

# A REPRESENTATION OF THE MODERN CHINESE YOUTH IN YU DA-FU'S NOVELS

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## Abstract

Yu Da-fu is a writer who marked the beginning of modern Chinese literature. Working as a member of Creation Society (*Chuangzao she*, 創造社), Yu became a pioneer of new style in Chinese literature in the sense that he initiated the new style of lyrical novels in Chinese literature and portrayed the awakening and frustrations of the modern self. As many young Chinese intellectuals did at the time, he developed the awakening of the modern self in the empire of Japan. Yu became a literary figure during his study in Japan, where he experienced diaspora by living right in the belly of the empire. He borrowed a form of modern Japanese literature, the "I-Novel (shishōsetsu, 私小説)," for his fiction, in a sense, mirroring in his novels his own life. Yu borrowed the form of I-Novel, a confessional genre, and created a representation of a modern Chinese youth in diaspora. The stories of the "self" he created present both the awakening of the modern self and the frustration of diaspora. In this sense, Yu's novels are important texts that show a representation of a modern Chinese youth in diaspora—how they have desired the empire and how they have failed.

## Keywords

diaspora, mirroring, modern self, I-Novel, *Silver-Gray Death*, *Sinking*, Yu Da-fu

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### **About the Authors**

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## INTRODUCTION

Yu Da-fu is a writer who is a key figure in the development of modern Chinese literature. In general, although many scholars discuss the development of Chinese literature through Lu Xun, Yu Da-fu contributed as much to its modern development. While Lu Xun adopted the re-creation of national character as a literary theme and linked literature to social, political, and realistic problems, Yu Da-fu established the “modern self” in the literary agenda through the theme of self-discovery and reflection. Yet, it remains a fact that assessments on Yu Da-fu have been tailored to the political standards of socialist China.<sup>1</sup> Such assessments might have taken exception to the fact that Yu was the first to bring eroticism into modern Chinese literature during the highly politically charged atmosphere of the time. Political standards were being established by left-socialist critics who regarded the theme of self-discovery as meaningless to social growth. Questioned intensively were references to the sexuality of the individual which make frequent appearances in Yu Da-fu's novels. However, to this day, this and other related controversies remain unresolved based on the fundamental question of how modern Chinese literature should be characterized. This paper argues that Yu Da-fu was a writer who contributed to the development of modern Chinese literature whose works contributed to the development of the modern “I.” To be sure, the development process of the modern “I” was a struggle among diverse and contradictory forces at play in Chinese society and history. In this light, this paper will first examine how the life and social status of the writer who lived in the empire of Japan is reflected in his works and how his perspectives were recurrent in his works. Second, it will examine the self-referentiality of Yu Da-fu's fiction, particularly, the “I-Novel.” Third, it will examine in Yu's works the sense of strife and frustrations of the diasporic individual from failing to achieve identity transformation in the development process of the modern self. To validate the paper's assertion, it will analyze the texts of Yu Da-fu's debut work, the short story *Silver-Gray Death*, and his representative work, *Sinking*.

## SELF-REFERENTIALITY OF YU DA-FU'S NOVELS

As is well known, Yu Da-fu (1896-1945) was born in a transitional period between the nineteenth and twentieth century, and lived a short life. Born as the youngest of four sons in Zhejiang province, Fuyang prefecture, he was bereaved of his father at the age of five, and with his eldest brother, he moved to Japan and studied there for ten years. His life can be divided into four major periods: education in China (1896-1912), education in Japan (1913-1922), homecoming and writing (1922-1938), and

retirement in Singapore (1938-1945). It is assumed that he was assassinated by a Japanese military police shortly after Japan surrendered in the Second World War.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the fact that this paper does not hold any intentions of analyzing the writer and his works from a biographical point of view, a general introduction of the writer's life is necessary, for Yu Da-fu's novels are highly self-referential. Generally, forty four works are identified as Yu Dafu's fictions, starting from his debut novel *Silver-Gray Death* that was published in 1921 to his last novel *Flight* that was published in 1935. All of them are either medium-length or full-length novels. If they are examined with the standards of self and type of relationship with the world, they can be classified into world-superior type fictions and self-superior type fictions.<sup>3</sup>

Korean literary researcher Dong-il Cho has theorized that modern literature is characterized by the tension between self and the world. As such, "since the era of Romanticism, the realities of fiction have been based upon the tense relationship between self and the world. Such realities are neither ethical, didactic, nor utilitarian" (Hillebrand 215). Furthermore, he states:

Although the form of conflict may differ by literary work, the point that the piece is constructed with the conflict between self and the world and that the piece cannot stand without either one remaining valid. Therefore, the work is a structure of antagonism between self and the world, and when raising a question about the conflictual structure of the work, finding a more comprehensive concept than the conflict between self and the world would not be possible. (Cho 91)

It may be inferred from the passage that the conflictual relationship between the self within the novel and the world has been serving as a central classification in understanding modern literature. It is also suggested that it is the most comprehensive conflictual classification with which to understand the conflictual structure of a literary piece. Following this model, Yu Da-fu's fictional works are described by differentiating between "world-superior type fictions" (세계우위형소설) and "self-superior type fictions" (자아우위형소설).

A "world-superior type fiction" refers to one that depicts the process of powerlessness, utter destruction of the inner self as the main protagonist is not capable of effectively confronting the violence of the world. Representative works include *Silver-Gray Death*, *Sinking*, *Guards*, *South-Bound*, *Blue Smoke*, *Lonely Afternoon*, *The Homesick*, *Wave of Spring*, *A Quarrying Machine*, and *Smoke Shadow*. In such fictions, the desires of self are expressed sexually, financially, and literarily, and therefore, women, money, and honor are sought after. Self pursues the approval and acceptance from others through such mechanisms of desire, but

the world that is violent constantly suppresses such desires, and the struggle and confrontation between self and the world continues. Eventually, self is defeated, and he eludes into nature, his hometown, a “small room,” and so on, or faces ultimate destruction through death.

A “self-superior type fiction” refers to one that depicts a vigorous resistance to the violent world with the formation of the consciousness about the Other. Representative works include *A Night Drunken by the Spring Winds*, *Lonely Ancestral Rites*, and *Escape*. Sentiment of anger, a sense of repentance, and an active will to take revenge is internalized by the “I,” who then demonstrates the most extreme forms of actions such as arson or murder as he resists and struggles.

The focus of this paper is on two specific literary works in particular. One is Yu's debut novel, *Silver-Gray Death*, and the other is his representative work, *Sinking*. The reason behind selecting the writer's debut novel is the judgement that it, among many others, is the starting point of the writer's literary act. As such, it is inscribed the “original” if crude and condensed literary “world” of the writer, which will unfold in some way in the near future. *Sinking* is a piece the writer himself acknowledged as his most representative and most famous work, as it is the work that brought him recognition (Yu, Da-fu *Anthology of Yu Da-fu* 149). Therefore, Yu Da-fu's body of works may be capsulated through the two fictional texts.

Yu Da-fu's debut novel, *Silver-Gray Death*, is the story of “He” who studied in Japan. Although it is written in the third person, it seems evident from the text that the “He,” a student studying in Japan, is the writer himself as if the text were by an “I.” “He” receives the news that his wife back home has died of an illness and finds himself lost in grief. “He” then encounters a woman, Jing Er, who works at a bar he frequents. “He” considers Jing Er as the woman who will replace his dead wife back home, and desires her. However, “he” falls into despair when “he” finds out that Jing Er already has a different man. Also, “he” thinks that Jing Er's mother does not approve of him because he is a poor man with little money. So, he tries to raise some money by selling books that he believes are “thoughts of great geniuses.” However, Jing Er eventually comes to marry her man. At the end of the novel, “he” collapses as “his thin and long body dropped on the ground” (Yu, Da-fu “Silver Gray Death,” *The Completed Works of Yu Da-fu* 16).

In this fiction, there is a “He” who desires, and Jing Er's man and mother are the obstacles to the acquisition of what is desired, as well as an attempt made by “He”—with money as instrument that is—to overcome such an obstacle. However, the temporary attainment of money cannot function in the sense of a permanent realization of what is desired. The fact that the main character is ultimately faced with death affirms this point. “He” fails to recognize that he himself is a poor

manwhile the people around him—Jing Er's mother for example—perceive him with clarity. "She" welcomes "He" who has brought gifts that he bought with the money from selling his books, but in fact, what was welcomed was not "He" himself but the gifts. The self in this fiction is positioned within a twofold frame of desire. "He" desires money that has disrupted his desire in order to reach the love that he ultimately pursues.

Interestingly, as he published this novel, the writer in fact mentioned the background of the novel as follows:

The reader must bear in mind that this is an imaginary tale after all. The author cannot be responsible to its reality. One word, however, must be mentioned here that he owes much obligation to R. L. Stevenson's "A Lodging for the Night" and the life of Ernest Dowson for the plan of this unambitious story. (Yu, Da-fu, "Addendum to *Silver-Gray Death*," *Anthology of Yu Da-fu* 148)

The writer is revealing above that he drew inspiration from the works of Robert Louis Stevenson. Assuming that *Silver-Gray Death* is indeed a "trial piece" as the writer said, then this piece must have been written between the period of imitation or apprenticeship and the period of maturity in which he began to produce original works. It may be inferred that since the writer drew his writing materials from the life of Ernest Dowson, then his literary works might have been influenced by the "I-Novel" of Japanese modern literature.<sup>4</sup> The "I-Novel" refers to a literary genre that appeared in modern Japanese literature across the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, led by writers like Ryunosuke Akutagawa (Yoshida 131-140; Sei 84-113). That Yu Da-fu was influenced by the Japanese "I-Novel" is an officially accepted fact (Li, "Yu Da-fu and I-novel"). Contrary to the simple first-person narratives, the "I-Novel" is a confessional narrative of the writer's firsthand personal experiences that most directly reveals the writer himself; in fact, some writers go as far as to intentionally adopt a certain lifestyle in order to write such a kind of fiction (Kim 44-45). Yu Da-fu would have been naturally influenced by the "I-Novel" that was popular in the Japanese literary world at the time when he was studying in Japan in the mid-1910s. Such influence would have made a mark in his original works about life not necessarily experienced first-hand, but vicariously experienced through reading. In this sense, it may be said that his works had been composed with a degree of self-referentiality owing to the double-mirroring allowed by an almost autobiographical depiction based on direct experience in Japan and vicarious experience acquired from a lifetime of reading.

His debut novel shows that Yu Da-fu started by borrowing the distinct Japanese literary style of the "I-Novel." As well known, after *Silver-Gray Death*, which created a compelling sensation in the Chinese society, *Sinking* was published. Considering

that his later work, *Sinking*, took the form of a narrative that directly confessed his life, it may be stated that his debut novel, *Silver-Gray Death*, had been written at an early stage of the borrowed form of "I-Novel."

Among Yu Da-fu's works, *Sinking*, in which "He" is about a Chinese youth studying in Japan, showed the greatest literary and social influence. *Sinking* was included in the first novel collection in modern Chinese literature with the same title, which officially marked the start of Yu Da-fu's literary career. "He" fails to adapt to the Japanese university and society, and wanders around in search of refuge. However, he falls into the sea, drunk, after having failed to overcome his own state of confusion.

*Sinking* is also about a Japanese student studying abroad. The main character is assigned a third-person "He" as well. Rather than following a detailed narrative thread, the novel is structured as a collection of consecutive episodes with little external action happening, emphasizing, instead, the psychological states of the main character "He." Characters that surround the main character "He" are the following: the Japanese female student, the daughter of the lodging house owners, the geisha of a high-class restaurant, the couple in the woods, fellow Japanese students, fellow Chinese students, and the brother of main character "He." But characters other than the main character "He" himself do not hold roles of gravity but exist as tools that shed light to the inner conflicts of the main character. Therefore, while the main character "He" forms a conflictual relationship with every secondary character mentioned above, such conflictual relationships are structured as radial rather than antagonistic (Lim 15). In other words, the conflictual relationship within the text is not established in terms of one character versus another; it is established in terms of one character versus many. Such a form of conflictual relationship depicts the "He" at the very center with the other antagonistic characters surrounding him.

Like *Silver-Gray Death*, *Sinking* is a novel that reveals a strong sense of self-reflection as a foreign student in Japan as well. Here, self-mirroring is ultimately no other than are presentation of a youth living as a diaspora in the land of the empire, Japan. After the defeat against the British Empire in the Opium War in 1842, the intellectuals and the people of China strived to create a new "nation" through a number of modern political developments. From the mid-nineteenth century, these developments included the Taiping Rebellion (1851), the Changing Laws Movement (1894), the Yihe Yuan Movement (1900), and the Xinhai Revolution (1911) were attempted, but such failed each time. Right after the Xinhai Revolution was declared as a failure, Yu Da-fu went to Japan in 1913. At the time, China and Japan were positioned at an ironic and historical crossroad as a collapsing empire and a rising one. Therefore, many Chinese youths chose to study in Japan as a route for new modern prospects. Writers who later deeply influenced the development

of modern Chinese literature, such as Lu Xun as mentioned above and Guo Mo Rou were not exceptions. They generally first planned fortifying modern China by studying medicine in Japan but decided to pursue a new modern strategy by ultimately “converting” to literature. The conversion from medicine to literature was a process of confirmation that modern values laid upon a spiritual basis rather than a materialistic one. Furthermore, the fact that then sixteen year-old Yu Da-fu lived in Japan until his mid-twentieth suggests that he might have been experiencing uncertainty in terms of a sense of identity at the most sensitive period of one’s development to maturity. He was experiencing an identity crisis. For Yu Da-fu who grew up experiencing the world from the perspective of a sensitive adolescent, his life in Japan might have been beyond diasporic in a literal way.

The life of the writer Yu Da-fu was one that was abruptly transported to a modern context. What is “modernity”? Though it is clear that modernity is a construct rather than an essence of nature, many scholars and the discussions among them have attempted to define it in various ways. For example, historical modernity is considered as the era that followed the fifteenth century after the collapse of the Middle Ages. Philosophical modernity is considered as the era that followed the seventeenth century, after Descartes summarized his thoughts with the famous “I think, therefore I am.” Artistic modernity is considered as the era that followed the seventeenth century as well, with the movement of respect for reason and classicism. Scientific modernity must be considered to have begun with Copernicus’s heliocentric theory in the sixteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

The standards mentioned above are all Western modernity. Eastern modernity is much more complex. For example, Japanese modernity should be considered as the era that followed the Meiji Restoration (1853-1877). Chinese modernity is considered the Opium War (1840-1842). Though of similar periods, Japanese modernity and Chinese modernity differ in quality. After the Meiji Restoration, Japan formed a unified modern state, and has conducted its democracy, constitutional government, imperialism with consistency (Jang, *Meiji Restoration: The Beginning of Contemporary Japan*). However, Chinese modernity was different. As mentioned earlier, after the Opium War, various schemes to modernize was conducted in ways that destroyed the existing five-thousand-year-old order, and instead resulted in a state of confusion that failed to establish a new one.

Therefore, the modern self that was situated within the Chinese context could not but be different from the self in the Japanese context. The Chinese self, who had been situated in a state of confusion where the old Chinese structure was collapsing, went to Japan in search of a new order and modern values, transporting himself to a diaspora life in the new context of Japanese modernity.

## THE STRIFE AND FRUSTRATIONS OF A YOUTH IN DIASPORA

Diasporas are people who face the experience of life that is constantly being thrown into new cultural and social contexts. They bear the fate of having to break out of their one context of life for whatever the reason and enter a new one. To survive a life of re-contextualization, they must undergo a process of "enculturation."

Yu Da-fu was a writer who represented the Chinese confused about modernity. In this confusion, the self that emerges in his works, through an "I" or "He," is the writer's reflection in diaspora. The self in his fiction is about a young intellectual who takes the resolute step to study in Japan in search of a new idea for a modern Chinese plan. The confusion of Chinese modernity is inevitably linked with the confusion of a personal recontextualization as he experiences trouble in adjusting to the Japanese society. From this perspective, Yu Da-fu and the "I"s reproduced in his novels mirror each other, and in the context of Japanese modernism, Yu Da-fu and his self may be said to represent modern Chinese youth.

As representation of modern Chinese youth, the "I" of Yu Da-fu's novels show diverse aims and pursuits in the process of adapting to a new context. The things that Yu Da-fu's "I" in the novels desires most as needed for enculturation include money, honor, and sex. Although not the focus of this paper, his other work, *Going South*, reveals a confession made by the main character "I":

I also have honor. Because starting September, I will be an Imperial University student. I can financially hold out for a year that I have saved over 280 Yuan now. The third qualification is women. Ah, money, love, and fame! (Yu, Da-fu "Going to the South," *The Completed Works of Yu Da-fu* 102)

Money, honor, and sex are the representations of the desire of the main character. But such a desired subject of active pursuit is actually intertwined with that of a more passive one. In particular, his representative work *Sinking* confirms a representation of the diaspora as a young Chinese who is living in Japan that fails to build a set of relationships with the people surrounding him. The radially-structured set of conflicts that is centered on the main character in *Sinking*, "he," is twofold. In other words, the conflict structure can be split into the surface layer and the inner layer. Conflicts of the surface layer are expressed, directly externalized and vented out, and in a hostile manner. Characters in superficial-conflictual relationships with the main character include fellow Japanese students, fellow Chinese students in Japan, and the brother of "He." That superficial-conflictual relationship is demonstrated in the monologues "He" makes:

He also wished his classmates would come and talk to him. But his classmates would all chat and giggle only among themselves. Once in a while when they would see the worried look on his face, they would turn heads and flee in hurry. So he resented his classmates all the more. "They are all Japanese. They are all my enemies. I will someday take revenge. I will take revenge no matter what" (Yu, Da Fu "Sinking," *The Completed Works of Yu Da-fu* 23)

Because of this, his Chinese friends say he suffers from a mental disorder. After he hears the comment, he becomes revengeful against his Chinese friends as he is against the Japanese students. (Yu, Da Fu "Sinking," *The Completed Works of Yu Da-fu* 37)

He wants to take revenge against his eldest brother. So he quits studying medicine and turns to the liberal arts. He imagines that because it was his brother that told him to switch to medicine, to turn again to the liberal arts would be a clear declaration of war against his eldest brother. (Yu, Da Fu "Sinking," *The Completed Works of Yu Da-fu* 44)

As shown above, the main character "He" fails to adjust to his relationships with others, as the narrative demonstrates an antagonistic conflictual structure: The Japanese students are the first object of the main character's vindictiveness as "He" forms an active conflictual relationship with them. It is conceivable that conflicts resulting from ethnic division and privileging are formed in situations where membership into a new social community is not possible. However, the conflicts of the main character "He" spill over into his relations with Chinese friends who share the same ethnicity, and his older brother who is a family member. This suggests that his life in diaspora is complex as he faces conflicts in multiple fronts: ethnic, social and political.

The inner conflicts of "He" lead to a dissolution of his desire in relation to others such as Japanese female students, the daughter of the lodging house owners, the couple in the woods, and the geisha of a high-class restaurant.

"Oh! Oh! They already knew. They already knew that I was Chinese. If not, why wouldn't they have given me the slightest glance! Revenge, revenge. Someday, I will take revenge against them!..." "Bitches! Gold-diggers! How dare you insult me? Revenge! I will take revenge! I will take revenge at any cost! Is there a woman with a sincere heart anywhere in this world? How dare even that geisha abandon me!..." (Yu, Da Fu "Sinking," *The Completed Novels of Yu Da-Fu* 23, 46)

Inner conflicts are connected with the consciousness or the psyche of "He." Inner conflicts are rooted in his outer conflicts. In other words, in *Sinking*, conflicts form inner and outer layers with his consciousness or psyche and physical being. Inner conflicts even more strongly manifest the fate a diaspora must face which is expressed in his pessimism believed to have been caused by women. This is deeply connected to the sense of abandonment the main character "He" feels owing to his

perception that “He” had been rejected and neglected by his mother. Archetypes of “derelictness” or “denial” can be found in familial relationships such as the case of the main character. His father’s death may be considered the first experience of abandonment. “He lost his father at the age of three” (Yu, Da Fu “Sinking,” *The Completed Works of Yu Da-fu* 26) and discarded thusly, he withdraws from the world into an enclosed space of his very own, the study which he may have inherited from his father. Furthermore, in his consciousness remain memories of being “discarded” by his older brother.

Whenever he reached such a conclusion, he always remembered every single incident when his eldest brother treated him rough. After considering several past events, he concluded that his brother was a bad man and that he was a good man. He also tried to fathom what made him good and count in exaggeration the pains that were afflicted to him. After proving that he was indeed the person most in pain in this world, tears gushed like waterfalls. (Yu, Da Fu “Sinking,” *The Completed Novels of Yu Da-Fu* 39-40)

The dissonance between “He” and his brother can be interpreted as an expression of the Oedipus complex towards his brother as the substitute for the father they lost early on. The “abandonment” he perceives continues throughout his life while studying in Japan. There is no one around to embrace him. However, it may be noted that such a sense of abandonment is not one of being abandoned but of “He” himself failing to adapt to the world. Therefore, the perception of abandonment may be explained in terms of the Chinese diaspora’s failure to adapt to the new society and culture, Japan. Because of such a sense of abandonment, “He” finally reaches the conclusion that the world is irreconcilable. For him, the world is both a target of “revenge” and “escape.” In particular, his conflicts are made manifest by a conspicuous obsession for “revenge.” In outer conflicts, such revenge is realized in whatever way. His changing of his major field of study is a clear sign as a “declaration of war against his brother,” and the growing distance between him and the Japanese students or his Chinese friends. Although it cannot be defined as an act of aggression meant to harm the other, his defiance can only indicate that the conflicts between them are hostile. On the other hand, the structure of the inner conflicts structure cannot be identified as hostile. “He” still remains obsessed with “revenge,” but such inner conflicts are not revealed for what they are. This is reminiscent of Ah Q’s principle of spiritual victory, a story written by Lu Xun. Thus, his very will to personally take “revenge” as a solution to the conflictual relationship in which “He” cannot express his desires is read as a “completion of revenge.”

The impossibility to reconcile with the world engulfs “He” and drives him into his own space. It is projected through the study in his youth, his studying abroad, the room he rented, the little house on the apricot flower hill he newly moved to, and so on. In the process, his life does not degenerate into that of frustration or failure

immediately. Two paths of reconciliation with the world are laid out before him. One is nature, and the other is literature. In *Sinking*, many natural sceneries appear as descriptions of the setting. Furthermore, natural settings are subject to his feelings of empathy. Nature embraces and warmly envelops the abandoned "He." However, in a different light, this signifies his failure and frustration in social relationships as well. We can see it in his Monologue as follows:

This is your haven, indeed. Although every vulgar person on earth envies you, despises you, and mocks you, but this Mother Nature, this overwhelmingly bright sun in the blue sky that is always new, this light breeze of late summer, this pure energy of early autumn, is your only friend, your benevolent mother, your lover. So you no longer have to return to the world and reside with those frivolous men and women. You now finish your life in the simple countryside in the arms of Mother Nature. (Yu, Da Fu "Sinking," *The Completed Novels of Yu Da-Fu* 17)

The other path of literature, especially his passion for "poems" is what sustains him. From when he was young, literary imagination was a source of bond between a world "He" had been disconnected from and another world. So "He" cannot have interest in books like Emerson's *On Nature* or Thoreau's *Excursion*. This is because such books are obstacles in his reconciliation with the world that he envisions. Rather, "He" is inclined towards poets like Wordsworth or Heine. Needless to say, the poems are still in harmony with nature, reconciling it with literature in order to survive and confirm his existence, allowing the diaspora that has been abandoned by the world to envision reconciliation with another world.

However, right from the very beginning, the protagonist has been unable to adapt to new social relationships in life, putting into question the survival of the youth in diaspora and foreshadowing the novel's end. The narrator's omniscient conjecture that he "probably developed depression" while a student in his youth explains his failure to adapt to a new society. "He," who is lonely and desolate, is unable to reconcile with the world in which loneliness functions as a theme that embraces the work as a whole and the main character. His childhood experiences have affected his consciousness even after his development into adulthood, bringing about a sense of inferiority, guilt, and abandonment, and this, in turn, as seen above, is connected to his vindictiveness. In his solitude after studying in Japan, where reconciliation with the real world does not seem possible, "He" tries to find a way by which he could seek a restoration of the relationship he has with the earth upon which he stands, and it turns out to be "woman" or "sex" or "love".

I don't need knowledge, nor do I need honor. I only need a "heart" that comforts and understands me. A burning heart! The sympathy that spring from that heart! The love

that comes from sympathy! What I need is love indeed!...What I need is love between a man and a woman! (Yu, Da Fu "Sinking," *The Completed Novels of Yu Da-Fu* 23-24)

What "He" needs is "love" as compensation for the frustrations and solitude he suffered as a failed diaspora who could not adapt to Japanese society. For the youth in diaspora, restoration of his relationships does not only lie in his pursuit of nature or literature, but also of a woman or sex, desiring both "Eve's body and soul." However, his chronic solitude has prevented a normal love of the other sex. Loneliness psychologically induced a sense of inferiority and guilt, masturbation, peeping, and prostitution. Eroticism, while not at all constituting the central theme of the work is magnified. Prostitution, the course that he has chosen, demonstrates the extreme destruction of his self-consciousness and mentality. "He," who fails in this as well, ultimately cannot reconcile with the real world, and ends his life in suicide, a permanent disconnection from the world. "He" could no longer find a way to survive.

Yu Da-fu's works depict the lives and agonies of Chinese youths of the time through a self-reflection on the Chinese youth in diaspora who is faced with confounding modernity. Such is a representation of an individual who, within such disparate contexts of Chinese modernity and Japanese modernity, could not but live as diaspora through the recontextualization of self. The modern Chinese youth in diaspora fails to achieve the development of a modern "I" and experiences frustration. Therefore, Yu Da-fu's literature is not a completion of modern Chinese literature, but is significant in that it raised the theme of the modern self in diaspora between China and Japan.

## CONCLUSION

*Silver-Gray Death*, as Yu Da-fu's debut work, and *Sinking*, as Yu Da-fu's representative work, have received much attention from readers and scholars for their distinct portrayals of Chinese youths. Yu Da-fu's novels have dealt with an important theme that points to the birth of modern Chinese literature that revolves around the youth in diaspora. In his works, they are transported to new social, cultural contexts, breaking away from traditions and leaving home. The modern self in Yu Da-fu's depiction faces frustrations and failures due to extreme solitude and a sense of abandonment. In his works, the modern self in diaspora is situated within a broad frame involving multiple factors including ethnicity, in relation to social, cultural, and personal conflicts.

## Notes

1. For example, Lin Zhi Hao stated, under the basic assumption that Yu Da-fu was a writer confused between his "passion for revolution" and "lack of courage," that "Yu Da-fu's life was a painful journey of not being able to strictly deny that he was an intellectual of a petit-Bourgeois background (Lin Zhi Hao 240).
2. About Yu Da-fu's life, refer to the following materials: Zeng Hua Peng, *Critical Biography of Yu Da Fu*, Colloquial Chinese Literature Publishing, 1983; Yu Yun, *Biography of Yu Da fu*, Fujian Renmin Publishing, 1984; Wang Ying Xia, *Yu Da Fu and I*, Fayue Literature Press, 1988; Sang Feng Kang, *Sorrowful Journey*, Beiyue Literature & Art Press, 1989, etc.
3. Lim, Dae-geun, "A Brief Review about Yu Da Fu's Debut Novel *Silver-Gray Death*," *Imun Review*, 1996.
4. Ernest Dowson, who is known best for his lyrical verse *Cynara* that is regarded to have added a new rhythm to English poetry, was a writer who was a Bohemian and a jongleur of his time, making a living by translating. When he was young, living a wanderer's life, he met a woman at a pub who shook his life to the core. She was the daughter of a political exile living in London, and was running a small pub with her mother when she met Dowson. Dowson visited the pub every day to express his love for her in poetry, but she was not able to accept his love, and married another Bourgeois man (Evans *History of English Literature*)
5. Specific argument on it, you can refer to Arif Dirlik, *Postmodernity's Histories: The Past Legacy and Project*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2000.

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