Abstract

Gu Hua (古华) is one of the remarkable and accomplished novelists in the contemporary China. It is through the novel *Fu Rong Zhen* (《芙蓉镇》) that he has established himself as an important writer after twenty years of writings.

The novel was first published in the monthly *Dangdai* (《当代》) in 1981 and it received favourable responses from both the readers and critics. This study aims to provide a systematic and in-depth evaluation of this novel.

Based on his personal experience, Gu Hua presents the historical changes in life and customs of the Hunan province and has successfully reflected the horrifying impact on the people by the ultra-left political movements which have prevailed China since the late 1950s till the fall of the "gang of four." Apart from that, he also reveals the origin of human kindness and wickedness. As for his writing skills, the author displays a full picture of the seventeen years of political upheavals through the narration of the ups and downs of a group of people in a small town in four different periods. He uses a delicate and vivid language and retains a sense of wry humour.

All in all, Gu Hua has succeeded in exploring and making innovations in this novel. Thus, he has made significant contribution to the development of the contemporary Chinese literary world.