Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

XIAOMENG CHENG

BA (University of Victoria, 2016)

“Performing the Everyday Life is Ruined City: Wife, Mistress, and Housemaid of a Literary Celebrity”

Department of Pacific and Asian Studies

Tuesday, August 7, 2018
10:00 A.M.
Clearihue Building
Room B007

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Richard King, School of Pacific and Asian Studies, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Guoguang Wu, Department of History, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Alison Bailey, Department of Asian Studies, University of British Columbia

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Marlea Clarke, Department of Political Science, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

This thesis presents a study of “performing the everyday life” in the writer Jia Pingwa’s well-known novel *Ruined City* (*Feidu 废都*). By adopting the sociologist Erving Goffman’s idea of dramaturgical interactions in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, this thesis contends that the social interactions in *Ruined City* are all performed. I particularly pay attentions to the relationships involving the novel’s central character, the celebrity-writer and one of the four “cultural idlers” in Xijing, which is the ancient capital Xi’an the author lives in real life, Zhuang Zhidie, and the three women in his life— the wife Niu Yueqing, the mistress Tang Wan’er, and the housemaid Liu Yue. Taking into account of Goffman’s idea, I consider Zhuang Zhidie performs various roles when he encounters with each of the women, and they in turn performing the corresponding role to fit in the performance environment Zhuang has regularized with his role and his definitions of situation. In a novel notorious for its graphic descriptions of sex, these relationships are also performed in sexual encounters, and presented with symbolic objects relevant to the characters' roles.