery, text, video, sound and animation to create an interactive and lively presentation' (Burke 2003). Because of the introduction of digital technology into literary creation, new possibilities are brought to lift the reader's imagination. Communication technology and new media, especially the Internet, are becoming crucial factors for further literary development in the society of the information age. This transformation is phenomenal, as Castells (1999: 30) points out, the rapid change is:

'at least as major a historical event as was the eighteenth-century Industrial Revolution, inducing a pattern of discontinuity in the material basis of economy, society, and culture. The occurrence of the computer and Internet will likely serve as a convenient demarcation point for the beginning of electronic textuality'.

Today, the 'digital revolution' and the way literary works are written through computer and uploaded on the Internet, and the use of interactive multimedia and hypertext in literature, are facilitating essentially new patterns of literary creation, publication, distribution and reading. The Internet is relatively new but the difference of literary creation and publication between the age of Internet and the age before the Internet is immense. Many of these changes have already become commonplace, as noted by many scholars who are examining closely the new process of literary creation, reading, publication and distribution. Svedjedal (2000) studies the impact of the digitization of the literary world upon fiction and poetry. According to him,

‘the rapid digitization of the literary world is spurring many changes for fiction and poetry in the form of the written word – enhanced printing technology, new kinds of online publishing ventures, innovative methods for selling books, different forms of literary discussions, new ways of structuring literary works in the form of digital hypertexts, hypermedia, interactive stories...(It) is much more of a multisequential web, a place where each reader chooses his unique way through hypertexts and where traditional boundaries between traditional professions are blurred or simply break down.’ (Svedjedal 2000)

Marshall Soules (2002) explores how we consider the recently emergent computer-mediated writing space, which according to him is ‘a unique performance medium with characteristic protocols’. Drawing on contemporary performance theory, literary criticism, and communication theory, Soules (2002) proposes that technologists, academics, and artists develop idiomatic rhetoric to ‘explore the technical and expressive properties of the new language machines and their hypertextual environments’.

Walter J. Ong (1982) among others, perceives the advent of new electronic technology “as a kind of return to thinking in a more ‘natural’ way”. The invention of writing and application of mechanical printing has made literary writing and reading depend heavily on the fixed written or printed text. Human communication is more interactive and dynamic. The digital technology not only changes the format of the book, but also enables authors to use non-traditional artistic forms and communicative ways in their literary creation.

Besides literary creation, the impact of the Internet on literary reading is also important. The electronic text and the ‘hypertextuality’ brought by digital technology make it possible for the reader to ‘escape the book’s linear page-turning mechanism and

provide multiple links between screens of text in a nonlinear network of narrative or poetic elements' (Decker 1999).

The impact of the Internet upon literary publication is also significant. The traditional print press depends on mechanical and industrial production. The most important role for literature publishing is to distribute and promote quality literary works effectively and efficiently. Copying, downloading or uploading can be finished in a matter of seconds. Thus, the computer and the digital technology make it possible to duplicate and distribute literary works cheaply and instantly at great volume. Increasingly, writers and publishers are bringing digital technologies to their trade. For example, although many publishers still require hard copies, authors now are very likely to submit their literary creation as computer files, Email attachments or postal delivery with a floppy or CD rather than manuscripts. And many publishers are promoting electronic books.

In addition, 'with tremendous technical advantages, computer and Internet are able to imitate and incorporate other, older media' (Gunder 2001). More and more publishers utilize online publishing now, melding literary publication with the fundamental advantages afforded by digital technology. Because of the advantage of electronic books and Internet publishing, they are becoming more and more popular, as noted by SNTRreport.com, the online journal of digital collaboration, 'industry surveys show encouraging signs of growth in e-book sales over the past year'. (quoted from Becker 2004).

The Internet also changes the distribution of literary works in print. Ever-increasing numbers of online Amazon.com-like bookstores have winning ways of

combining the new information technology to restructure the distribution of books in a way not seen since the advent of the modern book trade. All over the world, numerous online bookstores have emerged, emulating Amazon.com. The most successful online bookstores in China are Dangdang.com and Alibaba.com. They are Amazon.com of China in nearly every aspect.

The traditional print press will still survive and may prosper in the digital future; however, its business is greatly challenged by the digital technology. As the Internet is penetrating to more users, the outcome will be clear that the traditional bookstores and publishing companies will be losing control.

Throughout the history of world literature development, the emerging 'technologies of literature' have also fundamentally affected our view and our application of previous technologies in literature, but they don't simply exclude and supersede the 'older technologies'. In the age of the Internet, older technologies and the new technologies of literary endeavor will still exist in parallel. As Marshall McLuhan has pointed out: 'the history of the arts and the sciences could be written in terms of the continuing process by which new technologies create new environments for old technologies.' (1996: 276).

Although the older 'literary technologies' are being replaced by the digital technology, they are still essential in certain ways. For example, we still have oral storytelling today in the age of the Internet, and we still have more manuscripts and printed literary books than anybody can read in his or her entire life and they will continue to be important ways of literary creation and publication. Besides experiencing literary works on the computer screen, readers still enjoy them in newspapers, books and magazines,

experience them on television and in cinema, or listen to them on the radio. No matter whether they are state-of-the-art or out-dated, they are all an indispensable mechanism of literary creation and exchange nonetheless. However, the way of literary creation, reading, distribution and publication is increasingly dependent on the digital technology and the Internet will be playing the central role.

1.3. Technology and New Developments in Literature

The above sections reveal that the evolutionary process of world literature is from oral literature to written text, to mechanical printing and then to electronic texts. The reading, writing, distribution and publication of literature throughout the world share the same origin and follow almost the same evolutionary process. From the history of literary developments we can see the transformation of literature depends on, to a large extent, the emergence of cutting-edge technology of literary creation and publication. For a long time, paper and the like were the only choices for us besides the human mind to store literary work. New possibilities are brought into literature as the result of the advancement of new technologies. Thus the advancement of information technology stimulates a wide range of topics related to literature.

Although there are more factors like copyright disputes, and financial concerns for writers and publishers, technologically speaking, as technology advances, it is easier and easier to retain a literary creation, it becomes less and less expensive but more and more efficient to reproduce and distribute literary works, and many new genres and new forms of literary publication come into being as new affordances are provided by new media of literary creation and publication.

There are still signs of new forms and new applications of network technology, which hold the possibility of changing literature beyond recognition. Everything has two sides, however. So does digital technology. This restructuring of how literary works are created and published in the new age has also fueled bitter struggles between traditional writers and theorists. Many of them hold contradictory attitudes towards it and they have issued cautious warnings regarding digital technology and electronic text. They argue that anyone who can type and have Internet connection can publish online and their writing can cover any topic they are interested in. Thus, the boundary between 'literariness' and 'non-literariness' and that between reader and writer are broken. Decker (1999) warns that the reader may no longer 'concentrate on the text and logic argument', as the 'visual image has become primary.' And text will be 'auxiliary and ancillary' and there 'will be no substance to text,' suggesting an 'incorporeality and ephemeral nature'.

No matter whether we like or dislike the transformation brought by advancement in network technology, it has already become an indispensable part of modern life. Where there is advancement of 'literature technology', there will be literary transformation.

These different ages of literature above are not absolutely fixed historical periods, and the speed and the time of diffusion of those technologies to different literatures in the world are different and each geographical area has its own development process or characteristics. Needless to say, the Internet technology is also of vital importance to literature development in the Greater China region. As to the modern Chinese literature, with the advancement of the information technology, it is undergoing tremendous transformation and more changes are on the way. Changing technologies will continually reshape the very nature of Chinese literature in the Greater China region. To understand

new developments in Chinese literature in the age of the Internet, we need next to have a sound knowledge of Internet development in the Greater China region as a whole. In the following chapter, I will review brief Internet development in Greater China and examine the current situation of Internet penetration in the region.

Chapter Two: Internet in the Greater China Region

In a world characterized by instant flow of information through the Internet, it is also playing an increasingly important role in Chinese society. Chinese society in Greater China has witnessed an unprecedented free flow of information, more discussion, and more openness within and outside the region. It is evident that the Internet offers a faster and more convenient channel for Chinese people to express themselves, to seek information and entertainment within or outside the region.

Although the Internet is more controlled in Mainland China than most countries in the world, except for about a dozen sensitive topics such as Falungong, a forbidden religion, independence of Tibet or overthrowing the communist government, Internet users can talk about anything they want to (See 4.4. for control and censorship of the Internet in Mainland China). For example, on November 20th 2005 in Shenzhen, China, the author searched for ‘法轮功’ (Falungong) and ‘西藏独立’ (independence of Tibet) through the most popular Chinese search engine Baidu.com, the result was ‘The page can’t be displayed’. At the same time, I searched for ‘中国政府的腐败’(Corruption in the Chinese government) using the same search engine, I got 40, 500 results. In one free forum (URL: <http://club.gdzjtour.com/cgi-bin/bbs.cgi?menu=show&id=200210211619&sltitle=20050512165647&page=2&see=0>) Internet users freely post their writings about the corruption in China. One remarked, ‘Chinese government is the most corrupted in the world,’ while another added, ‘the officials in the government have so many masks’ (the same URL; translation my own).

The example shows, except for those forbidden topics, Chinese Internet users can participate in online interactions or post their writings to voice their anger or

dissatisfaction with the government, with their life and careers, which can be viewed by all Chinese readers with Internet access.

The Internet technology is booming, and governments in the Greater China region are all investing heavily in the Internet facilities. Since the mid-1990s, the Internet has become an obvious and dynamic force in the cultural landscape in the Greater China region. Tens of thousands of websites located in the region have emerged and many more are emerging. The number of Internet users has exploded, too. In this section, to help understand new developments in Chinese literature in the age of the Internet, I will concentrate on Internet diffusion that emerges in the context of Greater China.

2.1. Internet Development in the Greater China Region

Scholars suggest that the Internet is just the beginning of a new era of networked information (Ruschkowski 2003). Those who first utilize the information technology to their benefit definitely will have a major competitive edge in this brand-new world. In the age of the Internet, while developed countries still lead the Internet in terms of technology and language content, Greater China is also emerging as a major player in the IT industry.

The Chinese governments in the Greater China region have all vigorously promoted information technology as a means to secure their positions in the world, integrate their economies into the global economy and bridge the gap between the developed countries. Consequently, the Internet has become increasingly important in the region.

The last decade has also witnessed explosive growth in Internet applications in the region. As in most other countries, the development of the Internet infrastructure in Greater China commenced in military and scientific circles.

In the relatively short time the Internet has been around in Greater China, the transformation brought by it is enormous. It has transformed Chinese people's life. Especially for young urbanities, the Internet has become an indispensable part of their life style. Like Internet users elsewhere in the world, they use the Internet for information, recreation, communication, emotional comfort, free resources etc. E-mail, search engines, online chat, software downloading, BBS, blog and online games are the most frequent Internet functions used by Chinese Internet users.

The Internet will continue to facilitate the communication and free flow of information across regional and national boundaries in Greater China. As to Chinese literature, new ways that Chinese literary works are created, read, published and shared through the Internet will definitely have far-reaching impact upon its developments. To understand the impact of the Internet upon development of Chinese literature in the region, we need to have a look at Internet diffusion in Chinese societies of the region.

2.2. Internet in Mainland China

Increased economic and cultural communication with the outside world and increased information flow from the outside world has been part of the transformation of Mainland China since the beginning of its opening-up and reform in 1978. Internet users there have proliferated rapidly since networks opened to the public. And the Internet growth is inevitable. The government's efforts have both nurtured and enforced the

country's Internet. Policy-makers in the Mainland have realized their country has to accelerate Internet growth to realize their modernization drive and catch up with the technologically advanced nations, as noted by Zhu, 'given the significant role that technology plays in modern economies, technology policies have become increasingly important to governments of all levels in the Mainland' (2002). Thus they have made Internet development and diffusion of new technologies an important strategy for the 21st century. As a result, the government has invested heavily for research and application of networking technology.

Clearly, the Internet has taken root in the Mainland. The number of websites and Internet users has expanded rapidly, and Chinese language content has proliferated, too. Up to June 30, 2004, there were 627,000 websites, with an increase of 32.5% compared with 2003 (Chinabyte.com 2004). In addition, the belief that the Internet technology can shape a new society assumes unprecedented popularity.

Internet usage in the Mainland is expected to accelerate in 2005, as the price of personal computers keeps falling and access to telecommunication networks grows. According to the official *Xinhua News Agency*, which cited an official with China's Ministry of Information Industry (*Rueters* 2004), China's Internet users are expected to grow 28 percent in 2005 to 120 million.

However, the fact that China is still a non-democratic, developing country means that 'there exists a wide range of constraining forces, such as governmental control, inadequate infrastructure, economic affordability, cultural perceptions, and language barriers' (Zhu 2002). In addition, the government is finding ways to control and counter the political impact of Internet use.

A developing country, the Internet infrastructure in the Mainland cannot be compared with that in the West. As to economic affordability, the gap between the Mainland's burgeoning urban middle-class and those who live in the remote rural areas is extremely huge (Knight & Song 1999). According to *Xinhua News Agency* (2005-7-8), Mainland China's most serious social problem is the widening income gap, especially between urban and rural residents. Statistics showed that the ratio of the average annual disposable income between urban and rural citizens stood at 1:3.23 last year, compared with 1:2.57 in 1985 (*Xinhua New Agency* 2005-7-8). Thus, the Internet users are heavily concentrated in well-off provinces and municipalities in China's economically dynamic coastal areas, primarily Jiangsu, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Shandong and Guangdong provinces. In addition, those who live in the rural areas are either illiterate or have no knowledge of the Internet. The age of the Internet has a totally different meaning for them, as it has kept them behind.

The government is making every effort to help the poor rural areas and the economic backwaters to catch up. In the recently 'Going West Movement' (西部大开发), the government urges companies, talented people and investment to go to west China and develop the backward section of the country. And it can be predicted that there will be a continuous expansion of the Internet penetration in rural areas. However, this digital divide between urban and rural areas, between middle class people and minimal wage workers, between the better-off coastal provinces and the inland economic backwaters, and between the well-educated and the illiterate is unlikely to be truly bridged any time soon.

2.3. Internet in Taiwan and Hong Kong

The Internet has taken root in Hong Kong and Taiwan and they have high levels of Internet use as a result of their economic strength. The Internet penetration in the two areas is among the world's highest. The governments in the two areas have promoted the Internet technology as a means to enhance their economic competitiveness and integrate their economies into the global economy. According to statistics provided by *The Internet World Stats* (2005-07-19. See Table 1), there were 12,200,000 Internet users in Taiwan at the end of June 2005, approximately 53.5% of the total population. In Hong Kong, Internet users amounted to 4, 878,713 at the end of June 2005, approximately 66.9% of the total Hong Kong population.

The Internet World Stats has been conducting surveys on Internet usage in the world. Its latest reports on July 16, 2005 about the Internet use growth and the Internet penetration in the world from 2000 to 2005 provide a picture of extremely rapid growth in the number of Internet users in Mainland China. The number of Internet users has increased more than 3 times in 5 years. However, compared with Taiwan and Hong Kong in the following table, Mainland China still has a long way to go to bridge the digital gap, as its Internet penetration is only 7.5% to 9% of that of Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Area	Internet Users, Latest Data	Use Growth (2000-2005)	Penetration (% Population)
Mainland China	94,000,000	317.8 %	7.3%
Taiwan	12,200,000	94.5%	53.5%
Hong Kong	4,878,713	113.7%	66.9%

**Table 1: Internet Penetration in the Greater China Region
(Source: Internet World Stats July 16, 2005**

URL:<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats3.htm>

In terms of broadband penetration, Taiwan and Hong Kong are also among the world's highest, at 16 and 22 lines per 100 population respectively. Mainland has about 2 lines per 100 population, but its increase rate is at 87%, outnumbering the 19% increase rate of Taiwan and Hong Kong in 2004. (*Economist*: Thursday July 7th 2005)

Alongside the explosive growth of networks and diversity of applications of information systems and communication technologies, more radical changes of the Internet can be predicted in the next few decades. It is true that the Internet encourages a new era of literary development, but it also has possibly marginalizing effects for those Internet-less people. However, as the Mainland concentrates on economic, social and technological build-up, the world's fastest-growing major economy will bridge the digital gap and catch up with other entities in the region and advanced countries in terms of Internet infrastructure and Internet penetration.

Chapter Three: A Brief History of Chinese Language and Literature

Language is one of the key abilities that separate human beings from other creatures and it is one of the most important forms of human communication. People use language to communicate with other people sharing the same language. To some extent, we can say that people and culture in the world are defined by the language they speak as a mother tongue. Thus, it is also one of the key features that separate one people and one culture from the others.

Chinese language and literature are among the oldest in the world, dating back to four thousand years ago. As the result of the cultural and the aesthetic heritage of Chinese literature and the current political situation in the region, the new developments in Chinese literature are somewhat different from what has happened in the Western context, although they follow almost the same process. To understand new developments in Chinese literature in the age of the Internet, we need to look at the development of Chinese language and literature from a historical perspective. A sound understanding of their development and evolution will not only serve as a background in understanding the genesis of Chinese literature but also provides a foundation to describe and identify its new developments.

3. 1. A Brief History of the Chinese Language

China has one of the longest continuous traditions of writing in the world. It can be dated back to the first use of Chinese characters for purposes of ritual divination during the *Shang* (商) *Dynasty*, which stretches from 1570-1045 BC (MSN Encarta). Around

1000 BC, China consisted of hundreds of small feudal kingdoms. These kingdoms fell and merged with regional powers. After constant wars, there existed only 7 major kingdoms in China around 250 BC. These kingdoms had different spelling or pronunciation for the same word, as noted by Xu Shen (许慎) in the preface of his ‘《说文解字》’ (*Suo Wen Jie Zi*), one of the oldest Chinese dictionaries, that shortly before China was unified for the first time in 221 BC ‘the pronunciation of words and the form of the writing are different’ (言语异声, 文字异形, translation my own). The Chinese character ‘宝’ (*Bao*, which means ‘precious’ in Chinese) had 194 different styles and writings in this period. Many other characters like ‘眉’ (*mei*, ‘brow’) and ‘寿’ (*sou*, ‘longevity’) also have more than 100 different spellings (Gu 2003). The different identities of people in those kingdoms within China were often associated with varieties of languages. The fact that people from different states used different forms of writings had caused disunity in the country. Finally, China was unified as a single political and cultural entity by *Emperor Qinshihuang* (秦始皇) in 221 BC when he conquered all the other kingdoms by force and founded the first united, centralized state in Chinese history: *Qin Dynasty* (221BC-207BC).

Even though people have different views about *Emperor Qinshihuang*, some regard him a despot, some think he is a hero, as he is depicted in a recent Chinese film entitled *Hero*, but most people will agree that he has the greatest and longest-lasting influence throughout Chinese history. One of his most outstanding feats is the standardization of the Chinese writing system. He ordered his prime minister Li Si (李斯) to unify the Chinese writing system based on ‘Lesser Seal’ (小篆 *Xiao Zhuan*), the official script of

the *Qin State* (秦国). Since then, the Chinese written language was unified and China has had only one form of writing ever since. The introduction of a standardized written language has had a unifying impact upon Chinese history. It not only benefited economic development and cultural exchanges within China, but has also had a strong and long-lasting impact on Chinese literature.

Unlike English, Chinese is not a phonetic language; it is an 'ideographic writing system'. Chinese pronunciation is not directly related to its writing. Traditional Chinese scholars and poets use the *Qieyun* (切韵), 'a Chinese character rime dictionary invented in 601AD', to indicate the pronunciation (Reference.com 2005). In 1913, a system called *Zhuyin* (注音) was created to represent the pronunciation of Chinese. It uses different phonetic symbols to transcribe Chinese characters so people can pronounce the words. It is still used in traditional Chinese to represent the pronunciation today. An alphabet based on Roman letters called *Pinyin* (拼音) was created in the Mainland in the 1950s for people to represent the pronunciation. What the author uses in the thesis to represent the Chinese pronunciation is *Pinyin*.

The unique system in Chinese to represent its pronunciation causes a sharp distinction between *Written language* (文Wen) and *Spoken language* (语Yu) in Chinese. People all use the standardized and uniform script in spite of all the spoken varieties of Chinese. Thus, according to DeFrancis (1984), compared with other languages, in Chinese, 'the concept of a distinct and unified combination of both written and spoken forms of language is much less strong'.

As to the evolution of written Chinese, it has undergone tremendous change over the centuries, too. Following is a brief evolutionary history of Chinese scripts. Throughout

the history, the form of Chinese has changed a lot and its writing has been simplified; however, it has remained a conspicuous ‘ideographic writing system’ over its long development.

	oracle bone <i>jiaguwen</i>	greater seal <i>dazhuan</i>	lesser seal <i>xiaozhuan</i>	clerkly script <i>lishu</i>	standard script <i>kaishu</i>	running script <i>xingshu</i>	cursive script <i>caoshu</i>	modern simplified <i>Jiantizi</i>
rén (*nín) human								
nǚ (*nraʔ) woman								
èr (*nhaʔ) ear								
mǎ (*mraʔ) horse								
yú (*ŋha) fish								
shān (*srān) mountain								
rì (*nit) sun								
yuè (*noʊ) moon								
yǔ (*wɦaʔ) rain								
yún (*wan) cloud								

Table 2: A Brief History of the Chinese Language

(Table Source: <http://www.ancientscripts.com/chinese.html>)

In the Mainland in 1958 (Katzner 2002: 74), simplified characters (*Jiantizi* 简体字) were introduced. The method of simplification is by ‘reducing the number of brush strokes of a character, either by logical revision or by importing ancient, simpler variants or obscure forms. (e.g. 葉 maps to 叶; 萬 maps to 万)’(Recipeland.com 2006). While Mainland China has moved to simplified Chinese characters, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao have maintained the use of traditional Chinese characters. Thus, the Chinese writing system can be divided into two, with simplified Chinese characters used in Mainland China and Singapore, and traditional Chinese characters used in Taiwan, Hong

Kong, and in Chinese-speaking communities in most other South-East Asian and other Chinese communities all over the world.

The difference between the two writing systems has caused problems for Chinese readers, as a reader of one generally will have difficulties when reading literary works in the other system. In the age of the Internet, the two different writing systems of Chinese cause extra troubles as they are encoded differently on the computer. In the following, I will look at Chinese language online and the implication of the difference between the two writing systems for Chinese literature online.

3.2. Chinese Language Online

Theoretically, the Internet breaks the geographic boundaries and allows people worldwide to share information and communicate with each other freely. The primary writing system used on the Internet of Greater China is the Chinese writing system. However, modern computing was designed with English as the basis for programming languages. Chinese is 'an ideographic' and not an alphabet-based language and it contrasts markedly with the alphabetic language. It has more problems when it comes to the digitalization of the language; there are more likely to be problems publishing in Chinese on the Internet than in most alphabetic languages such as English and French. The two different writing systems of Chinese cause extra troubles as they are encoded differently on computer. When webpages in Chinese are displayed in the browsers in an international environment, painful experiences like incorrect display and lack of language plug-ins are common to Chinese users, which are rare for English users or users of other alphabetic languages.

Both Mainland China and Taiwan have developed local Chinese character codes. As a result, there generally are two major encoding systems used for Chinese online: Big 5 and GB, which are respectively responsible for the two divisions of Chinese-traditional Chinese and simplified Chinese. Traditional characters used in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao are encoded in 'Big5' code and simplified characters used in the Mainland are encoded in 'GB' code. Although the Big5 and GB codes can both display traditional and simplified characters, Big5 has become associated with traditional characters and GB with simplified characters and this Big5/GB distinction is used on many websites. The following table is a brief comparison of GB and Big5. From the table, we can see that the Big5 contains almost twice as many Chinese characters as that of GB. Their structures are different. Thus, there is a language plug-in and conversion software for the two encoding systems. Incorrect display is still very common, because the conversion process is quite complex. One simplified character can correspond to two or more traditional characters, then the conversion tools frequently will fail to choose the correct one. Mistakes and missing characters will be misleading to the readers.

Character Set	GB	Big5
English Name	7-bit Coded Character Set of Information Interchange	Computer Chinese Glyph and Character Code Mapping Table
Language Displayed	Simplified Chinese	Traditional Chinese
Chinese Character Contained	6,743	13,494
Special Character Contained	682	441
Date of establishment	June 1, 1982	May 1, 1984
Structure	94x94 matrix	94x157 matrix

Table 3: A Comparison of Coding Systems of the Simplified Chinese and Traditional Chinese

In addition, there are many extensions of GB and Big5, for example: GB 1988-80, GB 2312-80, GBK, GB 18030-2000, Big5+, Big5E and so on. They make the conversion between GB and Big5 even more troublesome.

Internet browsers are now multilingual, but the different Chinese coding systems still constitute a headache for Internet users. They require users to install two language packs, install different input methods, install conversion tools to switch between the two Chinese systems, choose the right Chinese set and so on. With the development of digital technology, the two types of Chinese scripts become less and less compatible. The division of the Chinese language coding systems will have a negative impact on the unification of the country and the unification of Chinese literature.

Luckily, the problem caused by different Chinese encoding systems has been noticed now. The invention of Unicode will have a great influence on the future of adopting Chinese online. According to the Unicode Consortium, 'Unicode provides a unique number for every character, no matter what the platform, no matter what the program, no matter what the language' (Unicode, Inc). It is an increasingly popular code in the Mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong to define both simplified and traditional Chinese.

3.3. A Brief History of Chinese Literature

The 5,000 years of continuous civilization in China has accumulated a wealth of classical literature and canonical texts. One of the aspects of Chinese literature that

allows its continuity can be credited to Chinese language, which also helps to shape many characteristics of Chinese literature. The literary style of classical Chinese literature is different from English literature, as explained in *Columbia Encyclopedia*, it was 'exceedingly concise and was unmatched for its vigor, richness, and symmetry. Historical and literary allusions abounded, and consequently special dictionaries were required for their elucidation' (Columbia Encyclopedia 2005).

Chinese culture influences the development of Chinese literature. It is generally accepted that although there are distinctive differences between Chinese people in different geographical areas, the cultural practices within them have common denominators. Many scholars have studied the main characteristics of Chinese literature (Link 2000, Yuan 1999 & Braester 2003). During its long history of development, it has formed four main characteristics. In the following, I will discuss them one by one.

3.3.1. Chinese Literature: an Open and Constantly Evolving System

China has a rich and deep-rooted tradition in literature. It is constantly evolving and enterprising Chinese writers continuously bring in new literary forms, styles and genres throughout the history.

Early Chinese literary writings generally were related to philosophical writings such as *Analects* of Confucius (551-479 BC) and *Tao-Te Ching* by Lao-tzu (around 600 BC). These writings were often about systems of morality and statecraft to bring about peace and harmony, an ideal yin-yang system or how people should act in the society to bring utmost benefit to all citizens.

Chinese literature then extended to poetry, drama and prose. Poetry became well established as a literary form during the *Tang Dynasty* (618-907). The greatest poets in China, Li Bo (李白), Bai Zhuyi (白居易) and Du Fu (杜甫), were all from this dynasty. The short story as a genre began to develop during the *Tang dynasty*. Novels began in the *Song Dynasty* (960-1279) and the four great Chinese novels, *Monkey King*, *The Romance of Three Kingdoms*, *Outlaws of the Marsh*, and *The Dream of the Red Chamber* or *The Story of the Stone* all emerged in *Ming* (1368-1644AD) and *Qing Dynasty* (1644-1912AD).

Drama is another old and important literary form. Along its tradition of popular entertainment, Chinese drama began to win popularity in *Tang Dynasty* and the most prosperous period of Chinese drama was in *Yuan Dynasty* (1279-1368AD). During the following centuries, dramas tended to become longer, and the opera dominated. Peking opera was a favorite artistic and cultural medium for Chinese people in the north. Spoken drama was not generally conspicuous until the 20th century when the Western spoken drama was introduced into China.

Throughout history, Chinese literature paid great attention to learning from, and absorbing 'nutrition' from literatures in other languages. It borrowed thoughts, genres and writing skills from other literatures or philosophical thinking, especially from Buddhism originating from Indian and literatures from Xiyu (西域), or what is now called Xin Jiang (新疆) Province in China today. From the late 19th century, literature from the West provided an impetus for transformation in Chinese literature. The translation from canonical Buddhist works and the literary works from the West have greatly enriched Chinese literature.

3.3.2. High Status of Literature in Chinese History

Throughout Chinese history, rulers and scholars alike placed great emphasis on literature. The attitudes of Chinese emperors and scholars toward literature had profound influences on the development of Chinese literature. Confucius (551-479 BC), the great sage in China, claimed that ‘writing serves to reflect the Tao; poetry serves to express the ideal’ (文载道诗言志 translation my own). Similar remarks by other ancient sages and the attitude of many literary critics to literary creation produced profound influences on later developments of Chinese literature.

The impact of a Confucius-based philosophy and cultural heritage as the common denominator is clearly revealed in the development of Chinese literature throughout history. The traditional Confucian values such as hierarchy, loyalty and harmony have laid an ethical and ideological foundation for classical Chinese literary works.

In addition, Link (2000:104) has observed that ‘Chinese cultural assumptions of ties between writings and governance are centuries old’. The ancient emperors in China attached great importance to literary capacities of officials and regarded literacy as a key indication and a great undertaking beneficial to an official’s management capacities, which was reflected in the ancient Imperial Examination System (科举制度) in China (Crozier 2002). The examination began in *Sui Dynasty* (隋朝 581-618AD) and was used to recruit civil officials and it laid stress on Confucius and literary classics. Actually, the core texts of the examination consisted of the *Four Books* and the *Five Classics* (四书五经) and other ancient literary classics. Learning by heart the Confucian classics and literary past was fundamental to success in the exam.

From *Ming Dynasty* (1368-1644AD), all test-takers were required to follow a fixed and prescribed format with eight parts called ‘八股文’ (eight-legged essay) in their writing. Thus, in this sense, it discouraged literary creativity. However, this system, which attached paramount importance to literary capacities and liberal arts knowledge of the examinees, helped to produce numerous essayists, poets and novelists in ancient China. Jia Yi (贾宜), Han Yu (韩愈), Wang Anshi (王安石), and Wen Tianxiang (文天祥), some of the greatest essayists and poets in China, were prime ministers in the imperial government. Numerous prominent poets and essayists, like Ouyang Xiu (欧阳修), Su Shi (苏轼), Xin Qiji (辛弃疾), were high-rank officials who also distinguished themselves in the Imperial Examination. Some emperors themselves were extremely important figures in Chinese literary history, like Li Yu (李煜) and Cao Pi (曹丕).

In addition, more literary and artistic achievements arose from intellectual energies that their creators had intended to channel into earning a position as an official in the imperial government. Due to various reasons or circumstances, many Chinese poets, novelists and writers did not do well on the exam. As observed by Crozier (2002: 27), ‘failure in the examinations is a recurrent theme running through the Chinese literary canon’. The greatest classic poets in Chinese history, Li Bo (李白), Bai Zhuyi (白居易) and Du Fu (杜甫) from Tang Dynasty, and Chao Xueqin (曹雪芹), the author of the Chinese novel *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, are ready examples; failure in the Imperial examinations unexpectedly propelled them to excel as a writer.

Literature holds a high status in Chinese history, but only canonical and classical literary works can enjoy the high status. So the popular literary works, like novels and

short stories, were regarded as low status and belonged to the common people. In the following, I will first discuss the diversified literary schools in Chinese literary history and then will discuss canonical and popular literary works in Chinese literary history respectively.

3.3.3. Diversified Literary Schools in China

Throughout Chinese literary history, there have been various literary schools. As a result, diversified literary schools have contributed tremendously to the tradition of Chinese literature. This can be contributed to the contending situation of Chinese ideological and cultural circles called ‘A Hundred Schools Bloom’. It began as early as the *Spring and Autumn Period* and the *Warring States Period* in 110-221BC, in which about a hundred different schools of thinking emerged. The four major ideological and cultural schools were Confucianism, Mohism, Taoism, and the Legalist School.

In every stage of development of Chinese literature, and for each genre and style of literary creation, there have been different schools, each having its own distinctive features. For example, in *Song Dynasty* in China, there were two distinctively different schools of *Ci* (词) poetry writing. While Xin Qiji and many other important poets belonged to ‘*Haofang School*’ (豪放派; literally it means ‘bold and unconstrained’) in *Ci* poetry writing, others like An Shu (晏殊), An Jidao (晏几道), Liu Yong (柳永) and Li Qinzhaohao (李清照) belonged to another important school called ‘*Wanyuepai School*’ (婉约派; literally it means ‘delicate and constrained’). Their styles, tone and diction were each distinctively different.

The flourishing of numerous literary schools and genres and styles of Chinese literary creation is an important indication of the fact that China has abundant talented writers who boasted tremendous artistic potential. The diversified literary schools are also an important impetus to the development and prosperity of Chinese literature.

3.3.4. Scholarly and Popular Literature in China

Classic and canonical works hold a prominent position in Chinese literature. The fact that ancient China was a hierarchical society made the position of classical and canonical works even more important. After the formative classical period that began with Confucius, ‘the literary history of China becomes one of imitation-with-variations of different models’ (Wagner 2005). Imitation of the classical works or works by important writers was of great importance in traditional Chinese literary creation. As a famous Chinese saying goes, ‘if you can repeat by rote three hundred poems from the Tang Dynasty, you will at least be able to chant, if unable to create’ (‘熟读唐诗三百首, 不会做诗也会吟’ translation my own). Thus, the first step in classical Chinese literary creation is to memorize and imitate the canonical and classical works, and the key to successful literary creation is to remember by heart the classical and canonical works and accumulate knowledge and different writing techniques.

In the development of Chinese literature, although as literary language became increasingly removed from spoken language, the difference between popular and scholarly literature became obvious. However, in Chinese literature, folk literature and popular literature have always developed side by side with scholarly literature and greatly driven the development and prosperity of Chinese literature as a whole.

Take China's earliest anthology of poetry *The Book of Songs* as an example. It is a collection of 305 folk ballads from 1100BC-700BC. It reflects the diversity of the social life at that time and it is also a blending of both popular literature and scholarly literature. *Feng*¹ in the anthology (风 Ballads) belongs to folk literature. For example 'Cutting Down Sandalwood' is a ballad of slaves' work and 'Chasing the Phantom' is a ballad about how one fails to reach the person he or she is in love with. *Ya* (雅 Festal Odes) has characteristics of both folk and scholarly literature, 'We Pluck the Bracken' is written by a soldier coming back from the frontier, but *Song* (颂 Sacrificial Songs) is purely scholarly literature. 'Hahhoa!' is written in time of King Cheng, the second King of Zhou Dynasty (around 1100BC). It shows the kind of mass farming employing 10,000 hands then in existence, supervised by the King himself.

Another example is the *Ci* poetry (词) *San-qu* songs (散曲) and *Fu* prose (赋). They belong to scholarly literature in Chinese literature and they have strict format, but all started as forms of folk literature. *Storytelling scripts* (话本) was a very popular form of folk literature starting from *Song Dynasty*. It evolved into the novel during the *Ming* and *Qing Dynasties*. Two prominent works of the four greatest novels in Chinese literature, *Outlaws of the Marsh* (水浒传), and *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (三国演义) were both based on popular folk stories and were transformed to novels by their authors. In addition, there are so many folklores and popular stories in Chinese literature, which have been rewritten generation after generation in different genres. They are an infinite resource for literary creation in China.

¹ Translations of all the titles of the poems are from *Book of Songs*, translated by Arthur Waley (1996).

3.4. Modern Chinese Literature

In the early 20th century, when China was on the verge of becoming the colony of Western powers, together with dissatisfaction of the corrupted government of *Qing Dynasty* and the out-dated Chinese philosophical thoughts like Confucius, the dissatisfaction with traditional literature was also expressed in the *New Culture Movement* in 1919. Despite the fact that China was in a most difficult and complicated time economically and politically, this period was particularly important and distinctive in the development of Chinese literature as it brought in a new literary language, different genres and writing techniques and allowed Chinese literature to evolve into an open system available to the whole society.

It was in this spirit of ‘reform and renaissance’ that one group of intellectuals, led by Western-educated scholars, like Chen Duxiu (陈独秀), Lu Xun (鲁迅) and Hu Shi (胡适) proposed to abolish the feudal system, and introduce ‘Mr. Science’ and ‘Mr. Democracy’ to China. Starting from 1917, they also began to propose a major new direction for Chinese literature and language. Up to that time, Chinese literary creation was removed from the everyday spoken language, as all respectable literature was written in the classical language, which was highly stylized. The new movement called for using the vernacular language as the language for literary creation.

Consequently, many writers experimented with a wide variety of new styles and artistic techniques derived from Western literature using vernacular language. New literary forms and styles made impressive progress in this period. Prose and verse of a

popular nature began to emerge and become successful. Literary works in this period attached great attention to people's lives and the future of the country. Thus, writers like Lu Xun and Guo Moruo, with a theme of patriotism to save China and a revelation of social ills, gave birth to modern Chinese literature. To some extent, this period laid the foundation of modern literature, as observed by (Lau: 1981) '1919-1949 brings together some of the best and most historically significant works of short fiction written in China in this century'. The most outstanding representative works of this era are the novels, poetry and drama by those writers who experimented with new ways of literary creation. *The Diary of a Madman* and *The True Story of Ah Q* by Lu Xun, the poetry anthology *The Goddesses* by Guo Moruo, and the plays *Thunderstorm* and *Sunrise* by Cao Yu, the novel *Midnight* by Mao Dun, the trilogy novels *Family*, *Spring and Autumn* by Ba Jin, the novel *Camel Xiangzi* by Lao She (Lau: 1981).

3.5. Contemporary Chinese Literature

Chinese literature also directly reflects the political and social life in Greater China. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Communist government ordered that all literature should strictly adhere to the communist party's doctrine and serve the needs of the people.

The soviet influence that dominated literary creation in Mainland China was based on China Mao's famous '*Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art*' in 1942, (《在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话》). His proletarian view had a long-lasting impact on literature that 'all artistic work should be intended for the masses of the people, and in the

first place for the workers, peasants and soldiers.’ (Mao 1942, quoted from Holm 1982: 273). His talks set the literary standard for literary creation in Mainland China and opened up a new era of ‘proletarian literature’. Thus, after modern China was founded in 1949, socialist realism became the uniform style of Chinese literary creation in the Mainland. As noted by Link (2000: 5), ‘one of the most striking features of the situation of literature under Chinese communism was the widespread assumption of its importance to the rest of life’. In the decades to come, it concentrated on describing the realistic lives of peasants and workers, and promoting the glorious future under the Communist Party of China. ‘Reportage literature’ (报告文学 Baogao Wenxue) is representative of this approach to literary creation. Novels and dramas in Mainland China exhibit many of the same aesthetic conventions and subject matter of this approach. Distinguished writers and poets in the Mainland include Ding Ling (丁玲), Sun Li (孙犁), Wang Meng (王蒙), Zhang Kejia (臧克家), Huo Jingzhi (贺敬之), and Bin Xin (冰心).

Since 1949 when the Communist Party won control of the Mainland, under Marxist doctrines, the Mainland has undergone constant and sometimes disruptive political, social and cultural change. On its extreme during the infamous *Cultural Revolution* (1966-1976), all Chinese literary endeavors in the Mainland discontinued except for a few ‘model’ operas and heroic stories. Although there were numerous writers who continued to produce in secret, during that period only propagandistic literary works were published.

In addition, there were considerable upheavals and specific attempts to break away from classical literature. The 16-point ‘*Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese*

Communist Party (CCP) Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' (Aug. 8, 1966; quoted from PL magazine 1971) defines the struggle in this way:

'Although the bourgeoisie has been overthrown, it is still trying to use the old ideas, culture, customs and habits of the exploiting classes to corrupt the masses, capture their minds and endeavor to stage a come-back. The proletariat must do just the opposite: it must meet head-on every challenge of the bourgeoisie, in the ideological field and use the new ideas, culture, customs and habits of the proletariat to change the mental outlook of the whole of society'.

The interplay of all these factors has led to the dramatic transformation of literature in Mainland China. Only when Mao died and the government began to initiate a policy of reform and opening-up in 1978, were the restriction on literary freedom relaxed. Writers in the Mainland began to address topics of personal interest to them and their readers.

Thus, there are many politically sensitive or politically relevant literary works such as 'model' operas and heroic stories which are a must-read for Mainland people, but they are absent in Taiwan and Hong Kong. They are either unacceptable or have a reverse or negative meaning. After the massacre of the students' pro-democracy movement in the Tian'anmen Square in June 4, 1989, many writers fled China, fearing government punishments for their support of the democracy movement. Most of them continue to write in exile and publish their work in literary journals mostly in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Gao Xingjian, the only Chinese laureate of the Nobel Literature Prize, is a typical example.

Dramatic changes in economy and politics took place in Taiwan in the past five decades. Nevertheless, literary writing in Taiwan, to a large extent, continued to follow

the traditional styles and genres, but many writers began to experiment with emerging literary skills and styles in the 1960s. Taiwanese writers have adopted techniques from English literature in the United States and Britain and have formed their distinctive features. Thus, there are two opposite viewpoints regarding Chinese literature in Taiwan. One views Chinese literature in Taiwan within the framework of Chinese literature and it is still considered a tributary of Chinese literature, while the other doesn't regard Chinese literature in Taiwan as a tributary of Chinese literature, as it has its unique identity, as observed by Braester (2003: 160) that 'a literary corpus emerged that took it upon itself to forge a Taiwanese identity'. Nevertheless, writers and poets like Li Ao (李敖), Yu Guangzhong (余光中) Xi Murong (席慕容) and Long Yingtai (龙应台) and popular novelist like Qiong Yao (琼瑶) and San Mao (三毛), are widely read in the Mainland and Hong Kong.

Chinese writers in Hong Kong boast tremendous readership in Greater China. The popularity of movies produced in Hong Kong worldwide is an indication of the abundance of creative talents there. There are many possible explanations for the current literary situation in Hong Kong: economic, historical and aesthetic. A former colony of Britain, it was struggling between the Chinese and English dominance. Traditional literary pursuit and modern literary experimentation in both English and Chinese exist, conflict, and compete in the city. Nevertheless, it seems that literary works with commercial values dominate in the world commercial and financial center.

The most widely-read writers from Hong Kong are Jin Yong (金庸) and Liang Yushen (梁羽生), who have created a new and popular novel—the martial arts novel. Yi Shu (亦舒), a very productive writer in Hong Kong, published her first novel at the age of

17. Influenced by both Chinese and English culture, her works provide a vivid depiction of middle class life in Hong Kong. With 180 novels and essay collections, she has distinguished herself with her romantic but sober stories and concise and fashionable style. Her works are well received in Greater China and even in Southeast Asian countries. Liang Fengyi (梁凤仪) is an example. Although many view her as not a good writer, her novels are very popular among young Chinese readers. A writer with a PhD of English, she also boasted a rich business experience, including the stock exchange, journalism and advertising, and she opened the first agency of Filipino home workers in Hong Kong. Her novels concentrate on love, marriage and family of people in Hong Kong. Her novels are also called ‘财经小说’ (finance novel) as they provide a realistic depiction of the life, especially the lives of professional women in one of the most vibrant economies in the world.

Generally speaking, for contemporary Chinese literature, communist thoughts and Soviet influence dominated in the literary works in the Mainland. On the contrary, writers in Taiwan and Hong Kong borrowed writing skills from the West and many even have advanced degree(s) in English literature. Thus, the current situation of Chinese literature is that traditional literary pursuit and modern literary experiments, different ideologies, and different varieties of Chinese language co-exist, conflict and compete (Link 2000).

3.6. A New Era of Interaction Since the 1990s

Chinese literature is changing fast due to globalization and interaction between different locales within the Greater China region. In this section, I will discuss the interaction of Chinese literature with other literatures and the interaction of Chinese

literature within Greater China in the context of globalization. The metaphor 'global village' was first used to describe a world wired for instant communication. In the age of the Internet, communicating with someone in other parts of the world would be easy, as if the globe had shrunk to the size of a village. Therefore, a truly isolated state or area does not exist.

In Chinese history, although there are short terms when China is excluded from the outer world or is separated or divided as the result of civil wars or invasions by foreign powers, communication has always been the mainstream. Due to the interdependent economic and cultural connections, the Mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao share a common destiny and interests. Their cultural, linguistic and regional affinity is creating a strong cohesion for them now that channels of interaction and exchange have been resumed. As the world's most rapidly changing major economy, the Mainland is an ever increasing presence and influence in people's life in Taiwan and Hong Kong, connected to them by the free flow of people across regional borders, transferring of technology, investment, dissemination of information, and above all, by the Internet.

The Internet is a tremendous resource for Chinese people. Although there are some government controls in many respects, the Internet is an open tool for anyone who has a computer and Internet access; it is a tool that is being accessed with increased frequency. It facilitates communication and interaction for people living in different locales in the Greater China region. The interaction and exchanges between them bring people closely together again, giving shape to a relationship of interdependence, mutual understanding and respect, and mutual development.

In addition, the gap between different locales in Greater China has been narrowed economically, ideologically, culturally and politically. Communism used to be a barrier for interaction between them; however, the reform and opening-up of the Mainland have made it lose popularity, and as noted by Zhu, there will be fewer barriers for communication between different locales in Greater China:

‘It has revealed that Communism has become the least popular value orientation among Chinese audiences, whereas Post-materialism has already been adopted by a significant portion (about a quarter) of the populace. Compared with similar surveys in the 1980s, this represents both a sharp departure from the past and an unfolding path into the future.’ (Zhu 2002)

Contemporary China’s political arena, thriving economy and culture provide more freedom and an open atmosphere in which contemporary literature takes on a greater brilliance, as noted by Lynch (1999), “a combination of property rights reform, administrative fragmentation, and technological advance has caused the post-Mao Chinese state to lose a significant degree of control over ‘thought work’”. Poems, essays, fictions, films and dramas in a broad spectrum of themes and in many forms are quite popular. Newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, film and the Internet, all give writers of literature much scope for their exertions. In this process, the Internet plays an increasingly important and indispensable role in the development of Chinese literature. In the following chapter, I will discuss its impact on the reading, writing, distribution and publishing of Chinese literature.

Chapter Four: the Impact of the Internet Upon Chinese Literature

Literature is never static; it is dynamic and changeable. The age of the Internet is the fastest growing era in human civilization and innovations of information technology are rapidly transforming literature beyond recognition. The advancement of the Internet significantly re-configures the landscape of Chinese literature. The growing Mainland, because of its size and strength, is the most important center of Chinese literature. Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao are the other important centers. They all contribute to the construction of the new and transitional Chinese literature in the age of the Internet.

Due to the emerging digital technology, developments of Chinese literature are so intertwined and so hybrid that a separate history of any one area necessarily would leave out key influences and developments involving the other, and thus would create a distorted and inaccurate account.

In the context of an empirical approach to the current situation of Chinese literature in the age of the Internet, I will examine the impact of the Internet upon Chinese literature in this chapter. I propose the following preliminary aspects for discussion: homogeneity and diversity of Chinese literature in the age of the Internet, erosion of boundaries for literary interaction, the role and function of literary institutions, and control and censorship. These topics are closely related to the advancement and diffusion of the Internet technology and will shed some light on new developments in Chinese literature.

4.1. Homogeneity and Diversity of Chinese Literature in the Age of the Internet

As Benjamin has observed: ‘the uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being embedded in the fabric of tradition. The tradition itself is thoroughly alive and

extremely changeable' (1935). As the result of the changeable tradition of Chinese literature and the diffusion of the Internet, new homogeneity and diversity have been created in the new developments of Chinese literature.

The shared Chinese tradition provides a marker to Chinese people and Chinese literature. However, the difference in writing between traditional and simplified Chinese (see 3.2), and the difference in life styles, values and ideologies between people living in the Mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao are obvious. This can be explained by the different degree and different pace of changes of the same Chinese tradition in different locales in the region. In his widely cited essay '*Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy*,' Appadurai argues that 'in this new conjuncture of the world, the invention of tradition and other identity-markers becomes slippery', as the 'search for certainties is regularly frustrated by the fluidities of transitional communication' (1996: 4). Thus, these differences also generate diverse identities for people living in different locales of the region: Taiwanese identity, Hong Kong identity and Mainlander's identity.

In the same essay, Appadurai also differentiates five dimensions or global 'scapes,' flowing across cultural boundaries: 1) ethnoscares, the flow of peoples (immigrants, refugees, tourists and so on) throughout the globe as we become increasingly mobile, 2) technoscares, the global configuration of technologies moving at high speeds across previously impermeable borders, 3) financescares, the global grid of currency speculation and capital transfer, 4) mediascares, the distribution of the capabilities to produce and disseminate information and the large complex repertoire of images and narratives generated by these capabilities, 5) ideoscares, ideologies of states and counter-

ideologies of movements, around which nation-states have organized their political cultures (1996:7; summary by Al-Zubaidi).

In the age of the Internet, The five ‘scapes’ of Chinese societies in the Greater China region are all greatly influenced by the Internet. The Internet makes Chinese people less confined to one place, as no matter where they go, they can still be ‘connected’ and they can be easily reached through the Internet. The Internet also stimulates the speed of diffusion of technologies like machinery, hardware and software in the region. In addition, the Internet and E-commerce have helped form economic networks that link the Mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao together again and tied them into global currency markets, stock exchanges and marketplaces. The Internet and digital technologies also makes instant flow of images and information possible. The characteristic of universal accessibility of the Internet makes different ideologies and values easily approachable across the regional and national borders.

Needless to say, Chinese people’s cultural inheritance or their continuity with the past in the Greater China region still constitutes an important part of people’s or their local culture’s identity, but the free flows of people, media, technology, finance, and ideologies across the national and regional borders accelerate the process that configurations of people, place and heritage are ‘losing many semblances’ (Appadurai 1996).

As the result of the five ‘scapes’ dimensions and the influence of the Internet, Chinese literature in the region can now easily transcend regional borders. However, there is also a trend to localize media, media focus and media content in different locales of the region. For example, the Chinese portal website Sina.com has separate websites to

meet the demand of different readers in the Mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong respectively. They are www.sina.com.cn, www.sina.com.tw, and www.sina.com.hk. The content, focus and even diction of each website are localized. This new 'regionalism' as a result of the five 'scapes' dimensions puts value on the diversity and difference of identities in the Greater China area, and helps sustain, conserve and develop diversified identities within the region. The same is true with Chinese literature in all these areas. In addition, writers and readers are most likely to create, read and publish locally and the content is localized too. Regular readers will visit their local literature websites more frequently.

In a word, the homogeneity of Chinese literature will give a distinctive marker to Chinese literature. But the difference of Chinese literature in different locales of the region in the age of the Internet should not be regarded as something distracting or disturbing. Difference is essential for the diversity of human creativity, and it is also a source of exchange, innovation and creativity.

4. 2. Erosion of Boundaries for Literary Interaction

Mainland China had been cut off from the outside world and other locales in the region as the result of the cold war, the Culture Revolution in the Mainland and the difference in ideology. There was hardly any literary communication between the Mainland and Taiwan for almost three decades because of their animosity. The opening-up and reform policy in the Mainland marked the beginning of intra-regional literary exchange activities within Greater China.

The Internet not only brings the Greater China area, especially the Mainland, closer than ever to the world economy and market, but also stimulates closer cultural, economic and social interaction within the region, where the four entities are relatively independent but are increasingly becoming interdependent. The erosion of boundaries within the region will provide a force stimulating intra-regional communication and interaction.

The reason is that the Internet supports free, instant, and mutual interactions in the region and it also offers the possibility to jump borders in the region 'at a single mouse click'. It makes possible an unlimited and open resource for Chinese literary works of any genre and any flavor. The Internet has provided Chinese writers with new creative opportunities as well as new platforms to display their works to Chinese readers at large; it has also provided readers new channels for appreciation, sharing, communication and criticism. On the new media and its digital space, the boundary of literary creation, reading, and publishing can be crossed instantly. Thus, an active intra-regional literary scene without boundaries and the free flow of literary works are playing a very important role in elevating and connecting literary creation and publishing in the Greater China region. The Internet, as a global and open media, has become the central component of this process.

The erosion of boundaries for literary writing, reading, publishing and criticism in the Greater China region as a result of the Internet is also a process of 'decentralization of literature'. 'The text and the producer of the text become decentralized entities and hybrids precisely because of their infinite travel in digital space' (Grabovszki 1999); therefore not belonging to any 'nation' or even an 'imagined community' (Anderson: 1991).

As an interface for the self-identities of the urban youth, literary trends and global culture, the Internet helps to diminish the difference of Chinese people in different locales. For example, the fashion reflected in literary works originating in one place in the region can be read, imitated, adapted and even evolved in the other places. And readers from these areas will be able to share their sufferings and desire. A sense of attachment or closeness can be (re)constructed, even though some of them are thousands of miles away and there is even no direct air flight between their cities and they are not able to travel freely to the others' city without a visa-like Permit. The Internet has provided a new impetus to literary communication in this region. Thus, the Internet has made Chinese societies in this area realize a certain loosening of the tension between 'home' and 'the other', different ideologies, and 'democracy' and 'communist' in a systematic level via the appreciation of a writer in another locale. Thus we can say that the Internet provides a channel for the (re)construction of a unified cultural geography, although Greater China as a country is still divided and will remain so in the future.

Following the notion of the erosion of the boundaries, Herman and McChesney have observed:

'the relevant media analogy for the Internet, then, is not that of broadcasting with its limited number of channels, but, rather, that of magazine publishing or book publishing. Assuming no explicit state censorship, anyone can produce a publication, but the right to do so means little without distribution, resources and publicity' (1998:125).

Unfortunately, this process is intrinsically uncertain, and open to human intervention. For the Mainland, the government censorship and intervention are obvious

(for information about censorship and control in the Mainland, see 4.4.). For any literary works which touch upon the sensitive topics like ‘free election’, ‘religion’ or ‘Students’ Movement of 1989 in Tian’anmen Square’, will be tracked and then deleted from the website or they will be blocked if they are published in websites located outside the Mainland.

Hong Kong has a tradition of concentrating on commercial works rather than on non-commercial literary works. In addition, urban youths in Taiwan and Hong Kong are more drawn to pleasure seeking, sensuous, or aesthetically-pleasing literary works. Although, compared with their parents or other people born before the economic boom in the Mainland, the urban youth generation in the Mainland by and large seems not interested in political debates, but they are still more interested in the destiny and political reform of the country and less attracted by pleasure seeking, sensuous, or aesthetically-pleasing literary works, as observed by Shyu:

‘people in Mainland are more interested in politics and more likely to discuss politics with others...As society has become more modernized and its political arena become more democratic or market oriented, politics may lose its ground in people daily life, as in Taiwan and Hong Kong.’ (Shyu 2004:10)

No one would deny the erosion of boundaries will have great impact upon the communication and interaction of Chinese literature within the region. But it is like a double-edged sword. It unites the three areas in the Greater China areas, but it also reflects the differences of the three areas in terms of culture and taste. The erosion of boundaries as a result of Internet diffusion also has great impact upon literary institutions in the region.

4.3. The Role and Function of Literary Institutions

In the following, I will have a look at the role and function of literary institutions as the result of the erosion of boundaries. The obvious power of globalized capitalism to distribute and promote its cultural goods in every corner of the world is unfolding clearly in the age of Internet (Herman & McChesney 1998). Before the age of Internet, there existed a number of local, autonomous, distinct, well-defined, and robust publishing institutions in the different locales of the Greater China region. *The People's Publishing House* (人民出版社) in the Mainland, *the Wenchang Publishing House* (文昌出版社) in Taiwan and *Union Publishing Cooperation* (联合出版社) in Hong Kong are the major literature publishers in Greater China. Other literary institutions such as publishers, libraries, bookstores, and distributors all play a central role in the distribution of Chinese literary works. Traditionally, the circulation of Chinese literature depended on the existence and function of those institutions.

The roles of those traditional institutions are still important to the distribution and publication of literary works. However, their importance as distributors of literary works is being challenged by the Internet. In the age of the Internet, their roles are increasingly replaced or eclipsed by the Internet. Go to www.baidu.com, the major Chinese language search engine, and search for ‘文学网站’ (literature website). It will render 123,047 websites dedicated to Chinese literature (the date of the search is March 13, 2005). Most of these literature websites have a large collection of established Chinese literary works of all kinds of genres. And a growing number of websites are devoted to original Chinese literary writings, providing a venue for emerging writers or those interested in writing.

‘Because of the new media, literature obtains an additional public as well as individual dimension by means of the digital sphere’ (Grabovszki 1999). There are millions of literary works on the Internet and thousands more are emerging every day without any service from the traditional literary institution. Many traditional literary works would have never been published without the Internet. This can be explained by the change in the process of literary production and publication. The advantage of production and publication of digitized literary works means a dramatic increase of the quantity of literature.

The publishing communication between the Mainland, Hong Kong and Macao has been expedited since the latter two’s exercises of sovereignty were returned to China and a CEPA treaty was signed between them, which stipulates zero tariff for goods and service movement between them.

Prior to the early 1980s, however, books published in the Mainland were forbidden in Taiwan, and those published in Taiwan were forbidden in the Mainland. But publication exchange between the Mainland and Taiwan has exploded since the island started economic communication with the Mainland in the early 1980s. Literary works by the Mainland writers are not illegal any more. One publishing house is even publishing the collection of Chairman Mao’s doctrines in Taiwan this year. Nevertheless, the publication communication between the Mainland and Taiwan is so limited that the *First Cross-Taiwan Strait Book Fair* was held only in July 21-31, 2005 (*Xinhua News Agency*, 2005), although communication of the two in other fields is well-established.

In consequence, we must pay attention to the changing roles of the literary institutions in the context of the new age. In the age of the Internet, one would be

misguided to assume that literary production and publication now is similar to that of the pre-Internet age. A simple reference to the realities of production, distribution, and consumption of literature will tell us that the writing and publishing of literature and the role and function of literary institutions are totally different now. The notion that digital publication is equated with the written and print text publication will not serve us any more. Needless to say, the digitization of the book world is part of a larger historical process. In some ways, 'the new literature environment coming along with the Internet seems to embody many of the ideas associated with post-structuralism' (Svedjedal 1999). Instead of having print books with the name of the author, we have 'de-centered works' with anonymous authors. The change of the role and the function of literary institutions can be attributed to advancement in digital technologies. As Manuel Castells (1999) has pointed out:

'this process should be understood as a restructuring of capitalism into informational capitalism, a network society permeated with modern information technology working globally and in real time – that in fact, "globalization" is mainly the consequences of advances in information and communications technology'.

The diffusion of the Internet will change the landscape of literary publishing of Chinese literature. Internet as a new publication, merchandising, and distribution vehicle for books is related to the dream of the 'globally accessible literature' (Svedjedal 2000) where all writers and readers are connected to the Internet. As to literature publication, for today's Chinese writer, there is more to the Internet than one might notice at first glance. The traditional writer is beginning to realize that anonymous literature websites are more than a place to post their writings. In fact, the Internet is becoming a massive

publishing industry. The influence of the Internet is booming and its potential is still far from being fully exploited by the literary community.

As a result of the penetration of the Internet into the publishing industry, major literary journals and publishing houses in the Greater China area all have made their presences online. Some even have created successful web counterparts of their print editions. On the websites of ‘人民文学’ (*People’s Literature* URL: http://www.rw-cn.com/cms/template/index_rw.html) in the Mainland and ‘文讯’ (*Wen-Hsun*, URL: <http://www.wenhsun.com.tw/>) in Taiwan, people can read the latest literary works of these literature journals. And a reader can also search for archives.

The endeavor of the major literature journals and publishing houses to go online is an attempt to bypass the limited circulation and high costs of a printed magazine and reach as many potential readers as possible. For other literature websites, their initial impulse for the publication was to provide a venue for the numerous ‘writers’ hiding in the obscure world of Chinese literature. Those websites have become a virtual space for promoting an exchange and communication of literary works between Chinese writers and readers through the digital publication of the readers’ comments.

In addition, according to a national study of ‘People’s Reading Habits in China (the Mainland)’, there is a trend that people are reading fewer and fewer print books, although the literacy rate in the Mainland is continuously increasing. In 2003, only 51.7% people read books regularly, down 8.7% from 1998. Also according to the study, in 1998, only 3.7% of people in China read on the Internet regularly, but the number increased to 18.3% in 2003, with an annual increase of 78.9%. The traditional media are still the

major channels for people to obtain information; however, they are challenged by the Internet. (Chinesenewsnet.com 2004; original text in Chinese)

The Internet and new book distribution companies such as Amazon.com have revolutionized the book trade in the world. The transformation is particularly evident in the area of popular literary works, but also in the distribution of scholarly literature. A large number of companies similar to Amazon.com are emerging in the Greater China region. For example, Dangdang.com in the Mainland have enabled Chinese readers all over the world to purchase books provided they have Internet access, no matter where they live. People in Hong Kong and Taiwan can purchase literary books from the Mainland websites and Mainland readers can also purchase books from websites located in the other Chinese communities.

Due to the short history and the fast expansion of the Internet, the former copyright laws in the Greater China region don't have adequate stipulations regarding the uploading, storing, downloading and copyright of literary works online. In addition, in the case of copyright violation of literary works online, the whole process of lawsuits and the difficulties to track the offender make it hard for the owner of the copyright to take action. Furthermore, the current political situation between the Mainland and Taiwan makes it impossible to sue offenders on the other side of the Taiwan Strait.

Taking advantage of the online copyright laws, many literature websites post online published literary works from classics to the latest popular martial arts novels for download or browsing. Classics and serious literary works from the Mainland are well-received, and popular martial arts novels from Hong Kong and love stories, essays and novels related to everyday life from Taiwan are particularly enjoyed by Chinese readers

(See 3.5 for detail). They are all collected in these websites and a reader can even find them all in one website. Some of these websites categorize the literary works they collected by the location of the writer. Thus, readers can read the best works from each area just by a click.

Many ‘underground Internet novels’ were discovered on the Internet and became popular. A ready example is the film ‘*Lanyu*’ (蓝宇), which is based on a novel titled ‘*Beijing Story*’ on the Internet. In spite of the extreme success of the film based on the novel, the author of the novel is still anonymous. The sexually explicit novel is about a romance of a couple of gay lovers. It was first distributed by homosexual people through E-mail and newsgroups. And then it was circulated on all kinds of websites, literary website included. If the novel were submitted as a print publication in the Mainland, it would have been bowdlerized or even rejected by government censors.

Stanley Kwan (关锦鹏), the Spielberg of Hong Kong and a gay director, read the story online and converted it into a movie. Two obscure actors Liu Ye (刘烨) and Wu Jun (胡军) from the Mainland starred in the movie. The film is still forbidden in the Mainland, but in 2004 it won 10 awards in the Taiwan *Golden Horse Film Festival*, the most important film award in Taiwan. The actor who played *Lanyu*, the hero in the movie, won the *Award of the Best Actor* and began his stardom ever since in the Greater China region.

Many critics maintain that readers will never fully accept the process of reading books on a computer and people debate heatedly on this topic, and people’s views are varied (Please see a discussion forum: *Will electronic reading devices eventually replace books?* <http://www.writerswrite.com/speakout/ebooks.htm>). Even in the

technologically advanced countries of the world, the role of the Internet as a medium of literary creation and reading or as a medium of communication between distributors and customers is still not as significant as the traditional forms of publication. Readers and writers will continue to demand the look and feel of traditionally published books. But what will happen for the new generation of creators and audience, who are trained from primary school on to write and read on the computer?

4.4. Control and Censorship

The Internet has penetrated the Mainland at a rapid rate. A rapid development in Chinese language publishing on the Internet began around the mid 1990s, when a large number of Chinese language Internet sites in the Greater China region emerged. Although the government in the Mainland promotes network technologies in a bid to integrate it to the global market and bridge the technological gap between the advanced countries, it still has a contradictory attitude to the Internet. Control and censorship of Internet contents reflects this attitude of the Mainland government.

Many scholars have done extensive research about the Internet control in China (Kalathil & Boas 2001; Lynch 1998: 255-72). The aim of the control by the Mainland government is to restrict free expression of opinion and circulation of sensitive information through the Internet. According to Kalathil and Boas (2001), the control comprises 'multiple levels of legal regulation and technical control and it involves numerous state agencies and thousands of public and private personnel'. The government in the Mainland restricts Internet access, monitors online behavior, and censors and filters content transmitted, through multiple methods, including web-pages, blogs, online

discussion forums, and BBS (bulletin board systems). In addition, it seeks to 'extend central control through some proactive strategies, guiding the development of the medium to promote their own interests and priorities' (2001). Through those strategies, the government can counter the challenges posed by Internet use and even utilize the Internet to extend its reach and authority. Unsurprisingly, sensitive contents in the website located in the Mainland frequently are non-existent as they are not allowed to be discussed, or will be deleted immediately once they are uploaded on the Internet. For the websites located outside the Mainland, any webpage that contains sensitive content for the government will be blocked. The approach of the Chinese government to the Internet reflects its conflicting views about the Internet. On one hand, the government needs the Internet to integrate China into the global economy. Thus, it promotes free flow of information. On the other hand, the 'authoritarian government' is afraid of the 'liberating effects' brought by the Internet (Kalathil: 2001).

The Mainland government still closely examines the content and flow of information on the Internet, as noted by Liu (2002),

'its (Mainland China's) transformation into a post-revolutionary capitalist state, neither socialist nor capitalist, modern nor postmodern... China's is a hybrid culture that embodies the fundamental tensions and contradictions of globalization. Although socialist alternatives and experiments have been drastically altered--if not completely abandoned--in China today, Mao's rhetoric still legitimizes the state, an inherent contradiction creating a sense of ideological crisis among intellectuals'. (Liu: 214)

Thus, the problems of control and censorship in Mainland China used to be and still are a barrier for literary creation and communication within Greater China. 'The control

and censorship of literature occurs in both democratic and non-democratic countries in the world and with regard to all kinds of media' (Grabovszki 1999). However, in the democratic and free countries or areas, the control and censorship is not as noticeable as that in the non-democratic countries and areas. Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao follow a path of Western democracy. The writers there have minimal interference from the government. The political atmosphere in communist China, to some extent, creates tremendous difficulties for literary writing in the Chinese language and even more for discussion of creative freedom. The control and censorship in the Mainland is a huge hinderance to literary creation. Chinese writers still don't have the creative freedom and if their writings are about sensitive topics, their works will not be published. These writers will be punished or will be sent to jail in some extreme cases. Thus, many writers have expressed their frustration and disappointment at the control and censorship in the Mainland. According to Gao Xinjian (高行健), the Noble Literature laureate and exiled Chinese writer:

'Chinese literature in the twentieth century time and again was worn out and indeed almost suffocated because politics dictated literature: both the revolution in literature and revolutionary literature alike passed death sentences on literature and the individual. The attack on Chinese traditional culture in the name of the revolution resulted in the public prohibition and burning of books. Countless writers were shot, imprisoned, exiled or punished with hard labor in the course of the past one hundred years. This was more extreme than in any imperial dynastic period of China's history, creating enormous difficulties for writings in the Chinese language and even more for any discussion of creative freedom.' (Gao 2000)

Although literature creation for writers doesn't necessarily have to be divorced from politics or necessarily be involved in politics, it is affected tremendously by the political climate. Before the diffusion of the Internet in China, for any writer who sought to win intellectual freedom, the choice was either to fall silent or to flee the country like Gao. In the age of the Internet, writers in the Mainland still don't enjoy the intellectual freedom of writers in the West, but it at least is a channel for them to express themselves.

In addition, all major publishing houses in the Mainland are state-owned. Thus, together with control and censorship of the government, for those writers who touch upon the 'forbidden zone' of the traditional literary work, it is nearly impossible for them to be viewed by readers in the Mainland.

With the advent of the Internet, the Mainland writers are able to express their individual voices and make their voices be heard by all the other people sharing the same language. The Internet makes it very hard for traditional ways of control and censorship to work. Thus, while the government forbids free speech, young people in the Mainland are more likely to resort to the Internet to challenge the traditional or the communist morals publicly. Even though there is censorship and control as to the Internet, users still can find ways to avoid being tracked or challenge the censorship and control from the government, using proxy, free space outside the Mainland, surfing in public Internet cafés, Email distribution, or BT downloading. In addition, the anonymousness of the Internet makes it possible for them to express freely and openly and be viewed by readers at large without getting into trouble.

Without the Internet, it is nearly impossible for literature works about sensitive topics to be published and viewed by the public at large. For the print literary works, in

the rare cases that they get published and circulate in the market, the government can easily trace the writer and the publisher and they will be punished or even put into jail by the government.

Even though the government in the Mainland is creating new ways to control and censor the content on the Internet, writers now do enjoy more creative freedom as the result of the diffusion of the Internet. In a sense, the Internet will be a catalytic force in the transformation of China.

Chapter Five: Cyberliterature in the Greater China Region

In the age of the Internet, as computers and the Internet are testing the limits of books themselves, a new type of literature is being born with the new generation of Internet users. The new genre of cyberliterature is characterized by a combination of texts with hypertext and dynamic, even interactive, computer-generated images. Cyberliterature has been called an ‘avant-garde mode of performance in an age of computers’ (Grabovszki 2005). It is a ‘new multi-media literature conceived by electronic revolution, reflected and produced by the new digital communications technology’ (Murray 1997). *Broken Saints* (brokensaints.com), a graphic novel, is an example. Picot has the definition of cyberliterature as following:

‘It is literature which makes use of the computerised/digital medium in such a way that it cannot be reproduced in print - for example it employs animations, sound-effects, nonlinear structure, interactivity, or a combination of these.’ (2005)

Cyberwriters around the world have produced millions of works of literature online and Chinese authors also have been churning out innovative cyberliterature since the mid 1990s. The first website dedicated to original writing in Chinese was ‘橄榄树’(Olive Tree) founded in 1995 (URL: www.wenxue.com). The most popular literature websites in the Mainland are ‘文学城’ (Literature City. URL: www.wenxuecity.com), ‘中文网络文学精萃’ (Quintessence of Chinese Cyberliterature URL: www.chinese-literature.com), ‘黄金书屋’ (The Golden Book House. URL: goldnets.myrice.com), ‘碧海银沙’(Blue Ocean and Silver Sand. URL: www.silversand.net). Through its relatively short history, Chinese cyberliterature’s role has been confined to be a primary venue for amateur

writers in the region. In fact, it has been the only venue for aspiring writers in the region who cannot or choose not to take the established route to prominence.

The Internet's impacts upon Chinese literature and Chinese literary society center on three interrelated points: the first point is whether or not the Internet is a valid venue for literary endeavor in the region. A second related issue examines the loss of linguistic integrity as a characteristic result of digital writing and publication. The third point of dispute is how Internet technology subverts the structure of traditional Chinese writing. In the context of an empirical approach to Chinese cyberliterature, I propose the following preliminary aspects for discussion: who are the cyberwriters in the Greater China region? self-expression of Chinese cyberwriters, new media and new possibilities for Chinese literature, traditional Chinese value under attack, and the validity of cyberliterature.

5.1. Who are the Cyberwriters in the Greater China Region?

Chinese cyberwriters, as the cyberwriters in other places, are 18-35 years old young people, predominantly urban males. They are educated, and ready to try and accept new, interesting and fashionable technologies. The limitations of traditional publishing makes it very hard for them to present their writing talents and make their works and, most important of all, their personal feelings available to readers at large.

As today's culture for urban youth has largely been shaped by television and other digital or image-based communication systems, Chinese urban youth in Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao find the Internet a favorite channel to voice their concerns and yearnings. They identify themselves as the 'New New Humankind' (Xin

Xin Ren Lei 新新人类). The term has a denotative meaning in Chinese of chasing anything new, fashionable, and vanguard. And these people are interested in new lifestyles, and new trends in technology, especially the Internet. They are the generation of the age of information technology. While the goal of this generation is both vogue and pleasure-oriented, it is closely linked with Western trends. Their interest in 'serious' literature is eroded by the entertainment industry and consumer pop culture, mostly originating from America and Japan, as noted by Wang:

'Marketization and commercialization are also responsible for the prevalence of popular culture and literature in contemporary China. We can easily find a remarkable phenomenon in Chinese cultural and intellectual life, especially after China's involvement in the socialist market economy at the beginning of the 1990s.'

(2004: 55)

Xin Xin Ren Lei are the pioneers who first attempted to integrate the computer network and Chinese writing. Like young people elsewhere, they have embraced the Internet, regarding it as a natural extension of their individualities. Cyberliterary works by them have begun to be popular, serving as the aesthetic representation of this urban youth generation. Thriving literary activities by these people in cyberspace have become a noticeable trend. They often incorporate into their writing a combination of what may be self-images, self-expression and experiences directly or indirectly associated with themselves.

Take as an example the five most popular literary works of the week from August 21-28, 2005 on the most visited Chinese cyberliterature website '*Under the Banyan*' (URL: http://www.rongshuxia.com/rss/ld_index.rs?tp=1125300393 2005-8-29). The

most viewed work is entitled ‘领舞’ (*Lead the Dance*², prose), the second one is ‘真情真事’ (*True Story*, short story), the third one is ‘贵阳!请送我上天堂!’ (*Guiyang! Send me to Paradise!*, novel, Guiyang is the capital of Guizhou province in west China), the fourth is ‘一半给情人,一半给知己’ (*One Half to My Lover, the Other Half to My Best Friend*, prose) and the fifth is ‘让我们微笑到天荒地老’ (*Smile to the End of the World*, prose).

They are all a combination of self-images, or experiences directly or indirectly associated with the writer. Most of their writings will not be subject to aesthetic and literary judgments; rather the focus is on the writer’s self-conscious, self-promotion in creation of a self-referential genre particular to this new medium.

Chinese cyberwriters in the Greater China region can be divided into three groups: those who write for fame, those who write for fun and those who write just for communication. As cyberliterature grows in popularity, the latter two account for the larger part. The writers are bored by television programs and newspapers and magazines, or depressed by the increasingly fast pace of life, but there are few people they can talk to or communicate with. Consequently, they resort to expressing themselves through the Internet. They can make friends online to release their depression and boredom. They could find comfort when people understand them or share the same experience with them. Even when they are criticized or attacked by viewers, they can find some fun in debating or attacking back.

The writer of the first Chinese novel on the Internet is a typical example. As a graduate student in Taiwan, like most other ‘net worms’ of his age, *Hooligan Cai* (痞子

² All title translations are my own.

蔡 Pizicai) played on the keyboard on his computer hour after hour, surfing the Internet and chatting, while working in a tedious engineering lab. Then he began to write down his fantasies about romantic adventures through the Internet, thus the making of the first Chinese novel in cyberspace, *The First Intimate Touch*. The novel became an instant success in Taiwan and it was well-received in Mainland and Hong Kong too.

It is the first widely recognized online novel in Chinese. The first-person narrator-protagonist *Hooligan Cai*, identical to the pen-name of the writer, leads a life that resembles the life of the author. Bored by mechanical and tedious work, he fantasizes about romantic encounters with pretty girls and finds the Internet chat-room the best venue to share his fantasies with other Internet users who use fake names and make up their gender and age at will.

However, as more and more works emerge online, the expectation of the Chinese cyberwriters also changed. They begin to write for money or for fame. Some of them even make the transition to be professional writers. They write for websites or publishing houses; others have their own columns. More cyberwriters just put their work online, in hope that their work will attract the attention from editors of the press, who are hunting for works of interest to be published. For the Chinese cyberwriter, the interest from the publisher or the investor is a good opportunity for them to reach as large an audience as possible. Thus, it is common to see popular cyberliterature works published in the form of traditional books and more and more ambitious cyberwriters will resort to the Internet and emerge from obscurity.

A young writer confesses that he wishes to be an established writer. The writer with the pseudonym '*Shanghai Orphan*' has published about 250,000 words online in a year.

He told reporters through OICQ, that his work had been finished a long time ago. To attract the attention of other people, he put all his work in ‘天涯论坛’(Skyline Forum. URL: www.tianyaclub.com) where cyberliterature works converge. Literary works originated from websites can bring huge profits for the publisher, too. The most successful in the Mainland is the ‘告别微安 (*Farewell Wei'an*)’ by Anne Babe (安妮宝贝). And literary works originated from the Internet have become a source for hard copy publication.

5.2. Self-expression of Chinese Cyberwriters

A very important attraction of the Internet is the freedom of literary self-expression. As the Internet becomes an increasingly central part of the daily life of Chinese Internet users, it also opens new opportunities to develop new identities on the basis of the emerging cultural influences. It also presents new challenges to their sense of identity. ‘It (the Internet) is transforming the old values of life and relationships with their own life styles, in order to fulfill the goal of more humane and self-pleasing existence’ (Niu 2004).

The writing and reading of literature in the age of Internet are more connected to the eternal spiritual value of the people, as the control and censorship from the government does not pose such interference as before (For information about government censorship and control, please see 5.6). Chinese Internet users can practically experiment with all kinds of genres and techniques. They can use interactive chat rooms to write literary works together. They can create ‘Internet slang’ as a special self-expression among the group. Although the Mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong are physically divided, surprisingly, the ‘Internet slang’ used by Internet users in the region share similarities.

Take *The First Intimate Touch* as an example. The literary devices and techniques that *Hooligan Cai* uses in his novels are nothing innovative. The novel largely adopts rather worn-out formulae of melodramatic plots. In addition, its carefree depiction of love, sex, and human relationship is couched in technological and scientific jargon.

It can, however, hardly conceal its uncritical endorsement of pleasure-oriented, individualistic values and beliefs. It opens a door, which makes young people understand that feelings in real life can be expressed by their own way of writing and putting the writing online can be shared by others. The 'language online' can be so fresh, so fascinating. Thereafter, thousands of cyberwriters and countless works emerge and prosper. The following is an excerpt from *the First Intimate Touch* (Cai 2005).

如果把整个浴缸的水倒出，也浇不熄我对你爱情的火。

整个浴缸的水全部倒得出吗？

.....可以。所以，是的。我爱你....."

Word-word Translation:

'If I pour out all the water in the tub, it cannot distinguish my flame of love for you.

But can the water be totally poured out?

....Yes. Thus. Yes. I love you....'

As noted by Liu 'members of the urban youth generation (Chinese) are much less interested in political and social issues, and they care more about personal, individual wish fulfillments.' (Liu 2004:150). The proliferation of literature websites provide a platform to all Chinese young adults and allow them to share their concerns and frustrations with other people in similar situations through writing. Some young people

with non-conventional orientations are able to resort to the Internet to express their struggles and the discriminations they face.

In addition, the globalization of technology, together with the power that the computer network wields, makes writing online a political act too. When major events occur, people will resort to the Internet instead of other traditional ways of writing and post their writings and share them with others. In late April of 2005, the leader of the KMT Party of Taiwan (or Nationalist Party), Lien Chan (连战), arrived from Taiwan to meet with Chinese Communist Party officials, marking the first visit by a KMT leader since the party fled to Taiwan at the end of China's civil war in 1949. Tens of thousands of poems were posted online to celebrate the visit by the KMT party leader, which means a peaceful solution of the Cross-Taiwan Strait problem is highly possible.

The above example also shows that the Internet can begin to affect people there in undeniably political ways. It is very common to find Chinese cyberwriters dealing with political issues in the Internet that are personally relevant, such as racial and gender-related themes, while others, free of inhibition, discuss their family, relationship, and other personal circumstances that may not be relevant to readers at large. Increasingly, writings about a specific topic or discussion forums formed on the Internet have become a source of empowerment where thousands of people can voice their economic, religious, racial, and sexual interests. Virtual online communities of readers are thus developed on the Internet. What is indeed innovative for cyberliterature is an acceleration that enables and multiplies encounters among writers, readers, and texts, and placement of readers' critical production in the same digital space as the literature work.

However, echoing an increase in juvenile delinquency, drugs, extra-marital affairs, and high divorce rate in the Greater China region, in some cyberliterature works, there is also a dissemination of works with erotic, and violent contents through the Internet. These materials used to be non-existent before the opening-up of the Mainland.

Literary expressions of the cyberwriter on the Internet share great similarities in the region, but they are also divided in the region. The new generation in the Mainland is the main beneficiary of the reform in terms of material and economic prosperity. While commercialism nurtures sensuous indulgence and pleasure seeking in all these areas, some writers in the Mainland are using the Internet to revive idealism and heroism reminiscent of the revolutionary past. Young people in the Mainland are more concerned with the future of the country, of the social, economical and political problems existing in the country; however, those in Taiwan and Hong Kong are generally perceived as more pleasure-seeking, especially in terms of their self-expression.

5.3. New Media, New Possibilities for the Chinese Literature

Literature can be presented in various media. We may read it in print pages, watch it on a television screen, listen to it on the radio, or experience it on a computer screen. As discussed in Chapter One, for a long time, paper and the like were the only choices for people besides the human mind to store literature. Since the late nineteenth century, though, 'new technologies have made it possible to store not only alphanumeric signs and illustrations but also sound and moving images' (Gunder 2001). On the Internet, there are signs of new forms of literature works: performance poems, the multimedia and the hypertext. Many of the literary works in the Internet use kinetic text, music, artwork,

pictures, live poetry readings, animation, and much more. They hold the possibility of changing literature beyond recognition.

The development of the Internet and the cultures of information with regard to their technical and content development in the Greater China region make people realize that 'literature is not only bound up with the book as its traditional medium but that it is also perceived and functions as a technological advancement' (Grabovszki 1999). Thus, to understand Chinese literature in the age of the Internet, we have to draw our attention to the development of the new media and the impact of the new media upon the writing and publishing of literature.

The qualitative difference between literary writing and publishing through the Internet and through print is the possibility of almost direct interaction with the author. Readers can comment on a literary work and exchange message with the author easily. In addition, literary works online offer a wide variety of choices for the writer to meet the various needs of a very wide range of readers, from someone encountering the material for the first time to the reader with specialized interests. The list of possibilities is almost limitless: explanatory annotation with several levels of details, color images, searches, links to related texts, concordances, selectable type size, the choice of modernized or old spelling, foreign language quotations in translation or the original language, and multiple versions of the text (Finneran 1996; Gunder 2001 and Jones 1995).

In terms of affordances, the new form of literature integrating text, sound, picture, animation and hypertext has really liberated writers from many constraints of traditional static media. As a tool that is a mixture of art and technology, cyberliterature provides writers with more creative possibilities. Thus, in cyberliterary works as noted by Coover

(1999), readers can see 'white backgrounds into vast landscapes, ancient battlegrounds and distant galaxies, into events more vivid than those on the news or the streets outside with characters we know better than we know our own families and friends'. This is what the new media enables cyberwriters to invent: 'this enlargement of our imaginative powers' (Coover 1999).

In addition, the combination of the Internet with other media, for example the mobile phone, provides more channels for cyberliterature. The mobile phone server in the region provides download service for poems, SMS (short messages), stories, even novels to mobile phone subscribers through the Internet. Most of the works are originated from the Internet. The Mainland is the first place in the world to deliver novels through SMS. 'The novel, *Outside the Fortress Besieged*, written by a businessman Qian Fuchang, is a steamy tale of illicit love among married people and is being short-messaged in installments of 70 characters each.' (Prava.ru 2004). Another example is the most popular song in Greater China now, which is a silly romantic ditty entitled, '*Mice Love Rice*'. It originated from a poem in a Blog in the Mainland. The once-anonymous singer-songwriter is now a national celebrity, and the song has been released commercially in both Mandarin and Cantonese throughout the region. In a word, the convergence of different media made possible by the Internet will drive the literature to endless possibilities.

Nevertheless, many critics claim that, although cyberliterature works are indeed beautiful visually, 'kinesis does sometimes seem like a way of draining the literary work of its meaning' (Coover 1999). This of course is the constant threat of cyberliterature: 'to suck the substance out of a work of lettered art and reduce it to surface spectacle' (1999).

In addition, new skills such as programming and knowledge of certain software are needed for cyberwriters.

However, traditional professional skills like editing, proof-reading, assessment, and so on, are also needed, even if combined in new ways, in new environments, and sometimes, new professions (Johnson 1999: 70-79). 'In creative writing, whether with a pen or a computer, writers maintain intrinsically the factor of the poetical while adding to it and the process of writing further dimensions and possibilities not available previously' (Grabovszki 2005). The writing and publication of Chinese literature is not necessarily to immediately replace the traditional ways; however, it will bring more possibilities and more dimensions.

5.4. Traditional Value Under Attack

Marika Finlay (quoted from Young, 1989: 86) suggests that post-modernism is 'a psychotic defense against the loss of referential identity'. Today, 'technological mediation is associated with estrangement from the real.' Like people in other places of the world, there is always a constant tension between maintaining a very traditional identity and acculturating oneself to the evolving and changeable world for people in Greater China, especially for people in the Mainland.

The youth in the Mainland too, freed from the Communist teaching, is grounded on such an ideology of global consumerism and egotism. Literature reflects the change of people's values, because literature reaches into people's values and ideology, as noted by Gao:

'literature doesn't simply make a replica of reality but penetrates the surface layers and reaches deep into the inner workings of reality; it removes false

illusions, looks down from great heights at ordinary happenings, and with a broad perspective reveals happenings in their entirety'. (Gao 2000)

The consumer culture's tireless promotion of the ideology of unbridled individualism and consumerism severely obfuscates the social conditions in the Greater China region today (Shyu 2004). It is detrimental to the social construction of the country, which calls forth social commitment and dedication of its citizens. For young people living in the region, many literary works online by them are confessional monologues in which writers confide their inner feelings. Others seem to be internal conversations, as different voices express the pain of various psychological struggles. A bold and obvious rejection of authority and traditional value permeate their writings. They hold a casual attitude towards sex. They are self-centered and down-to-earth materialistic, as they write mostly about rootless urban life or pain. In the following, I will take Blog writings as an example to reveal Chinese writers' rebelliousness against traditional values.

Blogging is one of the latest forms of online communication and the number of bloggers around the world is increasing exponentially. Up till now, although there is still no unified definition on Blogger or blogging, most scholars agree that it is one of the latest forms of online communication, coming after the Email, BBS (Bulletin Board System) and ICQ (I Seek You). Wikipedia defines weblog or a blog as 'a web application which contains periodic, reverse chronological ordered posts on a common webpage.'(2005)

In the Mainland, the first blogging website was www.blogchina.com, which began to offer free diaries deposit services to the public in August 2002. At that time, blogging was only limited to a small number of IT elites. The common people had never heard of it,

and they did not even know what blogging was. It was not until the *Dairy of Muzimei* (本子美) was published in her blog, that it became popular among Internet users in China. Muzimei is a female columnist of a fashion magazine in Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong Province and the hub city of South China. From June 19, 2003, she put her personal dairies onto www.blogcn.com, one of the earliest blogging websites in China. In her dairies, she gave a detailed description of 'one-night stand romance', or her sexual experience with different men of all ages, rock musicians, artists, students, etc. A sexual experience with a rock musician in a downtown street of Guangzhou at midnight was one of the most notorious. She is derided as 'writing with her body'. Many websites in China republished her dairies and she became a heatedly debated topic then. In a country where 'sex' is still a taboo, people's reaction to her were quite divided. Some people vituperated her with the most abusive words possible, some people supported her for courage and straightforwardness, but most people proclaimed that they didn't support her indulgence and promiscuity, though they agree that she has the right to speak out.

With the ever-increasing influence of the western civilization, Chinese culture is now in a process of radical shift and many traditional virtues are facing challenges. Muzimei can only be regarded as one of the vanguards of those 'traitors' against traditional values and lifestyles.

Another reason for the appearance of this literary form is that with the reform and opening of Mainland China, it has become and will become freer and more open. The interference of politics with literature is not as strong as it used to be. Writers can touch upon some sensitive topics, like those in the West, in Taiwan and Hong Kong. The

Internet provides people with a freer and a trendier venue for them to express themselves in artistic and literary forms.

5.5. Stylized Representation

Through its innovative use of the networking technology, Chinese cyberliterature confirms the vitality of all forms, styles and techniques of Chinese writing in print. However, it provides more forms, styles and techniques than what print literature provides. One of the most attractive aspects of cyberliterature works lies in their language. Their narrative discourses are mostly simple and straightforward, casual and conversational like most popular fiction in the market. Cyberwriters have created many Internet slang terms and neologisms and mix English acronyms with Chinese slang, colloquialisms, lingo and high-tech jargon. Men are ‘恐龙(dinosaurs)’ in cyberspace and women are ‘美眉(beautiful brow)’. Boys are ‘GG’ and girls are ‘MM’. There are thousands of trendy phrases articulated by the young people to project their individualities. Young people need these trendy and stylized representations to articulate their experience and it has become a registered trademark of frequent Internet users. However, freedom comes with a price. The stylized representation has become a potential disruption to the standard language and it has created a gap between the frequent Internet user and non-Internet user. The language of the young people in the Internet is totally unintelligible for non-Internet users. The following is an example,

‘周末，读大学的GG（哥哥）回来，给偶（我）带了很多好东西，都系（是）偶（我）非常稀饭（喜欢）的。就酱紫（这样子），偶（我）就答应陪他去逛街吃KPM（肯德基、匹萨饼、麦当劳）。’

Word-for-word translation:

'in the weekend, GG (brother) studying in university came back and brought idol (me) much good stuff, which department my porridge (which were my favorite). Soy sauce purple (That's it). Idol (I) thus promised to go shopping and eat in KPM (Kentucky Fried Chicken, Pizza Hut and Macdonald's) with him'

Surprisingly, young people in different locales of the Greater China region share these stylized neologisms. If a quaint or fanciful phrase has emerged and become popular in one place, it becomes popular in other areas of the region. These words and phrases have become everyday words in Chinese and are shared by young people there. In addition to Chinese and occasional English coding-switching, other languages and dialects-such as Taiwanese, Shanghaiese, Cantonese, or even Japanese are also playfully mixed with Chinese words in the writing.

5.6. Validity of Cyberliterature.

I will examine, in this section, firstly the current underlying anxiety regarding digital writing and publication and then speculate on the evolution of Chinese literature online by drawing on observations of literature and technology advancement.

Motivated by the potential and continual disruptions of cyberliterature to the uniformity of a literary work and culture and language, and the sacrosanct identity of the writer, the intensity of debate over the validity of literature online grows (Li 2004 & Turkle 1995). Doubt over the validity of cyberliterature as an authentic art form has exacerbated the debate between conventional literary circles and the emerging cyberwriters. Cyberliterature has come under attack, denounced by established writers as 'unsophisticated' and 'inauthentic' and hence 'a low genre' (Li 2004 & Turkle 1995). In

many instances, in literary production, collective authorship replaces the single author. This alteration of authorship has an impact on both the form and the content of creative texts.

Many critics (Li 2004 & Turkle 1995) describe cyberliterature as being 'democratic' in that it allows easy access to the public. Some claim that by allowing this kind of public access to literature, most literary scholars now would say the canon has lost its validity as a cultural object.

Chinese literature online is no exception. Although a large amount of work by these Internet writers looks like mediocre composition, outstanding works also have emerged. In the fall of 1999, Netease.com, a leading portal company, and Rongshuxia (Under the Banyan, 榕树下 URL www.rongshu.com), a website dedicated to original literature, organized two separate cyberliterature contests. Rongshuxia received 5,106 novels and essays; many of them are from Taiwan and Hong Kong (Rongshuxia 2004).

However, to some extent, the Chinese literature on the Internet is only a body of literature composed on a computer and uploaded onto various websites. The computer is no more than a typewriter. Thus we can say that they are just conventionally written works published in the Internet. The technical aspects of Chinese Literature on the Internet still fall short of the true aims and spirit of multimedia. Although Chinese cyberliterature still lacks the interactive technological edge, it is clear that most Chinese cyberwriters in the three areas have a unique literary style.

Established Chinese cyberwriters in the region demonstrate this attachment to the printed books by republishing their online books in print form. 'In the period of late capitalism, where information technologies dominate every social sphere, this frightening

consciousness is pervasive and heightens the connection between identity and the materiality of published works.' (Kim: 178) This transformation back to the safe terrain of tangible texts reveals a corporeal anxiety over the radical fragility and indeterminacy of electronic texts for Chinese writers.

Although at the moment, people still have different views of cyberliterature, it has become more and more popular among young people. It should be acknowledged that cyberliterature has both positive and negative aspects. I will argue that, although cyberliterature still doesn't enjoy a status as a valid literary genre and there is tremendous opposition to it, literature online will become a decisive force in shaping the new canon of Chinese literature.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have provided a brief survey of new developments in Chinese literature in the age of the Internet. I have taken an empirical view of the pioneering role of the Internet and its impact upon Chinese literature in the Greater China region. The computer network has penetrated Greater China at a rapid rate and it brings endless possibilities for the future of Chinese literature.

The Internet has changed and will continue to change the nature of literature and literary creation, reading, publication and reading in Greater China. The linked and instant intra-regional publication made possible by the Internet has broken down artificial regional barriers. Literature online can reach Chinese readers across the regional borders at a click. And they will increasingly play a central role in literary endeavor in the region. The Internet is a valuable addition to literary communication, creativity, and social interaction in Greater China rather than a replacement of traditional methods.

As the result of advancement of information technology and the economy integration and peaceful political atmosphere in the region, Chinese literature in the region is entering into a stable and interactive environment. Consequently, the next scene of Chinese literature is full of potential for transformation. Because of its technological strength, Taiwan used to enjoy a leading role in the revolution of Chinese literature. However, as the Mainland catches up, the volume of Taiwanese output will never equal that of the Mainland writers. The Internet holds out the promise of a new channel of communication for Chinese literature by nurturing creative and constructive literary works.

Though most of traditional writers in Greater China continue to shy away from this new, increasingly dominant medium, the new Chinese literary mainstream is going to be carved here. What makes new developments in Chinese literature qualitatively different from the print literature is the new possibilities of literary creation, publication, reading and responding. Through its innovative use of the networking technology, Chinese literature online confirms the vitality of forms, styles and techniques of Chinese writing in print. Its variety and playfulness will encourage readers and writers to read and write through the latest technology.

Literary works in print and traditional literary endeavors will still survive and may prosper in the digital future; however, its business is greatly challenged by the digital technology. As the Internet is penetrating to more users, the outcome will be clear that the traditional bookstores and publishing companies will be losing control. There is a new generation of writers and readers coming along, a creator and an audience trained from primary school on to write and read, and above all to think and communicate in this totally new way, and they will be the creators whose works the literary audience will be after and the audience that literary artists will seek to reach. Changing technologies continually will reshape the very nature of the literary enterprise and will reshape the landscape of Chinese literature. Chinese literature in the age of the Internet will look very different from what it was like in print. Yet the promise can only be delivered by ceaseless and concerted efforts of Chinese writers in the region.

However, there exist a wide range of constraining forces, technologically, economically and politically. A large number of cyberliterary works are emerging everyday, but quantity doesn't necessarily mean quality. Ten of thousands of literary

works emerge online, but most of them are there unnoticed by readers. They are ‘buried’ by new cyberliterary works that are emerging every day. Nevertheless, there is still every reason to think that the importance of the Internet for Chinese literature will increase as it penetrates to more writers and readers.

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