In Chapter Three we saw how Su Tong’s Toon Street Series depicts the restless and tragic lives of a group of urban teenagers during the chaotic Cultural Revolution. To complete the picture of Chinese youth, Su Tong’s contemporary Yu Hua provides a rural and small town version of teenage coming-of-age experiences through some of his short stories and his full-length novel *Cries in the Drizzle*.1 Yu Hua

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1 Yu Hua, *Xiyu yu huhan* [Cries and drizzle] (Taiwan: Yuanliu chuban gongs, 1992). This novel was first published in *Harvest* in 1991 with the title *Xiyu yu huhan*. Yu
seeks to express the disorder and distress so widespread among Chinese rural adolescents during the 1970s. Like their counterparts in the city, these youth demonstrate stunning subjectivity when their parental world fails to provide adequate models, support, and guidance. They withdraw to their peer community, retreat into fantasy, and sometimes even descend into psychosis. All are fallen youth; none becomes the socialist “new man” anticipated and promised by the CCP. Disillusion, destruction, violence, and death are what they have experienced on the way to adulthood. Therefore, the balance between the development of the young hero’s individuality and his gradual socialization is not achieved. Though the young heroes have to assert their autonomy and develop their individuality along their journey towards adulthood, they never achieve the sort of social integration that is normally expected in conventional Bildungsroman. In this way, Yu Hua’s coming-of-age narratives resemble Su Tong’s works in this genre in turning both the traditional European Bildungsroman and the modern Chinese chengzhang xiaoshuo upside down.

Yu Hua’s first full-length novel, Cries in the Drizzle written in 1991, has since been eclipsed by both his early experimental stories and his later works of critical realism, such as To Live, Chronicle of a Blood Merchant, and the later best-seller Brothers. Soon after its publication, Cries in the Drizzle encountered many reactions of disappointment from both readers and critics, who wrote overly negative reviews of the novel. For example, the avant-garde critic Chen Xiaoming dismisses the novel as a failure: “Because Yu Hua places too much emphasis on unique, personal experience and private psychology, the novel appears to suffer a narrative foreclosure that narrows the representation of life and historical reality.” Kang Liu argues that the effectiveness of Cries in the Drizzle is dampened by the author’s limited skills in managing the much “larger narrative scale of the novel”; this is because at this early stage in Yu Hua’s writing career, he had merely mastered “narrative skills in presenting experiences and events with intensity in the short

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Hua changed the title to Zai xiyu zhong huhan when it was printed in book form by Huacheng chubanshe in 1993. However, the novel printed by Yuanlulu chuban gongsi in Taiwan in 1992 still uses the old title Xiyu yu huhan.