

Cross-Media, Cross-Promotion: Intermediality and Cultural Entrepreneurism in Postsocialist China*

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Abstract

This essay conducts a case study of the cultural entrepreneur Guo Jingming (郭敬明) in order to examine intermedial practices in current China's cultural entrepreneurship and their social and political implications. Focusing on Guo's entrepreneurial practices between 2006 and 2016 with the young adult-oriented mook *Zui Novel* (最小說 *Zuixiaoshuo*) as the core product, I look into his cross-media building and promotion of his cultural persona, his company's strategy of creating young author-cum-idols, and the intermedial production of Guo's bestseller trilogy *Tiny Times* (小時代 *Xiaoshidai*). In these practices, old and new media converge to cross-promote cultural products. Guo's cultural entrepreneurship explores and exploits the Me-Generation's narcissism, self-pity, and strong desires for both cultural participation and self-promotion. The young consumer's interest in participation is courted yet contained for commercial ends. Meanwhile, Guo Jingming presents himself as the embodiment of the self-improving and self-enterprising ethos of economic neoliberalism. His connection with state cultural institutions is therefore downplayed in this brand image.

Keywords

intermediality, cultural entrepreneurship, Guo Jingming, neoliberal ethos,
participatory culture

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On meeting the thirty-six finalists of the third The Next (TN) literary contest (文學之新 *Wenxue zhixin*) on December 3, 2013, Guo Jingming (郭敬明, 1983-), the CEO of the contest organizer Shanghai Most World Culture Development Limited Company (Zui Company) (上海最世文化發展有限公司 *Shanghai Zuishi wenhua fazhan youxian gongsi*), is quoted as saying: “In the past, people read on parchment and bamboo. These [media] have disappeared from our world. Now they watch films and read on their cell phones. We the storytellers, however, will exist forever” (“Wenxue” 121). This statement declares the permanent human need for the story and the transience of the medium delivering it. By identifying the writer as the storyteller, Guo downplays the individuality and uniqueness in authorship, a Romantic and Modernist notion that many of us take for granted when talking about literature.

Guo Jingming’s unromantic perception of the writer (including himself) appears at first glance contradictory to what many people believe about China’s Me-Generation, who tend to assert their personality and originality. The members of the Me-Generation were born in the 1980s and afterwards, most of them growing up as the only child. They have no personal experiences or memories of Maoist China (1949-78) and their values and tastes have been largely shaped by global culture, especially Japanese popular culture and Hollywood blockbusters. As I show below, Guo does not deny young people’s desire of asserting their individuality, he capitalizes on it. Meanwhile, Guo’s self-perception of authorship differentiates writers of his generation from those of the earlier ones in the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The latter enjoyed the exalted stature offered by cultural institutions of the socialist state and therefore tended to see themselves as the spokesperson of the people. Guo and his peer Han Han (韓寒), on the other hand, are often considered as representative of Me-Generation authors who are characterized by narcissism, cyber-savviness, and an affinity for the market—even though these authors themselves keep emphasizing their differences.

In her survey of mainland Chinese fiction in the early twenty-first century, Julia Lovell identifies Guo and Han as “cultural entrepreneurs,” whose cultural activities targeting the urban youth market expand beyond literary creation, to the film and publishing industries. They carefully manage their brand images and personae by making full use of media, especially the Internet. They sponsor other writers and seek to build their business empires (12). Lovell’s observations indicate that more flexible and pluralistic analytical categories, such as intermediality and cultural entrepreneurship, are useful to examine the current cultural landscape in mainland China, a postsocialist space where “modes of production, social systems, and

symbolic orders” of socialist China and transnational capitalism overlap (X. Zhang 10). The apparently apolitical Guo Jingming and his company, criticized for their blatant commercialism, on the one hand, and praised for their pursuit of business innovations and success, on the other, provide an intriguing specimen to explore cultural entrepreneurship in the age of intermediality, which bears the impact of cultural globalization, digitalization, economic neoliberalism, and the Party-state’s administrative intervention with culture.

Cultural Entrepreneurism in the Age of Intermediality

In their study of cultural entrepreneurship in the first half of the twentieth century in China and Southeast Asia, Christopher Rea and Nicolai Volland theorize “cultural entrepreneurship” in order to break epistemological pigeonholes in cultural history that are based on a “discrete occupational category” (9). Seeing cultural entrepreneurs as agencies that “have driven changes, not just reflected them,” Rea and Volland call for a pluralistic approach to consider their investment in artistic talent and economic capital as well as their use of new technologies to expand their entrepreneurial possibilities (10). I shall use the term “cultural entrepreneurship” in this essay to cover both “the attitude, outlook, guiding principle, or ethos” (16) and “the behaviour of organizations that are entrepreneurial in their approach to culture” (10). Rea identifies three types of cultural entrepreneurship: cultural personalities, tycoons, and collective enterprises (18-23). Both Han Han and Guo Jingming fit fairly well the profile of “cultural personalities,” because they themselves are creators of their own products across cultural spheres while they also promote their products by means of “self-promotion,” namely, by promoting their persona and style (18). Guo, however, is also the head of a company involved in intermedial and transnational cultural production. He “hires others to create cultural products” and “treats culture primarily as a means to an economic end” (Rea and Volland 19). He makes business decisions, for example, on promoting young adult genre literature such as fantasy and science fiction. Such decisions not only affect the creative efforts by the authors of his company but also lead to the company’s commercial act of purchasing rights to translate foreign products. In this sense, Guo qualifies as an influential “tycoon.” Furthermore, Guo Jingming’s relation to state cultural institutions such as the Writers’ Association is much more ambivalent than that of Han Han. Therefore, the case of Guo Jingming provides a fuller insight into the cultural entrepreneurship that (re)emerged in postsocialist China.

Towards the end of the 1980s, the cultural sector became increasingly commercialized in the PRC (Kong, *Consuming Literature*). In the 1990s, the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) promoted a “cultural economy” in order to legitimize its rule through economic development and to renew its capacity to affect the agenda of culture, including popular culture (J. Wang). Chinese film directors, for example, assumed the new role of “cultural broker” at the turn of the twenty-first century, enabling the flow between economic capital, symbolic capital, and new aesthetic experience (Braester). A study of cultural entrepreneurship in the twenty-first century has to take into account the development of and interaction between various media technologies, especially digital technologies. I therefore introduce the analytical category “intermediality” to try to grasp the consequent changes in consumption behaviors and entrepreneurial practices in cultural production. If a medium is “a channel for the mediation of information and entertainment” (Elleström 13), then by media we may refer not only to image and text but also to media technologies (print, film, digital media, etc.). “Intermediality,” to appropriate Lars Elleström’s understanding of the term, is then the intersection of various media (4). Cultural studies scholars such as Henry Jenkins, Maddalena Pennacchia Punzi, Katherin Hayles and Jessica Pressman, while acknowledging the significance of material and technological practices, move the central issue of intermediality from technology to cultural domains by examining “social and cultural practices that have grown up” around new technologies (Jenkins 13-14) and “broad cultural and social implications” of technological practices (Hayles and Pressman x).

Theorizing “literary intermediality,” Punzi emphasizes the movement of the “literary work,” namely, “it is continually translated from one medium into another, thus acquiring a *plurality of identities*, generated as a trace of the movement itself” (10; emphasis in original). She also sees “the logic of the network” as the mark of the “Age of Intermediality,” when cultural hierarchies between the original and its adaptation, the written and the audiovisual media tend to be flattened (11). Jenkins uses the term “convergence culture” to describe the convergence of old and new media that has changed “the relationship between media audiences, producers, and content” in American popular culture (12). Whereas his theory confirms Punzi’s view that old and new media are in constant exchange and ultimately establish a symbiosis (12), Jenkins maps a much more ambivalent picture of this convergence culture in practice. He scrutinizes how participatory culture, which features the consumer’s active engagement with cultural products and in particular their appropriation and reworking of these products, has brought about increasingly complicated negotiations between media producer and audience. Four aspects of participatory culture in

Jenkin's observations are relevant to this essay: first, the development of media technologies, especially digital media, allows the audience to appropriate media content and hence achieves a sense of empowerment (11); second, the audience transforms media content not just for entertainment but also into resources to make sense of their everyday life, such as their "relations, memories, fantasies, desires" (17); third, the audience's participation has different levels of cultural innovation depending on their different skills and resources (23); and fourth, the audience's desire for participation can be commodified by media producers, who seek to "understand the emotional underpinning of consumer decision-making" and mold consumer desires accordingly. Jenkins terms this marketing strategy as "affective economics" (61-62).

The buzzword of China's cultural entrepreneurship in the age of intermediality is "IP (intellectual property) development," or rights management; namely, one maximizes the commercial value of the original content (for example, a novel) by selling its rights. The typical case of rights management driven by digitalization and the consumers' participation is the business model of Shengda Literature (盛大文學 *Shengda wenxue*; 2008-14, known as Cloudary Corporation in English), which at the time was the largest publisher of Internet literature in China. The author—often an ordinary Internet user—first serializes his/her story online. Then, when a story gains a large enough fan base, it will come out as a print book and its rights are further sold by the company for possible production of movies, television dramas, and games (Han 36-38).

When looking at Guo Jingming's entrepreneurial practices, I find that they have been largely based on printed matters, with *Zui Novel* (最小說 *Zuixiaoshuo*), a literary monthly in the hybrid form of a mook (ムック, magazine and book), as its core product. He printed the stories by himself and his authors first in the mook and then sold their rights for other media productions. Despite the integration of digital technologies into the everyday life of Chinese young adults, *Zui Novel* ranked among the bestselling literary periodicals, with constant monthly sales of 500,000 copies since 2007 (Chen 74). In 2015, Guo Jingming stated: "Three years ago, book publishing occupied more than 90% of our company's revenue, but in 2014 books themselves made up only 30% of our profits and the other 70% consisted of selling royalties, electronic rights, adaptation rights, and other rights" (C. Wang 42). In March 2016, Zui Company put an end to its cooperation with the print-based Changjiang Literature and Art Publishing House (長江文藝出版社 *Changjiang wenyi chubanshe*) in order to form an alliance with Boji Tianjuan Books Publishing Co. Ltd. (博集天卷), a company engaging in more diverse media production (He n.

pag.). In 2017, *Zui Novel* metamorphosed into a bimonthly, renamed in English *Zui Mook*, which publishes stories on one topic each issue. This probably signals the end of this mook as the core product of the company.

How did Guo Jingming win his target consumers, those most cyber-savvy young generations, with a printed mook as the core product of his company in the past ten years? How was this core product integrated into the company's intermedial cultural production? What does the story of Guo the cultural entrepreneur tell us about intermediality and cultural entrepreneurship in postsocialist China? The next two sections seek to find answers to these questions. The first section looks into Guo's cross-media building and promotion of his cultural persona—in his own novels, through his appearance in well-known television talk shows, and by his use of social media such as Sina Weibo (新浪微博), China's most popular Twitter-like messaging tool. I argue that Guo has built his brand image as a self-improving and self-enterprising neoliberal role model, a brand image speaking to his young audience's desires, fantasies, and anxieties. This brand image, however, blurs his connection with state cultural institutions. The second section examines Zui Company's TN literary contests that aim to create young celebrity-authors as its human capital and Guo Jingming's intermedial production of his bestseller trilogy *Tiny Times* (小時代 *Xiaoshidai*). It explores the mechanism of cross promotion in these intermedial entrepreneurial practices that exploit the Me-Generation's narcissism, self-promotion, and desires for a participatory culture. My analysis shows that the young consumer's desire for participation has been courted but also channeled to expand commercial opportunities for the company.

Cross-Media Building of Brand Image

Readers asked about the reason for purchasing *Zui Novel* answered—on the Reader's Opinion Form attached to each issue of the mook—that the editor-in-chief, Guo Jingming, is one of their main reasons. This strongly suggests that Guo's cultural persona plays a significant role in his entrepreneurship. But what constitutes this persona? How does Guo build this cultural persona and promote it as a brand image? And why does it attract young adult consumers?

Guo Jingming comes from Zigong, a small city in Sichuan province. In 2001 and 2002, he won the first prize back-to-back in the New Concept writing contests held by the youth literature magazine *Budding* (萌芽 *Mengya*). Meanwhile he published prose essays and short stories on the literary website *Under the Banyan Tree* (榕樹下 *Rongshuxia*) with the pseudonym Fourth Dimension (第四維 *Disi wei*).

His fans have therefore nicknamed him Little Four (小四 *Xiaosi*). After publishing a couple of bestsellers, Guo quit studying film and television at Shanghai University in 2004 to found the 島 i5land Studio in Shanghai. It would ultimately expand into the media conglomerate Zui Company in 2010, whose cultural products target the young adult market (Fumian 401-02; H. Xiao 161). While managing the company, Guo has not given up his identity as an author. In 2006, however, he was convicted of plagiarism for using similar character designs in his novel *Never-Flowers in Never-Dream* (夢裡花落知多少 *Mengli hualuo zhiduoshao*, 2003) to those in the novel *Inside and Outside the Circles* (圈裡圈外 *Quanli quanwai*, 2003) by Zhuang Yu (莊羽). He paid the fine but has never admitted his plagiarism.¹ His trilogy *Tiny Times*, an urban drama about four young women's friendships, romantic entanglements, and working life in twenty-first century Shanghai, was serialized in *Zui Novel* between 2007 and 2010. The story was then published in book form between 2008 and 2011 by his business partner Changjiang Literature and Art Publishing House.² Subsequently, Guo directed the series of four films *Tiny Times* based on his own books. The films were released in the summers of 2013, 2014, and 2015, generating an impressive box office revenue totaling 1,667 million *yuan*, circa 245 million US dollars (Cai 42). Although the film version of his fantasy novel *The Mark of the Cavalier* (爵跡 *Jueji*, 2010), renamed *Legend of Ravaging Dynasties*, or *LORD* (2016), was not critically well-received, Guo proudly announced in his Weibo entry on Oct. 1, 2016 that this was the first fully CGI (computer generated imagery) film made by Chinese artists.³

The story of Guo Jingming's metamorphosis from a bright bestseller author into one of the most important cultural entrepreneurs in contemporary China has been told and retold by himself and others, visually and textually, in print media, on TV talk

¹ I adopt the translation of *Never-Flowers in Never-Dream* here, because it appears on the cover of the original book. For a discussion on this case in terms of plagiarism and literary intertextuality, see Henningsen.

² It should be noted that this is by no means new. Similar practices have also been carried out for decades in cultural industries in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

³ 「播放這首片尾曲的時候，屏幕上密密麻麻幕後人員的名字。有人說，看著那些視效總監、合成總監、動畫綁定等頭銜後面不再是外國人的名字，而是中文名時，心裡湧起很多感慨。有人說，『隨著年紀慢慢成長，我對小四也沒有那麼多關注了，但是每次他的作品上映，我都第一時間來看。他一直都是我心目中代表我青春的那個少年。』謝謝你們。」（“When the ending song is played, the cast and crew credits are shown on the screen. Someone told me that s/he felt moved when seeing visual effects directors, special effects directors, and animation supervisors no longer bear foreign names. Someone said: ‘I am gradually outgrowing things related to Little Four, but each time when his film is released, I come to watch it immediately. He has always been the young man associated with my own youth.’ I thank you all.”)

shows, and on social media such as Weibo. Despite many controversies including the constant suspicion of plagiarism and criticism of his excessive materialism, Guo has been able to construct a brand image of himself as a self-enterprising young man, who, following free market principles, has transformed himself from a bestseller author of ordinary family background originating from an inland town into an empowered, multitalented cultural entrepreneur in the cosmopolitan “magic metropolis (魔都 *modu*)” of Shanghai.

This is a brand image exuding the “neoliberal ethos” described by Ann Anagnost. In examining neoliberal globalization, Anagnost notes that the link between the implementations of neoliberal thought in government and economic globalization should be understood “not just at the level of political strategy but also as a pervasive ethos that deeply informs the subjective formation of ordinary individuals living in conditions of neoliberal globalization” (4). It is an ethos of “‘empowering’ individuals as risk-bearing subjects” and “unleashing the power of the markets to order human affairs in areas where market agency is deemed superior to governmental control and regulation.” The logic behind this neoliberal ethos, however, is “adapted, contested, and shaped” by specific national contexts, local histories and the problems of government (12). In addition to pedagogical method, media portrayal of desired subjectivities has contributed to the spread of this neoliberal ethos (13).

Marco Fumian notices such neoliberal ethos in his analysis of Guo’s early novels *Enchanted City* (幻城 *Huan Cheng*, 2003) and *Never-Flowers in Never-Dream*. He draws a psychological trajectory of Guo and his only-child generation peers from repressing their desire for freedom to assimilating the dominant ideology that promises “everyone the possibility of attaining a state of freedom *in* the market and *through* competition” (411; emphasis in original). Reading these stories against the social and cultural backgrounds in which Guo grew up, Fumian argues that the fantasy novel *Enchanted City* has the compensatory function of articulating these young people’s repressed “need for freedom, the desire for the other and the urge for affection” (406). The narcissistic only child encounters fierce competition in school and on the job market, which generates anxiety and fear of failure that ultimately result in self-pity. Reading and writing fantasy novels offer *catharsis*, Fumian’s psychological analysis goes, but such *catharsis* also leads to a higher tolerance of repression. In *Never-Flowers in Never-Dream*, Fumian detects the author’s celebration of “values such as talent, an enterprising spirit, work effort and material well-being” and “a euphoric self-satisfaction for the unconstrained life available . . . within the glamorous scenarios of the new Chinese metropolises” (410). At the end

of his essay, Fumain insightfully points out that Guo Jingming himself enacts the mythical projection in his own story: “a hologram enlarging the dream of freedom offered by the market while minimizing the reality that largely restricts the attainment of this freedom” (411). Thus Fumian does not only offer a socio-psychological explanation of the tremendous appeal that Guo’s fiction has to his young adult readers, but also senses the interaction between Guo’s authorial persona and the production—and promotion—of his works.

Over the years, Guo Jingming has grown out of the single identity of a bestseller author. His Weibo page, created on August 28, 2009, boasts now more than 40 million followers and identifies himself as an author, film director, publisher, and editor.



Fig. 1. A screenshot of Guo Jingming’s Sina Weibo page as of June 15, 2017.

Guo’s mobility across cultural spheres and media therefore defies attempts to discuss him within literary discourse. The critic Xu Zidong (許子東), for example, failed in his efforts to understand the “Guo Jingming Phenomenon”—in his words, why is Guo so popular with high school students?—by approaching the issue from a literary perspective. Xu encountered Guo in 2013 on the Phoenix TV talk show *Behind the Headlines with Wen Tao* (鏘鏘三人行 *Qiangqiang sanrenxing*). He proposed that Guo “integrated his physical image into the creating process” (“Do You Love” n.

pag.). This statement, in my opinion, implies that Xu views Guo only as an author and consequently interprets his popularity within the framework of literary creation and reception. The insufficiency—hence the ineffectiveness—of Xu’s approach was revealed when the two expressed opposite views on China’s current publishing industry, which shows their drastically different standpoints. Xu claimed that the publishing industry was shrinking, while Guo contended that it was booming to such an extent that his major task was to ensure the visibility of his products on the market (“Do You Love” n. pag.). The use of his physical image, Guo explained to Xu, was a method of attracting attention. In other words, it has less to do with Guo’s own literary creation than with the promotion of his cultural products.

Guo Jingming and television talk shows are in a mutually beneficial relationship: Guo, a celebrity, helps talk shows with their ratings while the talk shows offer him a platform to argue his case, display his persona, and in most cases, boost his visibility, if not prestige.⁴ In 2009, Guo appeared on Yang Lan’s talk show *Yang Lan One on One* (楊瀾訪談錄 *Yang Lan fangtanlu*) that features interviews with prominent figures and celebrities. Entitled “Guo Jingming a Different Adult,” this interview positioned Guo from the perspective of his young adult fans. Guo, showing up with his spiky hair in dyed chestnut color, criticized older generations for leading a monotonous life with no self-awareness. By insisting on his talent, he brushed away the hard question about his plagiarism. Instead, he elaborated on his role as an idol (偶像 *ouxiang*), whose duty, according to him, was to demonstrate to his fans the possibility of becoming “a different adult”; that is, by showing them “a positive attitude towards life: perseverance, hard work, talent” (“Guo Jingming: A Different Adult” n. pag.). This conscious management of the self into proper human capital for the market-driven society, admittedly, is new to most Chinese parents.

Interactive social media, especially Weibo, offer Guo Jingming the most effective tools for brand image building through creating “affective alliance” with his fans. According to Shuyu Kong, “affect” refers not just to emotion and feeling but also to a function of *catharsis* and libidinal qualification. She borrows the term “affective alliance” from Lawrence Grossberg (*Dancing*) to analyze the fans’ online consumption of a TV drama as a form of participatory culture, stressing this alliance as a site of empowerment between cultural artifacts and its fans (“Affective” 6). I shall appropriate this term here to discuss Guo’s communication strategy with his fans on Weibo in relation to Jenkins’s “affective economics” mentioned earlier in this essay. I take the multiple implications of “affect” and real-time interaction in the sense of “affective alliance,” but I argue that this interaction between Guo and his

⁴ I thank one of the reviewers for suggesting this point.

followers is forged as a marketing strategy in response to the fans' emotional and libidinal needs to directly contact or relate to Guo. It promises the fans the right of participation, which is however carefully conditioned. Therefore, one can hardly talk about empowerment of the fans in this communication process.

Although Weibo only allows a text up to 140 characters, users can expand an entry by attaching visual materials such as photos, screenshots, videos, and/or providing external web links. Guo Jingming's photo on Sina Weibo shows a young professional in a blue shirt and tie against an urban landscape. Right under the photo, Guo, as a VIP member, is able to post information about his latest products. The left side of the page links to Guo's biographical information on *Baidu* (百度), the largest web search engine within the PRC. This page can easily lead the viewer to other related pages such as *Zui Novel* and his fan communities (see Fig. 1).

Guo Jingming adeptly interweaves company events with personal anecdotes and idiosyncrasies to substantiate his cultural and entrepreneurial persona. The first entry posted on September 27, 2009, almost one month after the account was created, celebrated finishing the manuscript of *Tiny Times 2.0*: "Finally I'm done with the last word of *Tiny Times 2.0*! This was really a life-and-death struggle!!" (Weibo n. pag.).⁵ Guo announces the progress of his writing and film making on Weibo; reposts bestseller charts containing the products of his company, which are mostly his own books; uploads pictures or videos of company gatherings at festivals; and provides external links to new books released by Zui Company and the promotional films about it.

It is, however, those entries on Guo Jingming's personal life and emotions that function most effectively to build an "affective alliance" with his fans and consequently make "affective economics" work. With his self-deprecating humor, Guo purposefully and skillfully presents personal—often vulnerable and melancholic—moments on Weibo in order to generate sympathy from and/or empathy for his fans, and to display the non-aggressive masculinity of a "warm male" (暖男 *nuannan*) that matches his androgynous look.

Guo Jingming constantly makes fun of his small frame and androgynous look as "too female" in his Weibo entries. Nor does he mind revealing his fear of mice. On the other hand, his occasional soft porn jokes and photos showing off his toned muscled body suggest that Guo intentionally cultivates the androgynous male beauty image portrayed in popular *danmei/danbi* 耽美 (addicted to beauty) fiction, a Chinese genre of male homoerotic romance similar to the "boys' love" (known as *yaoi* やお

⁵ 「《小時代 2.0》我終於寫完了最後一個字啦！！真是一場生死搏鬥啊！！」

(3) fictional narrative in Japan. His topless picture posted on August 1, 2011, for example, was reposted more than 27,000 times and attracted more than 18,000 comments, many of which were teasing and flirting in tone. Mark McLelland's study of the global female fandom of *yaoi* points out that this genre attempts to "challenge normative codes conditioning femininity and the expression of female desire" (24). Feng Jin argues, more specifically, that the masculinity imagined in Chinese online *danmei* fiction tends to lessen "the potential threat of aggressive masculinity" (80). In other words, such androgynous beauty embodies a female projection about a perfect male image.

Guo Jingming caters to this imagination by creating a positive "warm male" image of himself, which downplays the aspect of male physical strength while highlighting his sensitivity, caring nature, and comforting power in social relations, especially in his relations with females. Guo Jingming's Weibo entries often sing high praise to his company's bestselling authors and to his films' actors/actresses. He posts regularly anecdotes and photos of their gatherings. One of his long-time colleagues and the deputy CEO of Zui Company, Hen Hen (痕痕), wrote an essay calling Guo "my male bestie" (男閨蜜 *nanguimi*) (22). On *A Date with Luyu* (魯豫有約 *Luyu youyue*) in 2015, a Chinese equivalent of the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, Guo told the hostess that he and his mother often go to the beauty salon together to dye their hair and compliment each other's new hairstyles.

On his Weibo and on talk shows, Guo has expressed many times his love for his parents and his strong sense of responsibility to make them happy. On the early morning (1:03 am) of May 8, 2010, he posted an entry telling the following story: He received on his computer an invitation requesting a visual chat on QQ (an instant messaging software service). Unable to see who sent this invitation, he impatiently replied: "Are you crazy or something?" In no time he was connected and saw that his parents were waiting nervously to visual chat with him for the first time. When his mother's voice in Sichuan dialect came over: "Mingming, it is mama here" (Weibo n. pag.) Guo burst into tears.⁶

⁶ 「有晚 QQ 上一個陌生人發視頻邀請給我，但沒畫面。我想是惡作劇於是打了『神經病啊』發過去。這時畫面出現了，我媽挨著我爸，還抱著我的金毛狗，他們緊張又滿臉期待，像過年拍全家福樣。我沒攝像頭他們看不到我，那句『神經病啊』讓我媽手足無措。電腦傳出『明明，是媽媽』的四川話時，我哇得哭了出來。」 ("One night, some strange name invited me for a visual chat on QQ, but I could not see any picture popping up. I figured it was a mischief so I typed 'are you crazy or something' and sent it out. Then the picture appeared. My mom was sitting next to my dad, holding my golden retriever. They appeared nervous but full of expectation, as if they were taking a family photo during the new year's time. I did not install the camera so they could not see me. My impatient message put my mom at a loss. When her voice in Sichuan dialect 'Mingming, it's mama here' came over from my computer, I burst into tears.")

This entry has by now attracted almost 3000 responses and been reposted more than 1000 times. Most of these took place within 24 hours after it was posted. Many followers said they were moved by his feeling for his parents and the fact that he was willing to expose—hence share—a vulnerable moment. “That is why I love Little Four. He treats his parents so well,” one follower said. Others conveyed real-time comforts to him: “You are the little prince. Always a child in front of your parents. Don’t cry. Go to bed early.” This entry also generated a sense of identification. One follower exclaimed: “You also use QQ!” Others sighed: “Oh, I am also homesick now.” Another one related to their shared hometown: “Go home then. Don’t cry. I miss my parents, too. See, I write all this in the Sichuan dialect [for you]” (Weibo n. pag.). The comments also reveal, however, that Guo had rewritten two earlier entries, which seem to have been then deleted, into this one. Furthermore, as many comments noted, Guo posted this entry briefly before Mother’s Day, which was on May 9 in 2010. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that this entry, instead of recording spontaneously a private moment of Guo’s, was a piece of publication written for a specific occasion with a specific readership in mind.

Guo Jingming’s shrewd business tactics do not really match his “warm male” image and he is disliked by many. He has been criticized in both Chinese and foreign media for his “headlong embrace of commercialism” (Lim n. pag.) and lack of engagement in social activism. In his interview with the magazine *Portrait* (人物 *Renwu*), he defended himself by emphasizing professionalism: “Not everyone in this society is a revolutionary or a leader. . . . If you are a construction worker, you have to guarantee that your building does not collapse; if you are a doctor, you should use your scalpel to save lives. If a doctor becomes a public intellectual, engages in social commentaries and agitates against the privileges [of officials], then this society will be in chaos” (Zhang and Zhang 86). Such faith in professionalism shows his confidence in the market to regulate social issues and human affairs, yet Guo Jingming’s own road to success depended on something more than his talent, individual struggle, and professionalism as exhibited in his brand image.

In 2006, Guo’s public image reached its nadir due to his scandalous conviction for plagiarism. Changjiang Literature and Art Publishing House signed him up and used their resources “in government and other areas” to help him reinvent his brand image. This included: seeking support from famous writers and critics such as Wang Meng (王蒙) and Chen Xiaoming (陳曉明); recommending Guo into the state-sponsored Writers’ Association in 2007; arranging Guo to attend book launches of well-known authors such as Wang Meng and Mo Yan (莫言); and urging him to participate in public welfare and charity activities (Ji, Wang, and Wu 64). Thus Guo’s

success has also depended on the support of his publishing house partner, whose power and network are deeply rooted in their socialist past as a state cultural institution. This partner therefore is able to offer Guo access to symbolic—and perhaps also economic—capital accumulation that is equally a key to his success.

Whereas Guo Jingming usually downplays his connection with these institutions, he occasionally flaunts his patriotism on Weibo, like the one entry posted on September 9, 2012:

You can take me as a dumb fan (腦殘粉 *naocanfen*) of China. I am the person who used to shed my tears when seeing our national flag raised over Tian'anmen Square, I am the person who sobs each time our national anthem is played at the Olympic Games, I am the person who used to cry in the middle of the night over pictures online showing the Chinese people protecting the Olympic Flame in 2008. You do not have to doubt that this sort of people exists. There are many problems in my motherland, but this does not affect my unreserved love for and pride in it. (Weibo n. pag.)⁷

Within 24 hours, this entry had attracted more than 78,000 comments and even a double amount of reposting—more than 170,000 (Qiu n. pag.). Both the comments condemning Guo's complicity with and kowtowing to the state and those sharing his patriotic feelings contribute to the speed, scale, and intensity of the debate. They attest to Guo's high visibility in China's cultural landscape and his ability to identify—and stir—the hot issues in contemporary Chinese society. As Guo's own Weibo entry on Sept. 30, 2016 (see footnote 3) and the recent commercial success of the movie *Wolf Warriors II* (戰狼 *Zhan lang II*, 2017) show, commercial nationalism, “the intermingling of the commercialized mode of producing nationalism and the commercialization of national identities thus produced” (Yang 65), is now on the rise in the PRC. The next day the state propaganda newspaper *Global Times* (環球時報 *Huanqiu shibao*) posted their commentary to champion Guo's assertion of patriotism (Shan n. pag.). Behind Guo's brand image parading the neoliberal ethos of individual, risk-taking struggle and self-improvement in a free-market economy is a cautious

⁷ 「你們就當我是中國的腦殘粉好了。我就是曾經在天安門看升旗哭了的人，我就是每次看奧運聽見國歌就眼紅哽咽的人，我就是曾經半夜看網上北京奧運聖火傳遞時，中國人保護火炬的照片，看得嚎啕大哭的人。你們不用懷疑，這種人是存在的。我的祖國的確有很多問題，但這並不影響我毫無保留地愛它，為它自豪。」

cultural entrepreneur with Chinese characteristics, who has to navigate carefully through the market and the state as well as changing social values and cultural tastes.

Cross-Media Cultural Entrepreneurism

In 2009, the journalist Wu Huaiyao (吳懷堯) worked with the Institute of Cultural Studies at Tongji University (同濟大學文化批評研究所 *Tongji daxue wenhua piping yanjiusuo*), *ifeng.com* (鳳凰網 *Fenghuang wang*), and CCTV 10 (Science and Education Channel of China Central Television) to launch charts for the top ten most popular publishers and literary periodicals of 2008 and 2009. Wu is also known for initiating the China Writers Rich List (中國作家富豪榜 *Zhongguo zuojia fuhao bang*) in 2006 and for his in-depth *Huaiyao Interviews* (懷堯訪談錄 *Huaiyao fantanlu*) with prominent cultural figures on his blog combining video, pictures, and texts. Five of the eight committee members—a blend of established critics, media practitioners, and authors—nominated *Zui Novel* for the chart. An online vote was carried out on *ifeng.com* to decide the ranking of the nominated periodicals, which pushed the mook to first place in the top ten. The literary magazine *Harvest* (收穫 *Shouhuo*) founded by Ba Jin (巴金), one of the most significant figures in modern Chinese literature, ranked sixth. After the charts were released in early 2010, they were interpreted as the market defeating (pure) literature. Some critics termed it provocatively: “Guo Jingming defeating Ba Jin” (Y. Xiao n. pag.; Zhu n. pag.). Yet the boundary between so-called “serious” literature and Guo Jingming’s products turned out to be much more porous: back in 2009, Guo published an excerpt of his *Tiny Times 2.0* in *People’s Literature* (人民文學 *Renmin wenxue*), the literary magazine affiliated to the Writers’ Association, while in the summer of 2010, *Harvest* published an excerpt of Guo’s *The Mark of the Cavalier* together with two critical essays on the novel (Martinsen n. pag.).

The making of the charts, the following controversy over it, and the publication of Guo’s works in those “pure” literary magazines all point to an increasingly pluralistic cultural landscape in China, with various forces contending for symbolic capital. In the cultural business, this pluralistic feature is manifested in the tendency of the media to flatten hierarchies. Internet literature and the digitalization of literature have not led to the death of printed books; instead they seem to thrive on each other. Print-form literary magazines and books foreground their distinct materiality—size, paper choice, visual design, and even price range—in order to form a sense of cultural identification that attracts their target consumers (Zhang and Song n. pag.). The mook form that caught on around 2006 in China’s publishing industry

is a case in point: each is made self-consciously to appeal to its target readership with specific form and content. In addition to *Zui Novel*, *DuKu* (讀庫) edited by Zhang Lixian (張立憲) aims at readers interested in history; *Xuanyizhi* 懸疑志 (*Mystery and Thrillers*, 2007) edited by Cai Jun (蔡駿) and Yu Youruo (魚悠若) offers stories for suspense-lovers; *Li* 鯉 (*Newwriting*, 2008) edited by Zhang Yueran (張悅然) tries to capture the attention of college students and white-collar workers that enjoy literature.

Zui Novel constantly experimented with its size, design, price as well as the ratio between textual and visual contents to optimize its attraction. In October 2008, its size was reduced from roughly 18×25.5 cm to 16.2×23 cm, making it look more like a novel (standard size: 15.4×21.6 cm). The mook also borrows its visual design from fashion magazines: its colorful cover, table of contents, the editor-in-chief's notes as well as advertisements for Zui Company products are all printed on shiny coated paper. Further inside the mook, texts accompanied by color images are printed on fine book paper. The omnipresence of color pictures in the mook presents literary texts such as poems, essays, and stories in a highly visualized manner, creating the mood and intervening with—or even guiding—the readers' understanding of the textual contents. Guo Jingming's own face was used several times for the cover of *Zui Novel*, indicating the integral role of his persona in his products. The mook used to come out with supplementary sections such as “Zui Silence” (photography) and “Zui Comics.” Like fashion magazines, they were packed together with the mook in a transparent plastic bag. In 2015, comics and fiction were combined into a 296-page mook costing 16.8 *yuan*, but in 2016 comics were again cut out and the price reduced to 12.8 *yuan*.

The hybrid appearance of *Zui Novel* between literary and fashion magazines indicates its self-perception as a cultural product made for consumption. Correspondingly, Zui Company has developed its own system for creating celebrity-authors, a trend borrowing from “the much more articulated stardom system of film and pop-music industry [sic]” (Vogrincic 205). As mentioned in the previous section, Guo Jingming himself started his career as an author-cum-idol after emerging from writing contests. And he has nurtured a brand image largely correlating to the content of his stories. Similarly, Zui Company hosted TN literary contests (2008-09, 2010-11, 2013-14) to select new literary talents. Reminiscent of the ones Guo himself participated in, these contests make Guo's success appear tangible and replicable. Yet in comparison with the New Concept writing contests, TN literary contests are much more commercially-oriented in that they are shrewdly-planned promotional company campaigns to boost *Zui Novel's* sales and to select a pool of new writers with strong commercial potential for the company. To participate in the contest, either as the

contestant or as the audience, one has to buy several issues of *Zui Novel*, because the contest's requirements (registration form, information and discussion on candidates and their writings, etc.) are only available in the mook. The finalists enjoy a full promotional package including a high advance from Zui Company as well as the prospect of media exposure and guaranteed publication with Changjiang Literature and Art Publishing House, which brought out, among others, the international bestseller *Wolf Totem* (狼圖騰 *Langtuteng*, 2004). The endorsement of established writers, critics, and publishers such as Liu Zhenyun (劉震雲), Mai Jia (麥家), Zhang Yiwu (張頤武), Bai Ye (白燁), and An Boshun (安波舜) should lend the contests authority and prestige.

The TN contests use digital media to take the tastes of the readers into consideration. It has a similar procedure to that of the TV shows such as *American Idol* and *Super Girl* (超級女聲 *Chaoji nüsheng*) except for the contestant's age limit. Any person 25 or younger interested in writing is allowed to participate in the contest; in the last several rounds, the audience plays a role in the selection. Instead of using call-ins or SMS as in *American Idol* or *Super Girl*, the audience in a TN literary contest use clicks. Take TN III for example; the nine finalists had to post their works on Baidu Post Bar (百度貼吧 *Baidu Tieba*), an online community, and upload at least 5000 words per week. Readers would then click into the texts that attracted them. The number of clicks would determine the top three ("Wenxue" 121-22).

Subsequently, the young finalists of these TN contests, like those bestseller authors of *Zui Novel*, have had their work and photos published in the mook. Thus their pictures become part and parcel of their authorial personae. To substantiate their personae, *Zui Novel* invited them to participate in its gossip sections. The three finalists of TN III, for example, appeared in the "Zui Style" section, which was a platform for Zui Company authors to discuss lifestyle issues. Their topic was: "One has to be able to play cute to become popular" (會賣萌才能紅 *hui maimeng cai neng hong*). One of the finalists Huang Weikang (黃偉康) opened up the discussion by stating that he knew from experience that one has to play cute in order to be popular with others, either by looking or behaving cute. His opinion was supported by another finalist Chi Hui (遲卉), who compared herself to a cat and claimed that playing cute could improve interpersonal relations, making everyone including oneself happy. The third finalist Mao Zhiping (毛植平) related cute literary works directly to the cute author (namely, himself) by stating that cuteness is a persuasive power that urges the reader to buy the product (Huang et al. 190-92). Appearing narcissistic to the point of being self-obsessive, these statements demonstrate that the young writers self-

consciously promote themselves and their literary products through performing their authorial personae.

Another gossip column in *Zui Novel* entitled “A Whole Street of Bad Words” (壞話一條街 *huaihua yitiaojie*) was designed to promote one Zui author each time. The author and his/her colleagues in their cartoon images reveal his/her biographical information, tell anecdotes about him/her, and comment on his/her personality. Bao Xiaolin (包曉琳), the champion of TN II and a contracted writer at Zui Company, was featured in the gossip column, promising to “tear apart Bao Xiaolin alive” (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. A gossip column on Bao Xiaolin in *Zui Novel* (February 2015); © Sun Xiaodi et al.

Bao is presented in multiple cartoon figures, indicating the multifacetedness of her personality: one as originating from inner Mongolia, the other as a good advisor, a lively and strong woman. Six of her fellow authors wrote short passages on her, highlighting traits ranging from her care for others, talent in writing different genres,

and smart financial investment to anecdotes such as crashing glasses when drunk (Sun et al. 278-80). The authorial persona so constructed should serve to define—that is, categorize the style and genre of—their writings.

Like the *American Idol* show analyzed by Henry Jenkins, TN contests court their consumers' desire for active participation. They offer ordinary young readers opportunities to develop their dream career as professional writers or to participate in selecting their favorite finalists; allow the finalists to assert their talent and individuality (to the extent of idiosyncrasy); and promise them the possibilities of financial benefits. These contests and the related gossips were carried out and circulated across old and new media, forming a cross-promotional circuit that appeals to the narcissism of the Me-generation. Meanwhile, such business strategies which allow young readers and writers to express themselves help to increase their immersion in the media products of Zui Company. By creating gossip in *Zui Novel*, Zui Company has made the media exposure of its new authors controllable while, at the same time, it builds up a collective persona of the company as a young, dynamic, and friendly team full of promising and fashionable people who are fun to work with.

The intermedial production of *Tiny Times* exemplifies the cross-promotional operation of cultural products by the quintessential celebrity-author, Guo Jingming himself. As mentioned above, the trilogy was serialized in *Zui Novel* between 2007 and 2010. Guo announced the progress of his writing and the release dates of various editions of his book on his Weibo. Between the publication of his fiction, two comics—*Tiny Times 1.5* (2008) and *Tiny Times 2.5* (2010)—came out following the same path: they were serialized in *Zui Novel* before being published in book form. These books were then advertised in the mook as Zui Company products. Guo sold the rights of *Tiny Times* to Xiangxiang Film for nearly 10 million yuan, circa 1.5 million US dollars, in 2011 (Fang and Zhai 52). Whereas the content of *Tiny Times* was also adapted into other media forms such as a TV series (2014), a musical (2015), a mobile game (2015), etc., it is the series of four films between 2013 and 2015—all directed by Guo Jingming—that has attracted most media attention due to its high box office revenue and controversies over its materialism and portrayal of contemporary Chinese life. While the printed version in the mook and/or in book form built a fan base for the positive reception of the films, the release of the films succeeded not only in stimulating the sale of books but also in generating other print-based ancillary products: the books *The Full Record of the Making of the Film Tiny Times I, II, III* (小時代電影全紀錄 *Xiaoshidai dianying quanjilu* I, II, III). Coming out in both limited and paperback editions dovetailing with the release of the films, these books collect entries from Guo Jingming's own "The Diary of a Film Director"

published in *Zui Novel* during the making of the films, interviews with and essays by actors/actresses as well as posters and stills from the films. In 2014, Zui Company launched its online shop ZUI Lives (最世生活 *Zuishi shenghuo*) on the e-commerce platform *Taobao*, which sells stationery and accessories designed by Zui Company authors and artists. Special sections are devoted to *Tiny Times* and *The Mark of the Cavalier* to provide spinoff merchandise such as T-shirts, notebooks, postcards, stuffed toys, necklaces, and so on.

The narrator of *Tiny Times* is Lin Xiao, a girl from an ordinary family. She tells the stories of herself and her three friends: the rich and smart Gu Li is sharp-tongued yet warm-hearted; poor but talented artist Nan Xiang is burdened with a complicated love relationship and constant financial crisis; the tennis player Tang Wanru appears to be the classical silly girl who makes everyone laugh. Their friendships and entangled love stories together with Lin Xiao's working life at a fashion magazine—along with an incredibly handsome, perfectionist yet lonely boss Gong Ming—are the main themes of the stories.

Tiny Times can be read as a narrative of growing pains. The narrative perspective of Lin Xiao offers a point of identification for its young readers, who are dealing with similar issues—friendship, love, career—in their own life. Guo Jingming establishes a second venue of identification by serializing his diary in *Zui Novel*, entitled “*Tiny Times: The Diary of Making a Film*” (小時代影像日記 “*Xiaoshidai yingxiang riji*”) in 2013 and “*The Diary of a Film Director*” (導演日記 “*Daoyan riji*”) afterwards. The diary entries foreground his own growing pains about moving from the publishing sector to the film industry. Accompanied by on-site color photos, the diary presents Guo as a kind-hearted, slightly idiosyncratic workaholic and perfectionist who has ultimately learned his new trade and become a versatile figure in China's creative industries. This self-constructed image echoes to some extent the fictional character of Gong Ming in his story.

On the official poster of *Tiny Times 3.0*, released on July 17, 2014, the tagline goes: “Grow up without regret, fight for you” (成長無憾，為你而戰 *chengzhang wuhan, wei ni er zhan*). Guo Jingming interpreted this in his “*The Diary of a Film Director*” in 2014 as follows: “*Tiny Times 3.0*, a film for which we have fought for so long, will present for you a story of fighting to grow up” (“*Diary*” 24). By using the words “fight” and “grow up,” Guo not only puts the story of the film in relation to the daily life of his target audience but also emphasizes the strenuous efforts of him and his team to make the film. Later again in “*The Diary of a Film Director*,” Guo concretized the idea of “fighting to grow up” with the image of a mountain climber and thereby specified its meaning as a process of risk-taking self-

improvement: “I feel that I am standing on a new level now or I am climbing a higher mountain. I am unafraid of risks and concentrate on my goal ahead. Time is like a strong wind, cutting through my body while I am trying my best to climb up” (“Diary” 31). By creating a shared sense of growing pains, Guo Jingming taps into—and capitalizes on—the desires, anxieties, and fantasies of his readers and audience. The tagline of one of the *Tiny Times 4.0*—the last film of the *Tiny Times* series—posters reads: “I have used up ten years of my youth to come to your final date” (我用十年青春，赴你最後之約 *Wo yong shinian qingchun, fu ni zuihou zhi yue*). Who is “I” and who is “you” in this tagline? The deliberate ambiguity of pronouns here renders them interchangeable, which includes the author/director, the crew of the film, and the audience into one community. The key points lie in the fact that they have spent (nearly) ten years of their youth with the books/films of *Tiny Times*. This film as the last part should evoke their shared memory and hence nostalgia for the past time of younger days, which, in turn, reinforces the community.

The films received a wide range of reviews from various social and age groups. The target group was successfully attracted, as one review in the *People’s Daily* (人民日報 *Renmin ribao*) indicated. Many teenagers went to see the film on the first day when *Tiny Times 1.0* was released, which garnered a box office revenue of 73 million yuan, circa 11 million US dollars (Y. Liu n. pag.). Two weeks later, however, *People’s Daily* published another review displaying unease about the film. The author of this essay worried that the film promoted the desire for and the power of individuality and consumerism, which would have a negative impact on the “naïve” young audience (Q. Liu n. pag.). These two essays reveal the unstable positioning of state propaganda in public communication when dealing with the issues of entrepreneurism and consumption. On the one hand, they should be encouraged for economic development, on the other hand, they have to be kept under ideological control.

Although the negative voice from *People’s Daily* did cause a certain anxiety about the official permission of releasing *Tiny Times 2.0* in the same year (Guan n. pag.), it turned out that nothing serious happened. Both the producer of the film and Guo Jingming promised to highlight the story’s “positive” values. Guo, who appeared on the talk show *One on One* hosted by Yang Lan on August 4, 2013, reiterated that this film shows one can demonstrate his/her talent and realize his/her dream through hard work, and in spite of family background. In any case, the controversy increased the media exposure of *Tiny Times* and succeeded in promoting its products. It also increased the visibility of young adult culture—or the previous lack of it and hence the market niche. The intermedial production of *Tiny Times* discussed above therefore

shows how Guo Jingming's fictional narrative serves as original content whose value is maximized through media franchise. In this process, Guo's cultural persona was profoundly involved in the creation and promotion of the products.

As a media producer, Guo actively uses the Web to promote his products and his own persona. Yet he is extremely reluctant to share the content of his stories or that of other authors' works online and chooses to ignore the fans' creative reworking of his company's products. Fanfiction of *Tiny Times* does exist online (L. Wang 134). This includes one original piece entitled *Invalid Years* (無效年華 *wuxiao nianhua*) by Yi Chu (伊綉), which was posted between August 2013 and April 2014 on the literary website *Jinjiang* (晉江). The author situates the story in the narrative framework of a computer game, naming the narrator Lin Zhaoxi. Despite the attachment and loyalty that the author shows to Guo's original story, this game setup subverts the reality claim of Guo's works. Whereas his cultural entrepreneurship targets young adults and profits from digital technologies, Guo Jingming and his Zui Company appear to have little interest in interacting with such creative participatory culture—*Tiny Times* fanfiction has been largely drowned out in the promotional fanfare of Zui Company products.

The participatory desires of the fans, instead, are carefully channeled into a controllable, and often promotional, direction. When the film *Tiny Times 1.0* was released in 2013, *Zui Novel* polled its readers about the characters in the story. They were asked to imagine themselves as characters in *Tiny Times 1.0* and to envision the film's protagonists as part of their daily life (a possible lover, friend, family member, etc). Over 500 responses were collected. More than half (55.51%) of the respondents, both male and female, identified themselves with the narrator, Lin Xiao, while the rich and smart Gu Li was the most desirable friend for her competence, courage, friendship, and, of course, wealth (Amoyi and Meiyou). These responses conform to a large extent to the character design of the original story.

Conclusion

In December 2013, Guo Jingming was selected by *Southern Weekend* (南方週末 *Nanfang zhoumo*), a liberal weekly newspaper, as one of the nine practitioners of the Chinese Dream. The newspaper justified its selection of Guo by affirming his pursuit of upward social and financial mobility as an expression of the Chinese Dream: Guo, as a child of average Chinese citizens, has grasped his opportunities to grow wealthy by producing cultural artifacts for young adults and representing their taste. Controversial as he is, no one can dispute his immense influence ("Guo Jingming huo" n. pag.). As I attempt to show in this essay, the story of Guo Jingming

and his cultural entrepreneurship tell us more than this portrayal of harmonious relations between state ideology, cultural production, and a self-enterprising subjectivity. Guo, like many other entrepreneurs in postsocialist China, has to negotiate and navigate carefully through political, cultural, and economic powers.

What makes Guo Jingming a significant existence in China's cultural landscape yet differentiates him from other cultural entrepreneurs, such as Hong Huang (洪晃), Feng Xiaogang (馮小剛), and An Boshun, is his discovery of a profitable market niche in youth culture and his central role in shaping it. Through his entrepreneurial practices, Guo has brought into view the cultural needs and fantasies of young adults—most of them are the only child—and then tapped into these desires for his own commercial ends.

Guo Jingming has kept enlarging his own repertoire of professional expertise while expanding his business empire, which makes him and his constantly evolving company the embodiment of the self-improving and self-enterprising ethos of neoliberalism. The functioning of the print-based mook *Zui Novel* as the core product in Guo's cultural entrepreneurship between 2006 and 2016 shows that digital media have profoundly changed—but not dominated—cultural production and consumption in the age of intermediality. The material features as well as the textual and visual design of the mook and other print-based products cater to the young adults' tastes shaped by cultural globalization. The buying and reading of these products, in addition to circulating literary content, also serve for young adults as ways of building a (brand) community based on their similar aesthetic and lifestyle choices; and these choices, in turn, are largely molded by the products. Guo Jingming has successfully built a brand community by binding his own image, products, and the target consumers by means of affective associations of “youth”: the longing for friendship and love, the desire for self-expression and self-promotion, the dream of a successful career, melancholy nostalgia, as well as factors such as libidinal drives and, perhaps, even asserted patriotism.

Studies on cultural consumption in twenty-first century China, especially that on the new media, have often emphasized the empowerment of the prosumer through their participatory activities. Yet Jenkins reminds us that there are “competing and contradictory ideas about participation” in our protracted process of convergence culture (23). Guo Jingming's cultural entrepreneurship in the past ten years exemplifies the ambiguities and ambivalence of a convergence culture that operates on the principle of “affective economics.” It woos the young adults' desire to participate in cultural consumption, but contains its scope and creative power to

ensure the company's own profit. This has been so far successful due to the young consumers' limited skills and resources.

What this essay does not have space to treat is the promotion of young adult genre literature, especially science fiction, by Zui Company. Like Guo's other entrepreneurial practices, this has pushed forward China's cultural pluralism and professionalism in creative industries, but it always contains the danger of leading to homogenized and highly formulative cultural products.

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