

Intellectuals in Chinese Fiction

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Intellectuals in Chinese Fiction

YUE DAIYUN

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Contents

Foreword	vii
<i>Joyce K. Kallgren</i>	
Acknowledgments.....	viii
Introduction.....	1
1. The First Anecdotal Collection Describing the Lives of Intellectuals: <i>A New Account of Tales of the World</i>	8
2. Intellectuals at an Impasse and the Collapse of Feudal Society: <i>Six Chapters of a Floating Life</i>	38
3. Modern Chinese Intellectuals in Modern Chinese Literature: <i>The Eclipse and Rainbow of Mao Dun</i>	57
4. The Young Intelligentsia in the War Years: <i>Lu Ling's Children of the Rich</i>	83
5. Chinese Intellectuals of the 1950s as Seen in <i>Wang Meng's Bu li</i>	108
Postscript: The Man—or Woman—of Letters as Hero.....	134
<i>Cyril Birch</i>	

Foreword

Yue Daiyun is Professor of Modern Chinese Literature in Peking University. For the period 1982–1984 she took leave of absence to work at Berkeley as Research Linguist in the Center for Chinese Studies. She brought with her a comprehensive knowledge of Chinese fiction and a critical approach in which Marxist/sociological methodologies loomed large. During her time at Berkeley she was impressed by the fruitfulness of some recent Western studies of the art of fiction, in particular the ways in which analysis of the narrator's function led to deeper understanding of the relationship among author, world, text, and audience.

She embarked on a study of the Chinese intellectual in the modes of his self-portrayal in fiction through successive historical stages. This book is the result of her study. After soundings in the fifth and eighteenth centuries she provides searching account of three focal writers of our own time.

Professor Yue's involvement in the adventurous life of the Chinese intellectual is vividly narrated in her book *To the Storm* (with Carolyn Wakeman). With the present monograph she completes a prolonged meditation on the intellectual's relationship with self and society.

The manuscript of this book was expertly translated from Chinese into English by Deborah Rudolph and Yeh Wen-hsing to whom thanks are due. The Center for Chinese Studies has shifted the publication of its series "Studies in Chinese Terminology," supervised by the Current Chinese Language Project, into the ongoing China Research Monograph series.

JOYCE K. KALLGREN

Associate Director
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Introduction

While novels are not meant to be complete records of historical fact, they do contain a wealth of sociological data. For a novel presents to us not only the world it seeks to portray; it presents us as well the ideals of its author, his valuations, and his goals. Its reflections of society as it is or was, of course, are inevitably one-sided, even distorted. But such misrepresentation can aid us in understanding the forms of a previous generation's prejudices, its attitude toward life, its moral constraints, and its distinctive philosophies. The information to be found in fiction—particularly fiction written under the circumstances in which free and unrestricted expression was not possible—becomes even more valuable and gains in authenticity. In China, the eras of free expression of thought have not been numerous. Invariably, the authors of novels of merit are men who have been thwarted in politics and frustrated in life. In researching Chinese social history, therefore, we may discover in fiction new layers of information not uncovered in other sources.

The five novels under discussion here—*Shi shuo xin yu* (A new account of tales of the world), written by Liu Yiqing in the years 433–444; *Fu sheng liu ji* (Six chapters of a floating life), written by Shen Fu in the early years of the nineteenth century; *Hong* (Rainbow), written by Mao Dun in the years 1927–1928; *Caizhu de ernümen* (Children of the rich), written by Lu Ling in the years 1943–1944; and *Bu li* (Bolshevik greetings), written by Wang Meng in the years 1978–1979—span a considerable period and are unlike in the persons and societies they depict. Yet there are many common points and themes among them.

First, the authors of these works are all members of the intelligentsia and of a particular stamp: they are men who have lived lives of chaos and upset, who are dissatisfied with the realities of life around them, who hope, through their writing, to probe that life. Chapter 51 of the *Song shu* (Documents of the Song) tells us that Liu Yiqing, “finding that the roads and ways of the world had become difficult and that he could no longer straddle a horse [i.e., pursue an official career], summoned the masters of literature, and without fail,

from far and near, they came to him"—and *A New Account of Tales of the World* was compiled. After suffering various setbacks in family life and in society Shen Fu recollected his past in *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*. In *Rainbow*, an account of the failure of the Northern Expedition of 1926–1927, Mao Dun dispels his own profound sentiments and energetically explores the boundaries of the new road. In *Children of the Rich*, Lu Ling portrays his own predicament in the national crisis of the Japanese War of Resistance as well as the bitter struggle between the Nationalist Party, whose reactionary rule had disillusioned him, and the Communist Party, which he opposed, dissatisfied and doubtful. In *Bolshevik Greetings*, Wang Meng ponders his twenty years of oppression as a member of the lowest stratum of society, a Rightist.

Next, the intellectual protagonists of the works are, all of them, in different stages of life. Their passion for life consequently is at different levels. Yet if we look carefully we will find certain commonalities of spirit and mind. These commonalities are best expressed in their maxims “resisting position (*wei*) with virtue (*de*)” and “resisting decorum (*li*) with emotion (*qing*)” and, in some cases, their sensibility to Western culture.

The *Mencius* tells us, “In point of position, you are the prince and I am your subject. How dare I be friends with you? In point of virtue, it is you who ought to serve me. How can you presume to be friends with me?”¹ “Position” refers to political status, power, might (*shi*). “Virtue” refers to ideals, principles, the proper way (*tao*). Resistance, in the proper way, to rituals or decorum and to the nobility is a valued tradition of the Chinese intelligentsia. The *Mencius* tells us that the intelligentsia “delighted in the way, forgetting the exalted position of others. That is why kings and dukes could not get to see them often except by showing them due respect and observing due courtesy. If just to see them often was so difficult, how much more so to induce them to take office.”²

Many anecdotes in *A New Account of Tales of the World* describe the abrasive haughtiness displayed toward nobles and aristocrats by the intellectuals in accordance with their own proper way. The author and protagonist of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, while not equal to the famous scholars of the Wei-Jin period in their supercilious

¹ *Mengzi* 5B:7; trans. D. C. Lau in *Mencius* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1976), p. 157.

² *Mengzi* 7A:8; Lau, p. 183.

Introduction

aloofness, still stipulates that among himself and his friends there will be absolutely no talk of people's official promotions, lawsuits and current affairs, or the conventional eight-legged essay. This is another example of resistance, albeit passive resistance, to those in positions of power and influence. The protagonists of *Rainbow* experience devastating sorrows, carry out various quests and inquiries. One compromise absolutely impossible, however, is cooperation with those in positions of power. The young musician portrayed in *Children of the Rich* adheres firmly to his own ideals and moral principles only to be pressed and crushed, in the end, by the local despots who wield power and authority. The protagonist's situation in *Bolshevik Greetings* is somewhat different. A deep concern for society and a desire to see the nation develop led the intellectuals of the 1950s to comply unconditionally with those in dominant positions within the Communist Party. Yet even in the face of their pursuit of the ideal they are branded Rightists, mortal enemies of the Party.

The concept of emotion, emerging in opposition to decorum, shares an intimate relationship with novels of the Chinese literati. Several of Liu Yiqing's tales concern the system of rites and etiquette, the constricting, even shattering, effect it may exercise upon human nature, and the formulation of a code of conduct based on genuine emotion. The main figures in these anecdotes all pride themselves on "paying no homage to the rules of propriety" and on being themselves "the place where feelings are most concentrated."³ In terms of relationships between the sexes, especially, genuine emotion is esteemed and upheld in these stories. *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* is concerned with the two protagonists' spirit of truth and beauty, the genuine passion between them, and the conflicts and contradictions raised by the old code of ethics. In *Rainbow* Mao Dun writes of what follows the penetration of the Western intellectual tide of personal freedom into the spiritual life of China's intelligentsia, the changes and developments that occur within their tradition of resisting decorum with emotion. *Children of the Rich* details the excesses inherent in the search for individual morality and conducting oneself in accordance with emotions and temperament, thereby bringing on the tragedy of extinction. *Bolshevik Greetings* describes the metamorphosis of the individual's sincere and warm feelings under tremendous political pressure.

³ Liu Yiqing, *A New Account of Tales of the World*, trans. Richard Mather (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1976), p. 375, p. 324.

Intellectuals often act as go-betweens for the importation of foreign culture and learning. In the case of China, foreign culture was assimilated on a grand scale three times: during the Wei-Jin period, with the transmission of Buddhism into China; around the time of the May Fourth Movement, with the influence of science and democracy from Europe and the United States; and, in opposition to the West, with the introduction of Marxism via Russia and Japan. With the exception of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, the novels discussed here all reflect in some way intellectuals during these periods of high tide of Western culture in China. Quite a few anecdotes in *A New Account of Tales of the World* relate to famous Buddhist monks, their encounters with scholars of repute, and these scholars' comments on Buddhist doctrine. We can see from these tales how Buddhism worked its way into China in a period of political, economic, and cultural stability and prosperity. At that time Buddhist monks were largely intellectuals from the old, established clans and aristocratic families. In the early stages they simply appended Buddhist teaching to traditional Chinese culture. New developments, options, and revisions were later advanced based on the needs of society and the spirit of the traditional culture; and a Chinese Buddhism distinct from Indian Buddhism was established. *Rainbow* portrays a number of intellectuals during the May Fourth era who find themselves lost somewhere between East and West, new and old. At that time, China was in a state of crisis. The culture of the West had arrived, along with the overwhelming force of its governments, economics, and armies. And, while the realm of Chinese thought was not without its vanguard, it lacked a strong ideological system suited to the needs of the times. As a result, intellectuals occupied a position in which both option and assimilation were difficult. Some believed all aspects of Western culture to be unexceptionally excellent while others, anxious over the extinction of their own native culture, inflexibly rejected the West. Such a situation is reflected in *Children of the Rich* in even greater complexity. The different types of intellectuals there described struggle under the influence of a confusion of Tolstoy, Nietzsche, Romain Rolland, and others. They never cease in their attempts to return to traditional culture, seeking relief in the Confucian "Doctrine of the Mean" or in nature. In *Bolshevik Greetings* we can trace Marxism's ascent in the Chinese political world. Any truth that develops to an extreme will become falsehood. Such falsehood, when confronted with theory or actuality, may engender

Introduction

misrepresentation and injury, as it does in the extreme situation described in *Bolshevik Greetings*.

Naturally, aside from the similarities mentioned above, the intellectuals depicted in these five novels belong to totally disparate eras, are patterns of totally disparate models. The type best portrayed in *A New Account of Tales of the World* is the intellectual, hale and robust, skilled at music, practiced in riding and blacksmithing, who esteems naturalness and does not adhere to punctilio and who regards the nobility with disdain—a character utterly unlike the image of the traditional Chinese intellectual, the “pale-faced scholar.” The protagonist of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, living in the last years of feudalism, lacks the strength even to truss a chicken and is ignorant of the ways of the world. When cheated or bullied he lacks the strength to fight back. He tolerantly and without fail yields ground, a weakling who can only escape to nature. But even in the midst of his privation and troubles he continues to appreciate the subtle appeal of Chinese culture. The intellectuals portrayed in *Rainbow* are products of large metropolises and the modern revolution, intellectuals no longer dependent on the landlord class of a feudal economy. They rely on their own knowledge for their livelihood. They have become a part of the current of city life. They confront the intellectual tides of the entire world, relatively untouched by the force of Chinese tradition. Never having pulled up roots, they have not yet fallen into a pattern of superficiality and fluidity. The protagonist of *Children of the Rich* is an earnest individualist. Guided by the principles of individual struggle and liberation of the individual, his run-ins with society result in various irreconcilable contradictions. *Bolshevik Greetings* tells of a new generation, living under the influence of proletarian thought. Their passions and weaknesses, lives and lots epitomize the unique historical period they inhabit. These various types and models are not representative, of course, of every stratum of the Chinese intelligentsia. Each has his own particularities; all are clear-cut depictions of different parts of different strata at different historical periods.

Finally, I would like to discuss briefly the problem of the definition of an intellectual. In China the term is rather broad and nonspecific. “Anyone who labors with his brain and is in possession of certain cultural or scientific knowledge, such as workers in science and technology, workers in literature and the arts, teachers, physicians, etc.” may be called an intellectual, according to the 1979 edition of the encyclopedia *Ci hai*.

The Western concept of intellectual is somewhat stricter. The three-point definition proposed by the French sociologist Edgar Morin approaches, I believe, the position occupied by the traditional Chinese intellectual. In Morin's definition the term "intellectual" refers to one who is professionally involved in some aspect of culture or learning, who answers a specific function in society and in political affairs, who is conscious of principles of universality.⁴

"Who comprehends past and present, differentiates what is and isn't, this is called a 'scholar'" is the definition that was current in early China.⁵ An intellectual was, in other words, one who combined the knowledge of ancient and modern times and who was able to distinguish clearly between right and wrong. Chinese intellectuals have ever advocated that "in obscurity a man makes perfect his own person, but in prominence he makes perfect the whole Empire as well."⁶ They have attempted, through their own political activity or moral cultivation, to influence society. They fulfill, then, the second of Morin's three points.

The third point of Morin's definition—a consciousness of universality without compromise for the sake of immediate political interests—is another tradition of China's intelligentsia. In discussions of scholars or gentlemen (*shi*) in the *Mencius*, virtue and position, and proper way and might are always contraposed. In most cases virtue and the proper way are the ideals and principles of the intellectual. Position and might, then, represent political authority and its immediate advantage.

The Ming Confucianist Lü Kun clearly points out: "Might is the prerogative of emperors and kings; reason [*li*] is the prerogative of the sage."⁷ The sage (*Shengren*) is the highest representative of the intelligentsia, the teacher of emperors and kings.

This opposition of virtue and the proper way and reason against position and might recalls certain points of the argument put forward

⁴ Edgar Morin, "Intellectuals: critique du mythe et mythe de la critique," *Arguments* 4:20 (October 1960):35.

⁵ In his entry for "gentleman" or "scholar" (*shi*) in the *Shuo wen jie zi*, Xu Shen writes: "Confucius has said, 'Heap ten [*shi*] on one [*yi*] and you have made a gentleman.'" The *Bai hu tong*, in the chapter on ranks (chapter 1), adds: "The commentator notes, therefore, that he who comprehends past and present, differentiates what is and isn't, this is called a 'scholar' or 'gentleman.'"

⁶ *Mengzi* 7B:9; Lau, p. 183.

⁷ Lü Kun, *Shen yin yu quanji*, reprint of the Hou xiang lin ed. (Taipei, 1975), chap. 14, p. 12.

Introduction

by Julien Benda, that the absolutism of the intellectual's ideals bars him from the "half-truth" compromise unavoidable for the politician.⁸

Karl Mannheim emphasizes that the intellectual must preserve a spark of creative discontent as well as a critical spirit and should maintain, between ideals and reality, a certain tension.⁹ The distance between intellectuals and politicians traditionally advanced by China's intelligentsia is a manifestation of precisely this kind of tension.

In my discussion of these novels I have as much as possible adhered to Morin's definition, but, keeping in mind certain circumstances particular to China, I have not confined myself to it.

⁸ Julien Benda, *La trahison des clercs* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1975), p. 136.

⁹ Karl Mannheim, *Ideologie und Utopie*, 5th ed. (Frankfurt: Verlag G. Schulze-Bulmke, 1969), pp. 221-222.

CHAPTER ONE

The First Anecdotal Collection Describing the Lives of Intellectuals: *A New Account of Tales of the World*

What are intellectuals? Are the scores of personages in *Shi shuo xin yu* (A new account of tales of the world) intellectuals? What characteristics pattern their lives and thoughts? What influences does culture imported from abroad—the importation of Buddhism from India, in this case—exercise over the intellectuals in *Tales of the World*? How did this culture infiltrate China, and its intelligentsia, to become a part of Chinese culture? Why do we describe *Tales of the World* as a collection of anecdotes? How do its tales differ from the biographies included in historical texts? These are the questions we will consider below.

The Portrayal of Intellectuals in *Tales of the World*

The historical period reflected in *A New Account of Tales of the World* stretches from just after the end of the Han dynasty through the Eastern Jin, or, roughly, from 265 to 420. It was a period of tremendous flux in the intellectual world, in thought, spirit, and life-style. In *A New Account of Tales of the World* the nature of these changes is concentrated and crystalized in the reaction against political power and influence, reputation and high position; in the effort to comply with the rhythm of nature; in the hankering after comfort and ease; in the reaction against the Moral Teaching (*mingjiao*) and ritual propriety (*liyi*); and in the search to make man's inherent and genuine nature the standard for interpersonal relationships and social behavior. The great value placed on the inner self demonstrated an awakening to the dignity of human nature.

Most of the anecdotes in the book are tales of deliberate disregard of and contempt for authority, a contempt that is esteemed a pre-

cious virtue, as illustrated by the tales of Gu He and Chi Jian.

While Gu He was first serving as an administrator in Wang Dao's government of Yang Province, the first morning of the month, at the time of the dawn audience, before entering, he stopped his carriage outside the provincial office gate. Zhou Boren also arrived to see Chancellor Wang Dao and passed by the side of He's carriage. He was searching his clothes for lice and remained where he was impassively without budging. After Zhou had passed by, he turned around and came back, and with his finger pointed at Gu's heart asked, "What's inside here?"

Gu, continuing to pick lice as before, calmly answered, "What's inside here is the most difficult place of all to fathom."

After Zhou had entered, he said to the chancellor, "Among the officers in your provincial administration there's one with the ability of a president or vice-president of the Imperial Secretariat."¹

While Chi Jian was in Jingkou, he dispatched a retainer with a letter to Chancellor Wang Dao, requesting a son-in-law from among Wang's nephews for his daughter, Chi Xuan. The chancellor said to Chi's messenger, "Go to the eastern apartment and follow your own wishes in making a choice."

After the retainer had returned, he reported to Chi, "The sons of the Wang family are all of them admirable, each in his own way. When they heard that someone had come to spy out a son-in-law, they all conducted themselves with circumspection. There was just one son who was lying sprawled out on the eastern bed as though he hadn't heard about it.

Chi said, "He's just the one I want."

When he went to visit him, it turned out to be Wang Xizhi [the famous calligrapher]. So he gave his daughter to [Wang] in marriage. (p. 186 [6.19])

From these tales we see that social convention was turning from the tradition of "fearing heaven's mandate, fearing great men, fearing the teachings of the sages" and toward the new virtue of "fearlessness," of refusing to regard authority.

This contempt for authority was not the sole virtue of the age, or the highest; to violate and challenge authority were even higher vir-

¹ Liu I-ch'ing, *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü, A New Account of Tales of the World*, with commentary by Liu Chün, trans. with introduction and notes by Richard B. Mather (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), p. 187 (6.22). Numbers in parentheses refer to chapter and story number. Except where otherwise noted, all citations in text are to this work.

tues. Chen Zhongju of Runan and Li Yuanli of Yingchuan had their respective merits, and it was at times difficult to determine which was superior, which inferior. A comment from Cai Bojie broke the deadlock: "'Chen Zhongju is stubborn in crossing the will of his superiors, while Li Yuanli is strict in the management of his inferiors. Crossing the will of superiors is difficult; managing inferiors is easy'" (p. 248 [9.1]). Since upholding the truth when it entails opposing those in positions of high authority is difficult, Chen Zhongju was honored as one of the "Three Gentlemen" universally revered by their generation. But, to paraphrase Cai Bojie, what is most honorable is often most difficult. When the Three Gentlemen subsequently participated in an insurgence against court eunuchs, "crossing the will of their superiors" brought them death.

The conflict between virtue and position (political position) has always been an issue of primary concern to China's intellectual tradition; resisting position with virtue has always been an important tradition among concerned intellectuals.

Zong Shilin of Nanyang was a contemporary of Cao Cao, but utterly despised him as a person and would not have anything to do with him. When Cao became director of works and controlled the court administration, he asked Zong very affably, "Now may we be friends?" [Zong] replied, "The integrity of the pine and cypress still remains."

Since Zong Shilin had offended Cao Cao's feelings, he was treated distantly, and his rank never matched his virtue. But every time Cao's sons, Cao Pei and Cao Zhi, visited his house, they would both individually do obeisance as disciples to a teacher below his couch. Such was the courtesy he received. (p. 146 [5.2])

Plainly, the abstract value of virtue far surpasses that of worldly position in this tale.

The Wei-Jin period was a time of violent political contention. Murder and assassination were frequent occurrences. Under such conditions, one resisted position with virtue often at the cost of one's life. The only course left open to those unwilling to pay this price and yet averse to bargaining their integrity was to retire from the world and its affairs, to live in the seclusion of mountains and forests. There they found asylum; they maintained attitudes of passive resistance in noncooperation. They gave up "deliberating on policies, suited to the times, or ways of ruling the present world," preferring to "set [their] thoughts from time to time on the Mysterious and Transcendent and intone from afar the words of Lao Zi and

Zhuang Zi. Lonely and aloof in lofty retirement, [they didn't] concern [their] thought with temporal duties" (pp. 258–259 [9.36]). They were drawn to nature by inclination and, like Zhang Jiyong, indulged this inclination in the hills and ravines.

Zhang Jiyong was summoned to serve as an aide in the administration of the Prince of Qi, Sima Qiong. While he was in Luoyang, and saw the autumn winds rising, it was then that he longed for the wild rice, the water-lily soup, and the sliced perch of his old home in Wu. He said, "What a man values in life is just to find what suits his fancy, and nothing more. How can he tie himself down to an official post several thousand *li* from home, in pursuit of fame and rank?" Whereupon he ordered his carriage and proceeded to return home. (p. 201 [7.10])

The intellectuals of the Wei-Jin went so far as to believe a fixed goal or purpose in life unnecessary. To pursue interests or act out impulses was purpose enough.

While Wang Ziyou was living in Shanyin, one night there was a heavy fall of snow. Waking from sleep, he opened the panels of his room, and, ordering wine, drank to the shining whiteness all about him. Then he got up and started to pace back and forth, humming Zuo Si's poem, "Summons to a Retired Gentleman." All at once he remembered Dai Daoan, who was living at the time in Shan. On the spur of the moment he set out by night in a small boat to visit him. The whole night had passed before he finally arrived. When he reached Dai's gate he turned back without going in.

When someone asked his reason, Wang replied, "I originally went on the strength of an impulse, and when the impulse was spent I turned back. Why was it necessary to see Dai?" (p. 389 [23.47])

"To go on the strength of an impulse, and when the impulse is spent to turn back" summarizes nicely their approach to life. The ideal pattern of existence lay in union with nature, far from the dust and noise of the world, as Han Bo lived: "His rustic gate by day is closed, / The idle courtyard is at rest" (p. 271 [9.81]).

A New Account of Tales of the World portrays an age in which every regulation and propriety that might constrict human nature was broken and when genuine feeling governed conduct. This clash between genuine feeling and the imperatives of propriety is illustrated throughout the collection.

Wang Rong and He Qiao experienced the loss of a parent at the same time, and both were praised for their filial devotion. Wang, reduced to a skeleton, kept to his bed; while He, wailing and weeping,

performed all the rites. Emperor Wu remarked to Liu Zhongxiong, "Have you ever observed Wang Rong and He Qiao? I hear that He's grief and suffering go beyond what is required by propriety, and it makes me worry about him."

Liu Zhongxiong replied, "He Qiao, even though performing all the rites, has suffered no loss in his spirit or health. Wang Rong, even though not performing the rites, is nonetheless so emaciated with grief that his bones stand out. Your servant is of the opinion that He Qiao's is the filial devotion of life, while Wang Rong's is the filial devotion of death. Your Majesty should not worry about Qiao, but rather about Rong." (p. 10 [1.17])

By including this tale in the first chapter of the collection, "Virtuous Conduct," the author indicates that he regards genuine feeling an important factor of virtuous conduct. The outpouring of genuine feeling, not the show of empty propriety, wins his sympathy.

For Confucians the obsequies are the most solemn and the most significant of the required rites. Yet many of the tales, like the tale of Sun Zijing, directly attack these rites.

Because Sun Zijing possessed ability he seldom deferred to others, except that he always respected Wang Wuzi. At the time of Wuzi's funeral all the famous gentlemen were in attendance. Zijing arrived late, and as he approached the corpse he wept so bitterly that all of the other guests were moved to tears. When his weeping was ended, addressing the spirit bed he said, "You always used to enjoy my imitation of a donkey's bray, so now I'll make one for you."

His rendition was so like the real sound that the guests all broke out laughing. Lifting his head, Sun said, "To think that (Heaven) lets you people live, while it has made this man die!" (pp. 323-324 [17.3])

Sun Zijing's braying at the catafalque, his provoking the mourners' laughter and upbraiding them were unintentional—and unimportant—disruptions of the ceremony. What was important was that Sun expressed his grief. Similarly,

Gu Yanxian throughout his life had been a devotee of the seven-stringed zither. When he was buried a member of the family placed a zither on the spirit bed. As Zhang Jiying went to mourn for him, he could not control his grief. Directly mounting the bed, he strummed the zither, and after performing several airs, stroked the instrument and said, "Gu Yanxian, do you still appreciate this?" So saying, he wept again profusely and then went out directly without grasping the hand of the bereaved son. (p. 325 [7.7])

By lingering on the catafalque and neglecting to condole the bereaved son, Zhang Jiyong violated every protocol; yet his actions are the direct expression of his grief, and as such they are acclaimed as virtuous.

One of the chief elements of the Confucian tradition is ritual. Ritual regulates the five human relationships (between father and son, elder and younger brother, prince and minister, friends, husband and wife), which are grounded on filial devotion, commiseration, loyalty and trust, and, in the case of husband and wife, mutual respect. Genuine emotion is neither included nor accounted for in this structure of relationships. When Wang Rong was overcome at the death of his son, therefore, Shan Jian reproached him: "For a mere babe in arms, why go to such lengths?" (p. 324 [7.4]). Similarly,

Xun Fengqian and his wife, Cao Peicui, were extremely devoted to each other. During the winter months his wife became sick and was flushed with fever, whereupon Fengqian went out into the central courtyard, and after he himself had taken a chill, came back and pressed his cold body against hers. His wife died, and a short while afterward Fengqian also died. Because of this he was criticized by the world. (p. 485 [35.2])

While Wang Rong's and Xun Fengqian's behavior deviates from the Confucian standard, it accords with the sincere and earnest emotions that are human nature. Wang Rong defended his behavior, saying, "A sage forgets his feelings; the lowest beings aren't capable of having feelings. But the place where feelings are most concentrated is precisely among people like ourselves" (p. 324 [7.4]). Only two classes of people, in other words, can be said to be truly emancipated from their emotions: the exceptional man, the sage, and the unintelligent, unsensitive man. The majority of people cannot help but respond to their emotions. Xun Fengqian was plain-spoken on this point: "'A woman's virtue is not worth praising; her beauty should be considered the most important thing'" (p. 485 [35.2]). Genuine affection, not moral obligation, is the most basic element in the relationship between husband and wife.

The tales concerning Ruan Ji demonstrate clearly that he was a man of emotions. One tale tells us that Ruan Ji had a neighbor, a seller of wine, who had a very pretty wife. Ruan Ji would frequently drink in their shop and fall into a drunken sleep beside her. Another anecdote from the *Jin shu* standard history, included in the commentary, tells us that the daughter of Ruan Ji's neighbor, a young woman of beauty and ability, died without having married. At her death

Ruan Ji, though not related to her nor a friend to her nor even acquainted with her, "went to weep, and departed after exhausting his grief" (p. 374 [23.8]). Wine and meat are strictly forbidden mourners by ritual convention. When Ruan Ji's mother died, however, "He steamed a fat suckling pig, drank two dipperfuls of wine . . . and gave himself up to continuous wailing. As a result of this he spit up blood and wasted away for a long time" (p. 374 [23.9]).

It is genuine affection and grief, not the protocol of ritual, that takes hold of Ruan Ji. When his sister-in-law was about to return to her parents' home, Ruan Ji went himself to see her off in direct disobedience to the Confucian maxim barring such contact between brother-in-law and sister-in-law. "'Were the rites established for people like me?' he asked" (p. 374 [23.7]). Pei Kai once defended Ruan Ji's behavior: "'Ruan is a man beyond the realm of ordinary morality and therefore pays no homage to the rules of propriety. People like you and me are still with the realm of custom, so we live our lives after the pattern set by etiquette'" (p. 375 [23.11]).

This irreverence toward power and authority and toward the strictures of ritual was actually a reaction against the hierarchy. Many tales in the collection are commendations of those who treat common folk alike without discrimination. When Liu Tan, for example, asked Fashen how the Buddhist monk had come to be amusing himself within the vermilion gate, Fashen replied: "'You naturally see it as a vermilion gate; to this indigent monk it's as if he were enjoying himself within a mat door'" (p. 54 [2.48]).

Although the author of *A New Account of Tales of the World* prefers the metaphor of vermilion gate and rush door, he is clearly affirming the Buddhist doctrine of universal deliverance.

[Guan Ning and Hua Xin] were sharing a mat reading when someone riding a splendid carriage and wearing a ceremonial cap passed by the gate. Guan continued to read as before; Hua, putting down his book, went out to look. Guan cut the mat in two and sat apart, saying, "You're no friend of mine." (p. 7 [1.11])

The author evidently approves strongly of Guan Ning's actions, for he includes this tale in "Virtuous Conduct."

A New Account of Tales of the World collects many other stories in which people in the impoverished lower classes are treated with kindness and consideration. The tales of Gu Rong, Ruan Yu, and Pei Kai are only three of them. While eating roast meat at a banquet, Gu Rong noticed the server eyeing his meat hungrily and gave him some. "'Should the one who holds meat in his hands all day never

know its flavor?' he asked" (p. 13 [1.25]). Ruan Yu owned a carriage, which he frequently loaned to anyone who needed it. Once a man wished to borrow the carriage to bury his mother, but did not dare bring the matter up before Ruan Yu. When Ruan Yu learned of it, he burned the carriage, saying, "If I own a carriage and make people not dare to borrow it, what's the use of having a carriage?" (p. 17 [1.32]). Pei Kai requested millions every year from the treasuries of the Prince of Liang and the Prince of Zhao to aid the indigent members of his mother's and father's clans, declaring that "'to diminish excesses and supplement deficiencies is the Way of Heaven'" (p. 11 [1.18]). The author classes all of these stories as examples of "Virtuous Conduct."

Some Wei-Jin intellectuals not only shared these views, but carried them even further, laboring at tasks usually consigned to people of low position and little ability. Hearing that Sima Decao was residing in Yingchuan, Pang Tong traveled two thousand *li* to call on him. On his arrival he found Decao among the mulberry trees gathering leaves to feed silkworms. Pang Tong was surprised at the sight. "I've heard that when a great man lives in the world he should be wearing the gold seal and purple ribbon at his girdle," he said; that is, Decao should have been living as an official, enjoying a life of ease and comfort, not working as a "silkworm girl." Sima Decao chided him for believing that a man must prefer to "'sit in splendid rooms and travel with sleek horses and possess several tens of female slaves'" rather than toil in the fields plucking mulberry leaves (p. 31 [2.9]). Pang Tong was fundamentally wrong; he had lost track of the true way. But he realized that Sima Decao was a man of great principle and accepted the lesson he had been taught.

This story and those above all express a single theme: inner qualities, not external assets such as wealth or prestige, are the criteria by which an individual's worth should be judged.

The Wei-Jin intellectuals' awareness of impulse and human nature represents a new way of thought and a new attitude toward life that resulted in a new mode of behavior never before associated with the Chinese intelligentsia. This new mode of behavior was characterized first of all by a tendency to action.

Ji Kang, for instance, was fond of blacksmithing. He was working at his forge, assisted by the poet Xiang Xiu at the bellows, when Zhong Hui, well mounted and impressively escorted, arrived to pay a formal visit. Yet Ji Kang "continued to pound with the hammer without interruption, as if no one else were present" (p. 393 [24.3]).

Wang Cheng liked to climb trees. On his departure for Yanzhou to take up official appointment, the avenue and lane were filled with people who had come to see him off. Spotting a magpie's nest in the upper branches of a tree, Wang Cheng stripped off his official robes and began to shinny up the trunk. As his inner robes caught on branches and boughs, he threw them off as well. Finally, he seized the chicks and climbed back down to play with them, "his spirit and expression completely self-possessed, as if no one else were present" (p. 394 [24.6]).

One commentator tells us that "Xie Shang, after a few drinks, right in the midst of the trays and tables, would dance the myna-bird dance of the taverns in the Luoyang market, and do it exceedingly well" (p. 382 [23.32]). Ruan Ji whistled in the mountains, and the general Wang Dun played the drums: "Right where he was sitting Wang Dun shook out his sleeves and got up. Lifting the drumsticks he beat furiously with them, and the sound and rhythm were harmonious and rapid. His spirit and energy mounted with virility" (p. 301 [13.1]).

Another characteristic of this new mode of behavior was an emphasis on courage, self-restraint, and maintaining one's composure.

While Xie An was in retirement in the Eastern Mountains, he was once boating on a lake for pleasure with Sun Chuo, Wang Xizhi, and others. When the wind rose and the waves tossed, Sun and Wang and the others all showed alarm in their faces and urged having the boat brought back to shore. But Xie An's spirit and feelings were just beginning to be exhilarated, and humming poems and whistling he said nothing. (pp. 189-190 [6.28])

Huan Wen held a feast with armed men concealed about the premises, and extended invitations widely to the gentlemen of the court, with the intention of killing Xie An and Wang Tanzhi. Wang was extremely apprehensive.

As they went in together Wang's fears grew more and more apparent in his face, while Xie's cultivated tolerance became more and more evident in his manner. Gazing up the stairs, he proceeded to his seat, then started to hum a poem in the manner of the scholars of Luoyang, reciting the lines by Xi Kang, "Flowing, flowing mighty streams." Huan, in awe of his untrammled remoteness, thereupon hastened to disband the armed men. (p. 190 [6.29])

Xie An was self-possessed on joyous occasions as well as perilous ones. An's younger brother and nephew once scored a decisive victory in which, one commentator tells us, "the captives were num-

bered in the tens of thousands, and they took... a heap of jeweled paraphernalia... and a hundred thousand head of oxen, horses, donkeys, mules, and camels." An was playing chess when the letter announcing the victory arrived. Asked by his companions if he had received any news of the battle, Xie An replied, "My little boys have inflicted a crushing defeat on the invader!" (pp. 192-193 [6.35]).

A man like Huang Xian was widely admired for being "vast and deep, like a reservoir of ten thousand *qing*; clarify him and he grows no purer, stir him and he grows no muddier. His capacity is profound and wide and difficult to fathom or measure" (p. 4 [1.3]). Xi Kang was highly respected by Wang Rong because, he said, "I have lived with Xi Kang for twenty years and never saw an expression of either pleasure or irritation on his face" (p. 10 [1.16]).

This is not to say that these men did not experience emotions of pleasure or irritation; they simply never allowed their facial expressions to reveal these emotions. When Gu Rong realized that his son must have died in the service of duty, he gave vent to his grief by digging his fingernails into the palm of his hand "until the blood flowed, soaking the mat... after which his facial expression again became self-possessed" (p. 179 [6.1]). Xiahou Xuan was leaning against a tree, writing, when a storm arose and a fork of lightning split the tree in two, burning his clothes. "His spirit and facial expression showed no change, and he went on writing as before" (p. 181 [6.3]).

Finally, many of these intellectuals were skilled poets, painters, and musicians. They were unconcerned with punctilio, unrestrained in their gestures and actions.

On the eve of Xi Kang's execution in the Eastern Marketplace of Luoyang, his spirit and manner showed no change. Taking out his seven-stringed zither, he plucked the strings and played the "Melody of Guangling." When the song was ended, he said, "Yuan Zhun once asked to learn this melody, but I remained firm in my stubbornness, and never gave it to him. From now on the 'Melody of Guangling' is no more!" (p. 180 [6.2])

These men disapproved of those who were "petty and perverse." They prized the unaffected and the natural; they acted in accordance with their natures and dispositions. Their behavior was therefore sometimes unpredictably fantastic. The most extreme example of this is probably the poet Liu Ling, who

under the influence of wine, would be completely free and uninhibited, sometimes taking off his clothes and sitting naked in his room. Once when some persons saw him and chided him for it, Ling retort-

ed, "I take heaven and earth for my pillow and roof, and the rooms of my house for my pants and coat. What are you gentlemen doing in my pants?" (p. 374 [23.6])

In the company of others these men never bowed to etiquette or decorum; they never tried to guard their inhibitions. They might sit with their feet on the tabletop, as Yang Fu did, or on someone else's neck, as Liu Tan did. They might drink for days on end, as Zhou Yi did, or even plunder and raid in time of famine, as Zi Di did.

This freedom was not the exclusive prerogative of men; women, too, enjoyed a liberty hitherto unknown to them. Wen Qiao, a widower, was entrusted by his aunt to find a husband for her daughter. Wen Qiao had wanted to marry the girl himself, and so went ahead with the wedding arrangements without ever saying directly who the bridegroom would be. After the ceremony the bride pushed aside the silk gauze fan that hid her face and, clapping, exclaimed, "'I suspected all along that it was you, you old rascal! It turned out just the way the diviner said it would!'" (p. 445 [27.9]). Her comportment and attitude would be unthinkable in later generations.

Wang Anfeng at first found his wife's behavior unthinkable. She always addressed Anfeng with the familiar pronoun "you" (*ging*). Anfeng said to her, "For a wife to address her husband as 'you' is disrespectful according to the rules of etiquette. Hereafter don't call me that again."

His wife replied, "But I'm intimate with you and I love you, so I address you as 'you.' If I didn't address you as 'you,' who else would address you as 'you'?" After that he always tolerated it. (p. 488 [35.6])

The relationship between men and women in the Wei-Jin period was freer, more relaxed, than it was in later years. Ruan Xian, for example, had grown fond of a Xianbei slave girl in his aunt's household. His aunt promised to leave the girl behind when the household moved, but then, for some reason, changed her mind and took her along. Ruan Xian rode out on a donkey, still in mourner's weeds for his mother, to fetch the girl back (p. 376 [23.15]). And Jia Chong married his daughter to one of his aides after learning that the two had already become lovers. The attitudes here are much more liberal than those of parents in later literature such as *Xi xiang ji* (Romance of the red chamber) and *Hui zhen ji* (Encountering the perfected).

There was a new aesthetic governing personal appearance as well as demeanor. Men must have a stalwart build; they must be tall,

healthy, and strong, with high foreheads and clear eyes, fair skin and beards. "Xi Kang's body was seven feet, eight inches tall, and his manner and appearance conspicuously outstanding, '...majestically towering, like a solitary pine tree standing alone'" (p. 309 [14.5]). Afraid that his own small build was "insignificant and inadequate to impress a distant state with its virility," Cao Cao had Cui Yan (whose "voice and appearance were lofty and vital") take his place on the throne when the Xiongnu's envoy arrived for audience (p. 308 [14.1]).

The strong, tall physique was often associated with a heavily bearded face. Cui Yan's beard was four feet long, and Huan Wen's temples were said to "bristle like rolled-up hedgehogs's hide" (p. 314 [14.27]). The inverse of this robust and healthy type could also be found: Han Kangbo was described as boneless or, as one commentator notes, "like a fleshy duck" (p. 439 [26.28]).

Eyes are often the most revealing aspect of a portrait. During the Wei-Jin period bright, black eyes were favored, and thick, angular brows. Liu Tan described Huan Wen's eyebrows as "'sharp as the corners of amethyst crystal'" (p. 314 [14.27]). Wang Xizhi compared Du Hongzhi's eyes to "dotted lacquer" (p. 314 [14.26]). Wang Yifu said that Pei Kai's "'twin pupils flashed like lightning beneath a cliff'" (p. 310 [14.10]). Zhu Dun's eyes were "'intensely dark, and gleaming black'" (p. 316 [14.37]). And the skin of Wang Yifu's hands was so white, its color was indistinguishable from the white jade handle of the fly whisk he habitually carried. All of these men were known in their day for their handsome features and powerful builds, the ideal then of masculine beauty.

A new image of man emerges from the pages of *A New Account of Tales of the World*, new in terms of personal appearance, bearing, demeanor, spirit, and thought. The new man was not, as Pei Kai described him, "'within the realm of custom,'" but "'outside the realm of ordinary mortality'" (p. 375 [23.11]). He was not, as Sun Sengnu described him, "'of worldly occupation,'" but "'of principle and morality'" (pp. 268–269 [9.69]). A man of superior perceptiveness, he stood apart from those bound to ritual and law.

The intellectual source of this image can be traced back to the Perfect Man of the *Zhuang Zi*. In the "Tian Zifang" chapter Lao Zi tells Confucius, "'He who attains Perfect Beauty and wanders in Perfect Happiness may be called the Perfect Man.'"² Elsewhere in the

² *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 225.

Zhuang Zi the scholiast Guo Xiang comments, "Naturalness—'not doing' is naturalness."³ Naturalness (*ziran*) is the state of being free from artificial restraints, a state in which one's natural inclinations are at ease. It is the fundamental difference between Zhuang Zi's Perfect Man and the Confucian ideal of the sage. The Perfect Man believes in naturalness above all; the sage adheres to the Moral Teaching; he is the moral standard incarnate.

Why did the ideal of the Perfect Man take hold and grow during the Wei-Jin period? This unprecedented development can be attributed to several factors: political corruption, moral decay, social injustice, a world in which interpersonal relationships had become tainted by jealousy and mistrust, slanderous accusation, and criminal guilt through association. It was inevitable that persons of insight should begin to question existing values, to look for new standards, to take up the task of what Nietzsche calls a "transvaluation of all values."

With the rise of a manorial economy, the intellectuals of the Wei-Jin period were no longer wandering scholars dependent on the state for employment and livelihood, as intellectuals of Han and pre-Han China had been. They were a landed intelligentsia, economically independent. This economic and material independence allowed them to live as hermits in the mountains and forests and to give rein to their natural inclinations.

Confucian scholarship, moreover, had exhausted its potential after a four-hundred-year dominion. By the end of the Eastern Han dynasty had become weighted down with hair-splitting textual studies, divination, and mysticism. The Taoist principles of the "way of heaven," "naturalness," and "inaction" came forth as powerful weapons in the attack against Confucian scholasticism and mysticism. It is by no means purely coincidental that in the text of *A New Account of Tales of the World* alone there are sixty-three references to the *Zhuang Zi* and twenty-six to the *Lao Zi*, and that Yin Zhongkan is quoted as stating, "If for three days I don't read the *Daode jing* (The book of the way and its power), I begin to feel the base of my tongue growing stiff" (p. 124 [4.63]).

The Perfect Man developed into an important ingredient of the intellectual strain that offered an alternative to the Confucian tradition. It would later be widely reflected in poetry, drama, and fiction, especially in *Hong lou meng* (Dream of the red chamber), *Liao zhai zhi*

³ *Nanhua zhenjiang pingzhu*, ed. and annot. Guo Xiang (Huangzhou: Guji Shuju, 1983), ch. 1, p. 5a.

yi (Strange stories from a Chinese studio), *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, and other novels and short-story collections whose intellectual protagonists by temperament and preference are ill suited to official careers, valuing inclinations, emotions, and passions above everything in life.

Buddhists

A number of stories in *A New Account of Tales of the World* introduce us to another aspect of Chinese intellectual life, the life of the Buddhist devout. In these stories we see a foreign cultural element, Indian Buddhism, entering into the world of the Chinese intelligentsia and making its influence felt.

These stories can be divided into three categories. Stories of the first category are biographical sketches of eminent monks, many of whom were descendents of large clans or aristocratic families, literati in their own right. One commentator tells us that Zhu Daoqian, for example, was very likely descended from a "gown and cap" family, a family of scholar-officials. Elsewhere in the commentary we are told that Shi Huiyuan, too, was born into a family of high officials.⁴

Some of these monks were technically foreigners, natives of lands not then belonging to China proper. The commentary in Mather tells us that Sanghadeva was Kashmiri (p. 125 [4.64]), that in Yu that the monk Srimitra was from Central Asia (p. 100 [2.39]). Kang Sengyuan, whose "eyes were deep-set and his nose high," was quite possibly of foreign ethnic stock as well (p. 410 [25.21]).

Financially they were well-to-do. Kang Sengyuan, for instance, "built a *vihara*. Fragrant trees were ranged in the cloistered courtyard; a clear brook gushed along beneath the eaves of the hall" (p. 337 [28.11]). Celebrated scholars of the day came here to see him.

Monks like these spent their days expounding the scriptures and contemplating the profound. Heated debate often occurred in the course of a discussion, as when a Taoist monk from the north engaged Zhi Dun in a discussion of the "Smaller Version" of the *Prajnaparamita-sutra* at the Wa Guan Temple.

The monk frequently posed doubts and objections, but Zhi Dun's arguments and replies were always clear and analytical, and both his terminology and manner were so forthright that this monk was

⁴ Yu Jiaxi, *Shi shuo xin yu jianshu* (A new account of tales of the world, lightly annotated), ed. Zhou Zumou and Yu Shuyi (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuji, 1983), p. 31 (1.30) and p. 240 (4.61).

outargued and defeated every time. (p. 108 [4.30])

Listeners at these lectures and debates were free to come and go as they pleased. The preeminent monk Sanghadeva was not midway through his discourse when Wang Mi, professing complete understanding, led a group of monks into a nearby room and began to lecture himself (pp. 124–125 [4.64]).

These accounts of free debate and open exchange of ideas are a reflection of the animated lifestyle and mores of Wei-Jin society. They also illustrate the course of the Buddhist infiltration. It found its first spokesmen among intellectuals of influential and powerful family background. Through these converts Buddhism was energetically and effectively propagated, and very often propagated in environments such as those described above.

Stories of the second category concern the contact between scholars and Buddhist monks, often very close contact. We know from the anecdotes that the monk Zhi Dun, for example, was intimate with several landlord-intellectuals, including Wang Meng, Xie An, Xu Xun, Yin Hao, and Sun Chuo. The monk Shi Daoan was on very friendly terms with the Chi clan. Chi Chao, who revered Daoan for his virtue and erudition, “made him a present of a thousand *hu* of rice, and composed a letter of many pages in which his sentiments were expressed with great solicitude” (p. 192 [6.32]). And the monk Shi Huiua met with Yin Zhongkan to talk over various learned questions.

It is worth noting that in these conversations between monk and layman the topic is, more often than not, the teachings of Zhuang Zi or Lao Zi. Very seldom do they talk directly or exclusively of the Buddhist sutras. Zhi Dun’s name is mentioned in forty-eight different tales in the collection. Although he does talk on the “Smaller Version” in one story and on the “Three Vehicles” in another, his real expertise is *xuanxue*, the Mysterious Learning, the exploration of the abstrusities of the universe. Of Zhi Dun, Wang Meng once said, “His accomplishment in searching after subtleties is in no way inferior to that of Wang Bi” (p. 235 [8.98]). In saying this, Wang Meng put Zhi Dun on a par with the most celebrated student of the Mysterious Learning in their time. One tale tells us that in a debate on the “Xiao yao you” (Free and easy wandering) chapter of the *Zhuang Zi*, Zhi Dun “boldly marked out new principles beyond any proposed by the two above-named commentators [Guo Xiang and Xiang Xiu], and established an interpretation unlike that of any of the previous worthies, entirely beyond the reach of those famous

worthies in their groping for the flavor" (p. 109 [4.32]). Thereafter, Zhi Dun's was the accepted interpretation. Another tale notes that this discourse on "Free and Easy Wandering" was several thousand words long and that Zhi Dun's "eloquence and style were fresh and wonderful, like the blooming of flowers or a burst of sunlight." When Wang Xizhi, who had disdained him, heard Zhi Dun's words, he "threw open his lapels and unfastened his girdle and lingered, unable to tear himself away" (p. 111 [4.36]). Even when Zhi Dun met with Xu Xun, Xie An, Wang Meng, and others, the text they chose to chant to give voice to their feelings was not a Buddhist scripture, but a chapter of the *Zhuang Zi*, "Yu fu" (The old fisherman) (p. 120 [4.55]). Nor did Huiyuan and Yin Zhongkan discuss Buddhist doctrine, but the *Book of Changes*, one of the *san xuan* (Three Mysteries).

It was precisely in conversations such as these, on subjects traditional to Chinese culture, that Buddhist thought began to make inroads, to enrich and amend and facilitate the development of indigenous ways of thought. In the pages of *A New Account of Tales of the World* and its commentaries, we can trace the progress of this influence through works such as Zhi Dun's "Ji se lun" (Discourse on the emptiness of matters-as-such) and his exegesis of the "Free and Easy Wandering," works now lost. Zhi Dun wrote his commentary to the chapter from *Zhuang Zi*, we are told, because he did not agree with the interpretations of Guo Xiang and other earlier scholiasts. His new commentary on the Taoist text employed the Buddhist notion of formlessness and form, the material and the immaterial. Guo Xiang and others had used *xiao yao* 'free roaming' to refer to living freely in compliance with one's nature. In his commentary Guo Xiang wrote that whether *peng*-bird or quail, every creature "is complying with its own nature. Since each is fulfilling its lots, the free roaming of each is one and the same." Zhi Dun disagreed, arguing that if "free roaming" was commensurate with "complying with one's nature," it was no true state of liberation but only contentment, the sort of feeling experienced by "a hungry man once he is satiated, or a thirsty man once his thirst is quenched." In his view, "the Perfect Man, riding upon the correctness of Heaven, soars aloft, wandering infinitely in unfettered freedom. Since he treats objects as objects, without being treated as an object by other objects, therefore in his roaming he is not self-satisfied" (pp. 109-110 [commen. to 4.32]). While the Perfect Man lies within the confines of heaven and earth, his thoughts are not limited by this limited world. He can manipu-

late the creatures of the universe subjectively, without becoming a part of their world. That is, once he understands the principle of emptiness, once he grasps the illusoriness of the phenomenal world, he transcends the physical world, no longer pinned to its restrictions of time and space, and finally attains Buddhahood. He attains the realm of the Perfect Man.

One anecdote in *Tales of the World* tells of the monk Mindu.

When the monk Zhi Mindu was about to flee southward across the Yangtze River, he had as his companion a northern monk. Mindu plotted with him, saying, "If we go to the land east of the river with nothing but the old theory, I'm afraid we'll never manage to eat." So together they concocted the "Theory of Mental Nonexistence."

As it turned out, this northern monk never succeeded in crossing the river, but Mindu actually expounded on the theory in the south for many years.

Later another northern monk came south to whom the former monk had entrusted the following message: "Tell Mindu for me that the 'Theory of Mental Nonexistence' is completely unfounded. We concocted this scheme as an expedient to save ourselves from starvation and nothing more. Don't go on with it; otherwise you'll be betraying the Tathagata." (p. 447 [27.11])

These and other tales in this vein—the tale of the monk Sengyi and Wang Xiu at the Wa Guan Temple discussing whether or not a sage has emotions and the story of the Emperor Jianwen and the Buddhist sutras that hold that "by purifying and refining the spirit and intelligence one may become a sage" (p. 115 [4.44])—clarify the method of transmission and development of a foreign cultural element in China: it must first be grafted onto branches of the indigenous cultural tradition; it must interpose itself among questions and issues of pressing concern; it must adapt itself and change, if necessary, to suit the needs of the indigenous culture.

Stories of the third category record the attitudes of Wei-Jin intellectuals toward Buddhism. Very few of these celebrated scholars believed in it as a religion. They visited Buddhist temples not to worship, but to engage the monks in philosophical conversation or to make a halt in their mountain roamings and enjoy the surrounding landscape. Those who did go to worship were generally ridiculed, as was He Cidao.

He Cidao used to go to the Wa Guan Temple where he performed rites and worshipped with fervent devotion. Ruan Yu once said to him, "Your ambition is greater than all space and time, and your

valor traverses the ages.”

He asked, “And to what do I owe this sudden accolade from you today?”

Ruan replied, “I’m aiming at becoming grand warden of a commandery of several thousand households, and still haven’t been able to achieve it. But you’re aiming at becoming a buddha. Don’t you call that great?” (p. 410 [25.22])

Ruan Sikuang himself was actually known as

a follower of the Great Dharma (Mahayana Buddhism), in which his devotion and credulity went to extremes. When his eldest son, Ruan Yong, was not yet twenty he was suddenly stricken by a severe illness. Since the boy was the one in whom all his love and honor were concentrated, Ruan prayed on his behalf to the Three Treasures, not slackening by day or by night, for he felt that if his utmost sincerity had any power to move, he would surely receive help. But in the end the child did not recover, whereupon Ruan bound himself to an eternal hatred of the Buddha, and all the devotion of his present and past lifetimes was totally wiped out. (p. 476 [33.11])

Reality had dispelled Ruan Sikuang’s blind iconolatry.

But quite a few intellectuals were still interested in Buddhism as a philosophy. Yin Zhongkan, for instance, already mentioned as a student of the *Book of Changes*, “studied in great detail the treatises dealing with the Mysterious, and people claimed there was not one of them he had not investigated thoroughly” (p. 123 [4.60]). Yin Hao also applied himself in intensive study, especially after his dismissal to Dongyang, where “he read a large number of Buddhist sutras” (p. 123 [4.59]). We are told that in a discussion of “Natural Ability and Human Nature” at the residence of the future Emperor Jianwen, Hao’s knowledge so confounded Zhi Dun that the monk “kept changing direction to keep a safe distance from that topic, but after three or four exchanges he inadvertently walked right into Yin’s trap” (p. 118 [4.51]).

It was something of an established pattern for intellectuals in times of frustration or despair to withdraw to the mountains to live in remote retirement and study the sutras. We know that Yin Hao, a reader of experience and scope, came to form his own views on the *Vimalakirti-nirdesa*, on the “Larger Version” of the *Prajnaparamita-sutra*, and on the “Smaller Version” (p. 117 [4.50]), and that he frequently sought out monks who would discuss texts or passages with him until obscure points became clear.

From these tales it is apparent that if a foreign cultural element was to effect any kind of lasting influence, it must first work its way past these intellectuals, who were the leaders of the Chinese tradition and the diligent, discerning students of the foreign.

The Pursuit of Freedom

The great societal changes of the period between the decline of the Eastern Han and the rise of the Jin and Northern and Southern dynasties brought an intellectual liberation. The innovations of this age were most visible in the ideals the Wei-Jin intellectuals sought, in the lifestyles they preferred, in their attitudes toward life, and in their personal bearing and demeanor. In all of these they differed strikingly from their Han predecessors. Contemporaries called this new intellectual style "the vogue of the Mysterious."

At the end of the Eastern Jin there was an incipient resurgence of Confucianism. "Free roaming" and the consciously unrestrained self-expression of the age were heavily criticized in works such as Dai Kui's "Fangda fei dao lun" (Unrestrained self-expression is not of the Way) or Wang Tanzhi's "Fei Zhuang lun" (On abandoning Zhuang Zi). The "outer chapters" of Ge Hong's *Baopu Zi* contain an especially virulent attack against the vogue of the Mysterious.

A New Account of Tales of the World, completed in 430, was not part of this general trend. Its attitude is unmistakably sympathetic and appreciative as it records the diverse manifestations of the vogue of the Mysterious. It reflects as well the distinctive intellectual style of the Wei-Jin literati, an accomplishment in itself. But the intellectual and psychological composition of the Chinese intelligentsia has always been complex. While in any historical moment they have presented a united intellectual front as a group, this has not guarded them from involved shifts and change, from presenting an exterior aspect that does not truly correspond to their inner situation. "Free roaming" and uninhibited self-expression may have been the most outstanding features of the Wei-Jin intellectual scene, but they were not the only features; the diversity and complexity of the intelligentsia remained, a phenomenon noted and reflected in the pages of *A New Account of Tales of the World*.

We have mentioned above the Wei-Jin intellectuals' esteem for naturalness, their efforts to emulate the Perfect Man, their insistence on genuine feeling and true emotion whether in respect to themselves or to others. Many of them, however, were sons of influential

clans, of aristocratic and intellectual pedigree. It is impossible, therefore, that their thoughts, feelings, and actions were not, to some extent, still bound to tradition and to the Confucian code of ethics, which upheld the existing social order. They wavered between the Moral Teaching and naturalness, hoping that somehow the two could be reconciled. While advocating the importance of genuine affection, for instance, they could not ignore the traditional ideals of loyalty and filial piety. Claiming to be uninterested in political affairs, they sought to lead lives of simplicity and aloofness. Nevertheless, the political ideal of the Chinese intelligentsia remained, however deeply seated, an ideal that called for the ordering and reform of the nation and that obligated intellectuals to offer themselves to this end. They held the Moral Teaching in contempt; they felt an even greater abhorrence for "scholars" of false reputation and little learning who assumed intellectual airs and imitated their own wild and unrestrained manners. These inner contradictions and complex reactions are faithfully portrayed in *A New Account of Tales of the World*.

Loyalty and filial piety are the essence of the Moral Teaching. Zheng Xianzhi of the Liu Song dynasty asserted, "The great absolutes of the Moral Teaching are loyalty and filial piety."⁵ A number of anecdotes in *Tales of the World*, while speaking out against the hypocrisy of the Moral Teaching, adopt a positive attitude toward its "great absolutes" and even consider loyalty and filial piety when prompted by true feelings to be superior virtues.

When Wang Jing was young he lived in poverty and want, but after he became an official his salary reached two thousand piculs. His mother said to him, "You were originally the son of a poor family. Now that your salary has reached two thousand piculs, don't you think you might stop with this?"

Jing was unable to use her advice, and eventually became president of the Imperial Secretariat. But since he had assisted the Wei, he was deemed disloyal to the Jin, and was apprehended. Weeping profusely, he apologized to his mother, saying, "Because I failed to follow your advice, we've now come to today's extremity!"

Without the slightest expression of reproach, his mother said to him, "As a son you were filial, and as a minister you were loyal.

⁵ Zheng Xianzhi, "Teng Xian shihuan yi" (An opinion on Teng Xian's tenure of office) in *Quan Song wen* (Complete Song prose), ch. 25, p. 2b, in Yan Kejun, comp., *Quan shanggu sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen* (The complete prose of highest antiquity and the three ages, Qin, Han, the Three Kingdoms, and the Six Dynasties) (Shanghai: Yixue Shuju, 1930).

With both filial devotion and loyalty, in what way have you betrayed me?" (pp. 345-346 [19.10])

In another anecdote the author praises the success of Zhou Chu's reformation by telling us that he "exerted all his energies in a new direction, and in the end [he] became a loyal minister and filial son" (p. 318 [15.1]). And Chen Shi thus condemned a clerk who had asked for leave claiming, falsely, that his mother was ill: "To deceive one's superior is disloyal, and to make one's mother ill is unfilial. There aren't any greater crimes than disloyalty and unfilialness" (p. 81 [3.1]).

Clearly, *A New Account of Tales of the World* is not fundamentally or wholly opposed to this mainstay of the feudal mentality, the Moral Teaching; it is opposed only to its hypocritical aspect. Citing Ji Zha, Lu Xun writes: "These men of the middle states are enlightened in ritual principles but stupid in the understanding of men's hearts.' This is indisputable."⁶ *A New Account of Tales of the World* does not attack propriety and moral obligation in principle but only in instances in which they have been divorced from men's hearts.

Disinterested aloofness from worldly matters is a major motif in *Tales of the World* and an important characteristic of the vogue of the Mysterious during the Wei-Jin period. One who is tied to mundane affairs cannot slip his bonds at will to follow the whims of his nature. The Mysterious Learning, actually the Mysterious and Remote Learning, originally referred to two different branches of study: (1) ontological studies unconcerned with objects in the tangible world and (2) "pure conversation" on the nature of emptiness, unconcerned with affairs of the secular world.

This desire of the Wei-Jin intellectuals to distance themselves from the routine world was also a response to the precarious social environment of the day. In Ruan Ji's biography in the *Jin shu* we read: "Incidents abounded under heaven in the period between the Wei and the Jin. Few scholars were unscathed."⁷ It was precisely be-

⁶ Lu Xun, "Wei-Jin fengdu ji wenzhang yu yao ji jiu zhi guanxi" (Wine and medicinal drugs in Wei-Jin demeanor and writings) in his *Eryi ji* (A collection of "nothing more") in *Lu Xun guanji* (The complete works of Lu Xun) (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1957), vol. 3, p. 391. The editor notes that Lu Xun is actually quoting not Ji Zha, but Wenbo Xuezi, who speaks these words in the "Tian Zifang" chapter of the *Zhuang Zi*. See Watson, p. 222.

⁷ Fang Xuanling, *Jin shu* (Documents of Jin) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuji, 1974), p. 1360.

cause "the ways of the world had become increasingly treacherous" that Liu Yiqing "gave up horsemanship and, instead, summoned literati and scholars from far and near to come to him"⁸ and sought an outlet in the compilation of his *Tales of the World*. But these intellectuals, including Liu Yiqing, found it impossible to ignore altogether their inherent ambition to benefit society.

Those who truly wished to gratify this ambition through their own virtue or merit are treated with solicitude and respect in the tales. When Xie Xuan set out on a campaign to the north, the scholar Han Kangbo commented that his ability to fight was proportionate to his love for fame.

When Xuan learned of this, he was extremely angry, and whenever he was in a crowd, he would say with a severe expression, "When a great man leads a thousand men-at-arms into the place of death, he does it as a service to his ruler and to his parents. You can hardly say it's for fame." (p. 208 [7.23])

Intellectuals were still fleeing into the south in the early days of the Eastern Jin, before the empire had regained its strength.

Whenever the day was fair, those who had crossed the Yangtze River would always gather together at Xinting to drink and feast on the grass. On one occasion Zhou Boren, who was among the company, sighed and said, "The scene is not dissimilar to the old days in the north; it's just that naturally there's a difference between these mountains and those."

All those present looked at each other and wept. It was only Chancellor Wang Dao, who, looking very grave, remarked with deep emotion, "We should all unite our strength around the royal house and recover the sacred provinces. To what end do we sit here facing each other like so many 'captives of Chu'?" (p. 45 [2.31])

Liu Kun, too, who had not gone south, had a desire "'to establish [his] merit north of the Yellow River'" (p. 47 [2.35]). And Wang Chuzhong would often intone verses of Cao Cao while he drank, south of the Yangtze:

The steed grown old, flat in his stall,
Still wants to run ten thousand *li*;
The brave knight in his evening years,
Stouthearted, never will give up. (p. 302 [13.4])

Such ambition—not to attain high office or wealth or fame but to

⁸ Shen Yue, *Song shu* (Documents of Song) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1974), p. 1477.

serve the state and its people—was recognized by the tales, and extolled.

This praise was not without exception. Highest praise was reserved for those free in spirit and frank in their utterances and actions. One should not adhere rigidly to the letter of the Moral Teaching, but neither should one be counterfeit, affecting the outward manner of the uninhibited and free-roaming scholar. Yue Guang laughed when Huwu Fuzhi and others of his circle decided to give way to their impulses, some even going so far as to shed their clothing: "In the Moral Teaching itself there are also enjoyable places. Why go to such lengths?" (p. 12 [1.23]).

From this story and others we can see that the uninhibited self-expression characteristic of the Wei-Jin literati was conceived of as an intellectual state, an inner, spiritual freedom. The fantastic behavior of Huwu Fuzhi, Shi Chong, and other libertines and voluptuaries was no more than a veneer, a skin-deep freedom. Ji Kang's and Ruan Ji's proud remoteness and breadth of mind were the bones and flesh of the new ideal. Those who transcended this, losing themselves in a state of naturalness, possessed a freedom that penetrated the very marrow of their bones. Huan Wen believed Xie Shang was such a man: "Whenever Xie Shang stands on tiptoe beneath the north window playing the lute, surely and unmistakably I start thinking of a Realized Man (*zhen ren*) from the edge of heaven" (pp. 315–316 [14.32]). This is the state of the Perfect Man that Tao Yuanming envisioned, "lying beneath the northern window... thinking of myself as one of the people of the ancient Emperor Fuxi."⁹

The Chinese intelligentsia had always found refuge in nature where remoteness and seclusion allowed a passive attitude toward an unsatisfactory world and their own powerlessness to alter it. Even in this refuge, however, many were unable to shake off all concern for the chaotic world. At liberty to pursue naturalness, to seek spiritual detachment, or to perfect a personal morality absolved of social concerns, they still demonstrated a desire to remedy the state and save its people whenever opportunity arose and experienced a crushing sorrow when their goal was not realized.

A New Account of Tales of the World is a mirror of the lives of the Wei-Jin intellectuals. The most important reflections in the mirror are

⁹ Tao Qian, "Yu zi Yan deng shu" (Testament to Yan and my other sons) in *Quan jin wen* (Complete Jin prose), ch. 111, p. 7b, in Yan Kejun (see n. 5).

the new genius of the Chinese intelligentsia—embodied in their pursuit of naturalness, their transcendence of the mundane, their rebellion against tradition and against political authority and influence—and the new image of the Chinese intellectual—unhampered, unorthodox, scornful of the world's conventions. At the same time, the tales do not overlook the shadow that the traditional ways of thought cast over this new intelligentsia, and the inner complications and contradictions that arose from it. Although the scope of *A New Account of Tales of the World* is broad, its subject is treated with depth and profundity.

Tales of the World and the Origins of Fiction

Most literary historians agree that the beginnings of Chinese fiction may be found in the Wei-Jin chronicles of the supernatural—such as *Sou shen ji* (Records of searching for the divine) and *Shi yi ji* (Lost records regathered)—and in chronicles of personages, such as *A New Account of Tales of the World*. These biographical chronicles did not begin with the *Tales of the World*. The *Zuo zhuan*, *Zhan guo ce*, *Shi ji*, and *Han shu* all contain splendid biographies and biographical accounts, while *Tales of the World*, Pei Qu's *Yu lin* (Forest of conversations), and Ge Hong's *Xijing zaji* (A miscellaneous record of the Western Capital) are generally classed as fiction. What, we would ask, distinguishes the one group from the other?

The most fundamental difference between the two genres is the intended aim in writing. The chief aim of the *Shi ji* was to record history; the chief aim of *Tales of the World* was to write of men. More than six hundred different people are mentioned in tales divided into thirty-six categories.¹⁰ Although so many names are mentioned, the narrative is not spread thin. Only 165 names are mentioned more than four times, only 64 are mentioned more than ten times, only 27 are mentioned more than twenty times. The most frequently mentioned or discussed are Xie An (108 times), Huan Wen (89), Wang Dao (84), Liu Tan (75), Wang Meng (58), Sima Yu (56), and Yu Liang (54). Anecdotes and sayings of these men are collected

¹⁰ Looking at the book as a whole, there is no real link between the separate anecdotes of each chapter, no overall point of view. And there are instances of repetition and inconsistency. Lu Xun had good reason to write that "it is possible that this work was compiled by many hands" (*A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, trans. Gladys and Hsien-yi Yang [Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1976], p. 69).

in *Tales of the World*, as are fragments of their sage conversation, instances of provocative conduct, and descriptions of their distinctive bearing. In the bibliographical section of his *Shi tong* (Compendium of history), the Tang historian Liu Zhiji writes: "The *Forest of Conversations*, *Xiao lin* (Forest of laughs), *Shi shuo* (Tales of the world), and *Shuo* (Common talk) all record tales of small disputes, banter and tease, sneering derision, and unaccountable hearsay. They are laughed at by the knowing, and delighted in by the ignorant." The tales are comic and piquant, yet possess a definite significance. The nineteen stories involving Cao Cao, for instance, in *A New Account of Tales of the World* contrast sharply with his biography in the *San guo zhi* (Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms) in terms of both content and style. Below is one of the stories, from the "Guile and Chicanery" chapter.

When Cao Cao was young he used to be fond of playing the knight-errant with Yuan Shao. Observing that a certain young man had just taken a wife, they took advantage of the situation to steal into the courtyard of the groom's house and during the night's festivities shouted out, "There's a kidnapper about!"

As the people inside the "blue-green hut" all rushed out to look, Cao Cao entered, and drawing his sword seized the bride and made off with her. Reemerging together with Yuan Shao, they lost their way and landed in a bramble patch, from which Shao was unable to extricate himself. Cao thereupon shouted again in a loud voice, "The kidnapper is here!"

In a desperate panic Shao wrenched himself free, and in this way they both escaped. (p. 441 [27.1])

The details may not be irrefutable, but the story as a whole draws an interesting picture of Cao Cao's personality.

The stories of derision or of extraordinary occurrences were very popular. The tale below is taken from the chapter "Living in Retirement."

When Ruan Ji whistled, he could be heard several hundred paces away. In the Sumen Mountains there appeared from nowhere a Realized Man about whom the woodcutters were all relaying tales. Ruan Ji went to see for himself and spied the man squatting with clasped hands by the edge of a cliff. Ji climbed the ridge to approach him and then squatted opposite him. Ji rehearsed for him briefly matters from antiquity to the present, beginning with an exposition of the Way of Mystical Quiescence of the Yellow Emperor and Shen Nong, and ending with an investigation of the excellence of the Supreme Virtue of the Three Ages. But when Ji asked his opinion

about it he remained aloof and made no reply. Ji then went on to expound that which lies beyond Activism, and the techniques of Resting the Spirit and Conducting the Vital Force. But when Ji looked toward him for a reply, he was still exactly as before, fixedly staring without turning. Ji therefore turned toward him and made a long whistling sound. After a long while the man finally laughed and said, "Do it again." Ji whistled a second time, but as his interest was now exhausted, he withdrew. He had returned about halfway down the ridge when he heard above him a shrillness like an orchestra of many instruments, while forests and valleys reechoed with the sound. Turning back to look, he discovered it was the whistling of the man he had just visited. (p. 331 [18.1])

This tale obviously possesses little worth as historical data, but just as obviously it is the sort of tale that would appeal widely to a popular audience. Read critically, as by a historian, the story would be "laughed at by the knowing"; but as an entertainment it would also be "delighted in by the ignorant." Because its intention is to amuse and divert the common man rather than provide a fund of reliable source material for the historian, *A New Account of Tales of the World* is considered primarily a work of fiction. But it still allows us a glimpse of the ways and tenor of the times.

The collected tales are divided into thirty-six categories. How or why these particular categories were decided on is not immediately discernible. No pattern is apparent. But many of them are descriptive of individual temperament, moral character, personality traits, or state of mind—"The Square and the Proper," "Cultivated Tolerance," "Quick Perception," "Precocious Intelligence," "Virile Vigor," "The Free and Unrestrained," "Contempt and Insults," "Guile and Chicanery," "Stinginess and Meanness," "Extravagance and Ostentation," "Anger and Irascibility," "Slander and Treachery," "Blind Infatuations," "Hostility and Alienation." There is a chapter "Appearance and Behavior" on personal bearing and manner. "Insight and Judgment," "Appreciation and Praise," and "Classification According to Excellence" measure the merits and faults of their subjects. "Admonitions and Warnings," "Admiration and Emulation" "Grieving for the Departed," "Favors and Gifts," "Taunting and Teasing," "Contempt and Insults," "Dismissal from Office," "Self-renewal," "Blameworthiness and Remorse," and "Crudities and Slips of the Tongue" lay particular emphasis on human relations. Individual lifestyles and character profiles are portrayed in "Virtuous Conduct," "Affairs of State," "Letters and Scholarship," "Technical Understanding," "Skill and Art," "Living in Retirement," and "Worthy Beau-

ties." "Speech and Conversation" records the quips and cranks and noteworthy discussions of these unconventional literati. From the chapter headings alone it is clear that the collection's primary interest and intention is the portrayal of individuals and their interactions.

In terms of literary style, *Tales of the World* already displays some features that would become distinctly characteristic of Chinese fiction. There is a clear succession of ideas, a definite beginning and end. The narrative and chronological sequences tally; only rarely in the narrative is the chronological sequence reversed or interrupted, and there are no major omissions or lapses.

The narrator is an outside, omniscient observer. Below is a typical example of his narrative approach.

Han Shou was handsome in appearance and features, and Jia Chong summoned him for his aide. Every time Chong held a meeting of his staff, his daughter, Jia Wu, watched through the blue-green chain-decorated doorway. When she saw Shou she liked him and constantly cherished thoughts of him in her heart, expressing them in the chanting of poems. Later one of her slave girls went to Shou's home where she related all this, and in addition spoke of the girl's radiant beauty. As he heard it, Shou was moved in his heart, and accordingly requested the slave girl to carry back a secret message.

On the appointed day he went to spend the night. Shou surpassed all others in nimbleness, and entered by leaping over the wall, so that no one in the household knew of his visit. After that Chong became aware that his daughter was being rather lavish in applying make-up, and her elation was far beyond the normal. Later when he called together his aides, he noticed that Shou had about him the aura of an exotic perfume, one which had been sent as tribute from a foreign country. Once it was applied to a person it lasted for months without fading. According to Chong's calculation, Emperor Wu had only bestowed this perfume on himself and on Chen Qian; no other family possessed it. He suspected that Shou had been intimate with his daughter, yet the walls surrounding his house were double and solid, the main gates and side gates strong and impenetrable. How could he have gotten in? In the end he attributed it to robbers, and ordered someone to repair the walls. The messenger came back and reported, "Everything else is the same as usual, except only the northeast corner, where there seem to be human footprints. But the wall is too high to be leaped over by any man."

Chong accordingly gathered his daughter's attendants and interrogated them closely, and they responded with the facts. Chong kept the matter secret and gave his daughter to Shou in marriage. (p. 487 [35.5])

The narrator knows the cause and outcome of the episode he is relating, yet he does not appear in the tale himself. The narrative starts with his brief introduction of Han Shou and unfolds as the factual and chronological sequence demands. But the story is actually told from several different perspectives: first, from Han Shou's perspective, then Jia Wu's, the slave girl's, and again Han Shou's; the latter half of the tale is told almost exclusively from Jia Chong's point of view, larded with the report of his messenger and the slave girl's confession. The narrative is varied but succinct. Jia Wu's toilet is not described for us, for instance, nor is her personal appearance. We are told simply that her unwonted "lavishness" has been noted by her father. One short sentence informs us of the girl's state of heart and of her father's suspicions, and is an important link in the narrative sequence. The perfume, a simple device, is the key to the lovers' exposure and therefore the crux of the story. The narrative flows smoothly until the puzzle of the rare perfume arises; the resolution of the puzzle concludes the tale. The climax follows the turns of plot like a breaker after a series of swells.

The neat correspondences between the beginning and end of the tale bring out the temperaments and sentiments of the persons involved. Early, we are told that the girl saw and liked Han Shou; later, we are told of her love-struck elation. Early, we are told of Han Shou's unusual agility; later, we learn that this gift alone allowed him to keep his assignation, the gates to the Jia compound being solid and strong and its walls too high for most men to scale. Such attention to detail strengthens the overall effect of the story. All of these are tricks of narrative style and structure and, while common enough to fiction, are never encountered in historical writing.

Narrative technique aside, the descriptive passages in *Tales of the World* are much richer, much more colorful than what we find in most historical writing. In one tale, for example, we are told that "each morning as the courtiers gathered for the dawn audience, the audience hall would still be dark. It was only when the Prince of Kuaiji, Sima Yu, came that all became radiantly light, like dawn clouds rising" (p. 316 [14.35]). The contrast between light and dark leaves a dramatic and powerful impression of the Prince's appearance, "radiantly light, like dawn clouds."

Two other especially good examples are the descriptions of Liu Ling and Ji Kang: "Liu Ling's body was but six feet tall, and his appearance extremely homely and dissipated, yet detached and care-free, he treated his bodily frame like so much earth or wood" (p. 311

[4.13]). “Shan Tao said, ‘As a person Ji Kang is majestically towering, like a solitary pine standing alone. But when he’s drunk he leans crazily like a jade mountain about to collapse’” (p. 309 [14.5]).

Like other traditional works of fiction, *Tales of the World* also portrays characters through their own gestures or speech in a particular situation. For example:

Wang Lantian was by nature short-tempered. Once while he was attempting to eat an egg he speared it with his chopstick, but could not get hold of it. Immediately flying into a great rage, he lifted it up and hurled it to the ground. The egg rolled around on the ground and had not yet come to a rest when he got down on the ground and stamped on it with the teeth of his clogs, but again failed to get hold of it. Thoroughly infuriated, he lay on the ground and seized it in his mouth. After biting it to pieces he immediately spewed it out. (p. 465 [31.2])

With each stage of the short narrative Wang Lantian’s tantrum becomes more violent, and our impression of his excitable temper more pronounced.

The spoken language of *Tales of the World* is just as vivid.

Wang Pingzi... observed the Lady Guo, the wife of his older brother Wang Yan, was so avaricious that she was going to have a female slave pick up the manure along the road and carry it home suspended from a pole (to be used for fuel). Pingzi reprimanded her, and moreover told her it was not to be done.

Lady Guo flew into a violent rage and said to Pingzi, “Some time ago, when your mother, Lady Ren, was on her deathbed, she put you, little boy, under the care of me, the new bride. She didn’t put the new bride under the care of the little boy!” (p. 282 [10.10])

In only two lines, Lady Guo’s raging shame and tyrannical temper come to life.

When Zhi Dun was asked what he thought of Wang Huizhi and his brothers after their initial meeting, Zhi Dun replied, “‘I saw a flock of white-necked crows and heard nothing but the sound of their loud caw-cawing’” (p. 440 [26.30]). His words express not only his opinion of the Wang clangor, but of his own (somewhat arrogant) sense of superiority.

Lu Xun calls this *baimiao* ‘unadorned description.’ The term originally referred to a technique in Chinese painting: line drawing in ink without color, shading, or wash, a style that is crisp and clear, uncluttered by the detail and atmospheric perspective characteristic of

traditional Western painting. Simplicity and straightforwardness mark the aesthetic appeal of the technique.

In conclusion, *A New Account of Tales of the World* mirrors the various patterns of life among the Chinese intelligentsia: in official capacity at ancestral temple and audience hall, in uninhibited retirement in mountains and woodlands, in longing for uninhibited retirement while in attendance at ancestral temple and audience hall, or in hope of an official career and success while pining away in remote rusticity. It focuses on the speech and deportment, appearance and temperament of these literati. It is amusing and diverting in nature, well ordered yet varied in literary technique. In content, style, and intent, the tales depart from historical biographies and move toward the newly developing genre of fiction. We can already see in this anecdotal collection a number of features now common to Chinese fiction.

But *A New Account of Tales of the World* is not solely a record of intellectual style and life. Written in an age of literary experimentation, it is a work of significant innovation and of significant impact: since its appearance it has influenced the thought and sentiments of successive generations of intellectuals.

CHAPTER TWO

Intellectuals at an Impasse and the Collapse of Feudal Society: *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*

Many fine novels appeared within the hundred years of the Qing dynasty's dramatic decline, among them *Ru lin wai shi* (The scholars), *Liao zhai zhi yi* (Strange tales from a Chinese studio), *Hong lou meng* (Dream of the red chamber), and *Jing hua yuan* (Flowers in a mirror). All of these works, to a greater or lesser extent, deal with intellectuals, their temperaments and their bitter experiences. Speaking comparatively, *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* (*Fu sheng liu ji*) clearly is not the most notable novel of the period. Yu Pingbo, for one, considers it nothing more than a "minor amusement."¹ But it succeeds in offering us a picture of the intelligentsia not to be found in other novels, a reflection of their adversities and lives at the end of the feudal period.

Six Chapters as Autobiography

The author of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, Shen Fu, styled Sanbo (1763–c. 1808), was a minor intellectual born of a well-to-do family. He had some experience as a secretary to magistrates and was skilled at calligraphy and painting. We know little more about his life, for of his "six chapters," only four remain. These four chapters, discovered at a bookstall by a Yang Yinchuan, were first published in 1877. "A brother-in-law of Yang's and a well-known scholar, by the name of Wang Tao, had seen the book in his childhood, so that it is likely that the book was known in the neighborhood of Suxhou in the second or third decade of the nineteenth century."²

¹ Yu Pingbo's preface to the 1933 edition of *Fu sheng liu ji* (Shanghai: Keiming Shudian, 1947), p. 13.

² Lin Yutang's preface to the 1953 edition of *Fu sheng liu ji* (Taizhong, Taiwan:

The book follows an autobiographical format. The first chapter, "Wedded Bliss," describes the love and married life of Shen Fu and his wife Chen Yun. It shows us a pair of lovers seeking momentary happiness and freedom in an era and environment conducive to tragedy. The second chapter, "The Little Pleasures of Life," describes the small pleasures the couple create for themselves and enjoy in the midst of their squalid surroundings. The third chapter, "Sorrow," describes the lack of mutual understanding between people, the unfeeling callousness of relations within the feudal household and their bearing on the final parting of husband and wife. The fourth chapter, "The Joys of Travel," describes how the protagonist, finding himself estranged from society, seeks sustenance in nature. The last two chapters of the six have been lost; only their tables of contents remain. "Experience" was probably a description of the scenery viewed by Shen Fu during his travels around Taiwan. "The Way of Life" possibly had something to do with the mental and moral cultivation practiced by Taoists.

Six Chapters of a Floating Life records vividly the misfortunes of the lower stratum of the intelligentsia just before the decline of feudalism. Frustrated throughout their entire lives, these people attempted nothing and accomplished nothing. Consequently, they held no hope in the future or in their own prospects. They had nowhere to turn but to love and nature, similar in some ways to the "superfluous man" of nineteenth-century Russian literature (Pechorin, for example, of whom Lermontov writes in *A Hero of Our Time*). Cast from society's path and unable to find a place for themselves within society, they felt no need to remain in society. They were not willing to flow with the current and follow the tide, to do things they would rather not do. Frequently they tried, or thought of trying, to change their lots; but their attempts ended in failure, and they became tragic figures, useless to a society they weren't really a part of. In spite of this, Shen Fu as he appears in *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* is completely Chinese, completely a product of his times.

Shen Fu is different from the aristocratic intellectual Pechorin, different from those landlords in an era of economic prosperity, Ji Kang and Ruan Ji. Shen Sanbo struggles continually against hunger and poverty, suffers setbacks in his career and livelihood. He and Yun never have a home of their own, but entrust themselves always

Chongwen Shuju), p. 3; trans. by Lin in *T'ien Hsia Monthly* (TH) 1 (1935), p. 75. Except where otherwise noted, all references in text are to these works.

to the care of others. With no little trouble, Sanbo finds a position as secretary in the Salt Bureau at Hanjiang and sends for Yun to join him. "I was fully hoping, then, that we were going to have a quiet life and Yun's health would steadily recover and that eventually we might be reunited with our family. In less than a month, however, the yamen was reducing its staff" (p. 46; TH, p. 328). Occasionally he finds a position as tutor to the children of wealthy families.

I was out of a job for many years, and had set up a shop for selling books and paintings in my own home. The income of the shop for three days was hardly sufficient to meet one day's expenses, and I was hard pressed for money and worried all the time. I went through the severe winter without a padded gown and Qingjun [their daughter] too was often shivering in her thin dress, but insisted on saying that she did not feel cold at all. For this reason, Yun swore that she would never see any doctor or take any medicine. (p. 38; TH, p. 320)

Sanbo never enjoys a steady income. He is regularly "forced to run about abroad for a living, while [Yun is] left without sufficient money" (p. 50; TH, p. 333). Throughout his life Sanbo "often [has] to pawn things when [they are] in need of money, and while at first [they manage] to make both ends meet, gradually [their] purse [becomes] thinner and thinner." His daughter, although only a girl of fourteen, often has to undertake this pawning of the family jewelry and clothing and suffers no end of hardships. Driven from their home and lacking the means to support their children, Sanbo and Yun are forced to allow Qingjun to be adopted as a "child daughter-in-law" and to discontinue their son's schooling, apprenticing him to a merchant. With Yun's death Sanbo sells everything in the house but still needs a friend's financial help to give her a proper burial (p. 50; TH, p. 333).

It is impossible to compare Shen Fu in his straitened circumstances to Pechorin with his imposing presence and supercilious ways or to Ji Kang and Ruan Ji, unscrupulous and haughty toward descendants of noble clans. Yet in his own way Shen Sanbo also resists authority.

Sanbo rejects accepted standards and values. This is particularly and unmistakably evident in his unwillingness to serve as an official and his persistent refusal to take part in the civil service examinations. While living at Xiaoshuanglou, Shen Fu formulates his "Four Taboos":

firstly, talking about people's official promotions; secondly, gossiping

about lawsuits and current affairs; thirdly, discussing the conventional eight-legged essays for the imperial examinations; and fourthly, betraying another's hand at the card table by one's looks. (p. 31; TH, p. 218)

Most Chinese intellectuals hope that through an official career they might realize their own political ideals. Another group, however, condemn the official life or refuse to embark on an official career. Their motives and reasons vary: Some want to serve but are not capable enough; some, from wealthy and affluent households, balk at the constraints of an official's life; some, having served without achieving their ideals, are embittered by the experience; some, finding little worth in worldly emoluments, conclude that there is no meaning in a life devoted to their pursuit.

Shen Sanbo avoids talking about people's promotions. Because of his social standing he has no opportunity to embark on an official career except through the examination system, and he has a great dislike for the eight-legged essay, a prominent feature of the exams at that time. In addition, he sees through the sham of officialdom. Having served as secretary to the magistrate at Jixi for a number of years, he feels deeply that he can no longer bear the despicable sight and noisy bustle of the official life. He decides, therefore, to change his trade from scholar to merchant. By chosen ideal and natural disposition indifferent to monetary gain and worldly success, he chooses instead to pursue a life at home, a life more personally suitable, tranquil, harmonious.

Whether in respect to wealth or career, he has no great ambition or initiative. He desires only, in the company of his wife or a few good friends, to occupy himself "the whole day long . . . in discussing poetry or painting," to drink wine or sip tea, to be content and satisfied. It is his reluctance to work cooperatively with others in a large network and his lack of interest in the work of the bureaucracy that lead him to scorn officials and figures of authority. Shen Fu epitomizes his own character in a few words: "I was fond of friendship, proud of keeping my word, and by nature frank and straightforward."

At Xiaoshuanglou there are, in addition to the four things tabooed, four things of which all approve: "generosity, romantic charm, free and easy ways, and quietness." All one need have, in short, is a fund of sincere feelings and a capacity for helping others with an open hand. Repressed sentiments and the constraints of etiquette are not accepted.

Shen Fu reproaches his wife for being a "stickler for forms, like the Confucian schoolmasters," declaring that it is something he strongly detests, for "one who is overcourteous is crafty." He professes that "true respect is in the heart, and does not require such empty forms" (p. 7; TH, pp. 83-84).

When they are together, Sanbo and his friends also conduct themselves without any observation of the Confucian code of etiquette but in accordance with their dispositions and do not stand on ceremony with one another.

[W]e sat on the ground drinking and eating...and some singing or yelling.

[W]e would get together and indulge ourselves in wine and song...Like all young people, we went through all this din and commotion without feeling fatigue. (p. 66; TH, pp. 435-436)

In the absence of all conventional restraints, I would yell and sing on the back of a buffalo or, inspired by alcohol, dance and cavort on the beach and do anything my fancy dictated.

When the wine pot was all empty, we went about picking lilies of the valley to decorate our hair with.

As if filled with vestigial airs of the Wei-Jin period, they are utterly uninhibited, unrestrained, shunning any pretense at decorum.

They do, however, have a set of values. Sanbo cites his own sense of dignity when he says, "I have lived a straight life and have a free conscience" (p. 55; TH, p. 338). With a free conscience, he has nothing to fear. He continues the tradition of the Chinese scholar-official, aloof from worldly affairs and material pursuits. "I am by nature fond of forming my own opinions without regard to what others say" (p. 57; TH, p. 425), he tells us. Believing firmly that "a man ought to stand on his own feet" (p. 54; TH, p. 337), he accordingly asks his family for nothing.

Sanbo is generous by nature. Although he is not wealthy, he is always ready to do whatever he can to help others. Soon after Yun's death, Sanbo, broken with grief, prays at her graveside: "The autumn wind is blowing high, and my gowns are still thin. If you have any influence, protect me and arrange that I may have a job to pass the old year, while waiting abroad news from home." But when his friend, "finding it hard to meet the expenses at the end of the year," asks him for a loan, Sanbo gives him every dollar in his pocket: "I told him that this was the money I had reserved for bringing Yun's

coffin home and that he could pay me back when I heard word from my family." But no news comes at all, and he has no way to recover the money loaned out.

Shen Sanbo and the other "superfluous men" found in Chinese literature are neither harmful nor beneficial to society. Frequently, because they do not abide by its conventional morality or ethics, they are oppressed by society, deceived by its meaner members, like Sanbo's brother Qitang. It is because of his deceit that Yun is driven out by her father-in-law. Worried that Sanbo will return home to collect his share of the inheritance after their father's death, Qitang resorts to obstacles and obfuscation to put his brother off. He hires creditors to press Sanbo for payment of debts. Finally, he asks to borrow ten or twenty dollars from Sanbo for "burial expenses." Sanbo is powerless to protect himself. Without a friend to advise him otherwise, he hands over the entire sum of his recent earnings, twenty dollars, to his brother (p. 56).

This brand of intellectual is impractical, unworldly, endowed with a temperament that renders him susceptible to others' deceptions without offering opposition or resistance. On several occasions Yun is the subject of unwarranted abuse and unjust treatment. He accompanies his wife in her ostracism, yet never does he dare to stand up for her, never does he offer a word in her defense. His life is ill-favored, a chain of tolerance and concession. And Sanbo never recognizes the reason for this. He fails to understand "why...there are sorrows and hardships in this life" for good men like himself, men without an atom of contentiousness in their beings. He ascribes it to his being "fond of friendship, proud of keeping [his] word, and by nature frank and straightforward" as well as to his lack of money: "At first we incurred the criticism of the busybodies, and then even people of our own family began to make sarcastic remarks" (p. 35; TH, p. 316). This is only an impression, however; he has no way of recognizing the underlying reasons, the inequities of society and his own tolerance of these inequities. Since they are powerless to change the objective world, they can only seek in their subjective world to free themselves or to escape into their individual lives of emotions and feelings, to follow the patterns of the waves' traces in the world of nature.

Love and Marriage

For Sanbo, love is the spring and source of life's pleasures. *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* is unique in Chinese and Western literature

alike for its careful description of a man and wife's deep and affectionate love, their mutual interest and appeal during the years of their marriage. Many works write only of the complicated process of falling in love. Marriage is usually viewed as the final stage of this process, summed up in a single stroke of the writer's brush. The love between Sanbo and Yun is completely Chinese in nature, with many distinctive and fine aspects, weak points as well as strong.

In *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* marriage is described as a fine and beautiful relationship. Chen Yun herself is portrayed as a woman of unusual temperament. Lin Yutang tells us: "[W]hen I say that she is one of the loveliest women in Chinese literature and Chinese history—for she was a real person—I do not think I have exaggerated" (p. 2; TH, p. 72). There is reason to what he says. Her husband describes her as a remarkably appealing woman.

Of a slender figure, she had drooping shoulders, and a rather long neck, slim but not to the point of being skinny. Her eye-brows were arched and in her eyes there was a look of quick intelligence. ... There was an air of tenderness about her which completely fascinated me. (p. 41; TH, p. 78)

Yun possesses a warm love for life rarely seen. Even in times of distress she is able to appreciate, or create if need be, the beauties and joys of life. Invariably she is energetic, fearless—as she is when, dressed in Sanbo's robes, she visits a local temple to see the lanterns on display there; or when, under the pretext of paying a call on her parents, she joins Sanbo touring Lake Taihu. Her scholarship, her compositions of prose and verse, her skillful embroidery are all means that draw out her inherent appreciation of beauty and allow it to further develop. In the face of poverty, misfortune, unfair treatment, uncomplainingly and with a calm intelligence she deals with unchangeable facts. At times she is even able to find humor in what would otherwise be a critical situation. Seriously ill, she is driven from home by her father-in-law and must leave her children. In the middle of the night, as she is preparing to go, she forces a smile and says: "We first met round a bowl of congee and now we are parting round a bowl of congee. If someone were to write a play about it, it should be entitled, 'The Romance of the Congee.'" Never rich, she is nonetheless never miserly, and Sanbo recalls that she "would take off her hairpin and sell it for wine without a second's thought."

In *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* marriage is not the end of love but the beginning of its maturation. It marks the beginning of a shared life of common ideals, common goals, harmony and accord.

Both Sanbo and Yun abhor the scramble for fame and profit. With cotton clothing to keep them warm, simple meals to keep them satisfied, a single room where they can live in peace, leisure to roam among fountains and rocks, they have, they feel, a most ideal life, a divine life (p. 44). They have no inclination for meritorious achievement or its reward. The most important element in their life and love is their ability together to create and appreciate beauty in life within the restrictions of time. Together they set out miniature landscapes in earthen basins, together they burn incense in quiet rooms. Even "maple leaves and bamboo twigs or even ordinary grass and thistles" are transformed into works of art under their creative hands: "Put a twig of green bamboo side by side with a few berries of *lycium chinense*, or arrange some fine blades of grass together with some branches of thistle. They will look quite poetic" (p. 26; TH, pp. 211–212). Sanbo writes:

I was very fond of having nice little suppers with a little liquor, but did not care for many dishes. Yun used to make a tray with a plum-blossom design. It consisted of six deep dishes of white porcelain, two inches in diameter, one in the center and the other five grouped round it, painted gray and looking like a plum flower. Both its bottom and its top were beveled, and there was a handle on the top resembling the stem of a plum flower, so that, when placed on the table, it looked like a regular plumblossom dropped on the table, and on opening, the different vegetables were found to be contained in the petals of the flower. A case like this with six different dishes would be quite enough to serve a dinner for two or three close friends. If a second helping was needed, more could be added. . . .

When the lotus flowers bloom in summer, they close at night and open in the morning. Yun used to put some tea leaves in a little silk bag and place it in the center of the flower at night. We would take it out the next morning, and make tea with spring water, which would then have a very delicate flavor. (pp. 34–35; TH, pp. 221–222)

To the greatest possible extent, each appreciates the other's creativity and interests. Within this mutual appreciation their love continues to reside.

Whenever they find themselves facing some difficulty or disaster, the first concern of each is always the other. After Sanbo loses his position at the Hanjiang Salt Bureau, he writes, "Yun at first thought of different plans for me; she tried to be cheerful and comforted me, and never said a word of complaint." And when Sanbo is forced to leave Yun, gravely ill, and set out on a long, arduous journey in the

hope of borrowing money, he thinks not of his own hardship but of Yun's worry and anxiety for his sake: "but in order to ease her mind, I pretended to her that I was going to hire a donkey. As a matter of fact, I took the journey on foot, merely eating some wheaten cakes in my pocket whenever I was hungry" (p. 47; TH, p. 329).

At many crucial moments, in fact, Yun is Sanbo's spiritual support and helps him make important decisions. When Sanbo's father drives them from home, they must leave quietly in the middle of the night, entrusting their children to the care of acquaintances. All arrangements are planned and carried out by Yun. Whenever Sanbo must raise money, it is always Yun who thinks of a way. Even his transformation from scholar to merchant is done only with her support.

There is an important and distinctive feature of the couple's love yet to be discussed. Both physical and spiritual love are written of with equal sensitivity and beauty. There are Chinese novels that deal exclusively with the physical aspects of love, such as *Jin Ping Mei*, and novels that deal exclusively with its spiritual aspects, such as *Hong lou meng's* depiction of the relationship between Jia Baoyu and Lin Daiyu. The author of *Hong lou meng* seems to separate these two sides of love. Jia Baoyu has sexual relations with Xiren, but not with Lin Daiyu, whom he loves. Such relations, in his opinion, are indecent, obscene.

Six Chapters of a Floating Life displays both aspects of love, although the spiritual side of Yun and Sanbo's relationship is the more important, as one might expect with intellectuals. They talk of the past and present, compose poetry and paint, drink wine and sip tea. Sanbo's recollections, however, are prompted by his emotions, honest and impulsive. Never a hypocrite for the sake of orthodoxy, he does not consider their intimacy and sexual relations taboo subjects. Sanbo does not deny their lovemaking, does not conceal their "[rubbing] shoulders together and [clinging] to each other like an object and its shadow" (p. 4; TH, p. 80). Once, he writes, after reading *Romance of the Western Chamber*,

I [sat] down by her side and we joked together like old friends who had met again after a long...absence. I touched her breast in fun and felt that her heart was palpitating too, so I bent down and whispered in her ear, "Why is Sister's heart palpitating like that?" Yun looked back at me with a smile and then our souls were carried away in a mist of passion. Then we went to bed, when all too soon the dawn came. (p. 4; TH, p. 80)

A description such as this, bringing out the sympathetic correspondences between the two in a way both implicit yet exquisite, is quite in keeping with the Chinese style.

Naturally, their love was subject to the rather severe restrictions and constraints of society. "Lovely wives and beautiful concubines" were considered pleasures due men. In her deep, selfless love for Sanbo, Yun looks after his eating, his drinking, all aspects of his daily life, and is even willing to help secure other women for his enjoyment. When they stop at the Bridge of Ten Thousand Years on Taihu Lake, for example, she casually teases Sanbo and Suyun, the boatman's daughter. She also cultivates a friendship with the prostitute Hanyuan, becoming sworn sisters with her in the hope that she will make Sanbo a concubine of "both beauty and charm."

Although Sanbo's love for Yun is similarly constant, he does not let it prevent him from enjoying the brothels of Canton, squandering more than a hundred dollars during one visit to the city and parting on friendly terms with the singing girl Xi'er. And when, not long after Yun's death, a friend presents Sanbo with a concubine, he writes, "From that time on, I was again thrown into life's mad turmoil, a floating dream from which I do not know when I shall wake up" (p. 57; TH, p. 340).

In the old China, society demanded "constancy from beginning to end" for women only; men were accorded much greater sexual freedom. Yet by the virtue of Yun's unselfish love, set off by her total lack of jealousy, even this unfair intrusion cannot cast a shadow on their love and relationship.

Nature

It was in the mountains and streams of China, vast, magnificent, and rich in variety, that intellectuals dissatisfied with the realities of life escaped and found sustenance for their minds and spirits. This was especially true in the declining years of the feudal society, and especially true of intellectuals who like Shen Sanbo had lost all interest in politics and held no illusions about the future of the society they fled. The "joys of mountain and stream" became an extremely important factor in their lives.

Their roaming was not merely an appreciation of nature; it was primarily an expression of their ideal of life. Shen Sanbo's decision to put aside his books and rove marks the beginning of a new stage in his life. In the fourth chapter, "The Joys of Travel," then, he gives special emphasis to the conclusion of his career as a student and par-

ticipant in the civil service exams and the assumption of freedom to wander and roam the famous mountains and great rivers (p. 61).

Chief in this ideal of drawing one's emotional sustenance from nature is the contrast between the transitory life of man and the everlasting world of nature, between man's limitations and nature's boundlessness. From this contrast new values and criteria are formed, and what would be in the world of men gain and loss, glory and dishonor, joy and grief, harmony and disunion, is reevaluated, and the miseries and vexations of the mundane world are shed. What is most important, therefore, is not the beauty of nature, but the response it evokes in the hearts of men. Recalling West Lake, Shen Sanbo describes both the beauty of the scene and its effect upon him.

The sun was rising then and there was a stretch of morning haze behind the rows of willow-trees, giving a most charming effect. The air was filled with the fragrance of lotus flowers and a gentle breeze would blow by, making one feel light of heart and body. (p. 59; TH, p. 427)

Of the Tower of the Yellow Stork at Wuchang he writes:

[T]he beautiful snowflakes dancing in the sky above and silver-clad hills and jade-bedecked trees below gave one the impression of a fairy world. Little boats passed up and down the river, tossed about by the waves like falling leaves in a storm. Looking at a view like this somehow made one feel the vanity of life and the futility of its struggles. (p. 88; TH, p. 462)

Describing the Mid-Autumn Festival at Canglan Pavilion he writes:

After a while, the moon had already risen to the top of the forest, and I gradually felt that the breeze was playing about my sleeves, while the moon sparkled amid the ripples of the water, and all the worldly cares of our hearts were banished. (p. 10; TH, p.87)

These lines give evidence to the author's new ideal and attitude toward life, results of his enlightenment by nature.

In the lines above we see that in Shen Sanbo's descriptive passages sight, smell, taste, touch, hearing—sensations of all sorts are brought together and act upon one another. The spectacle of nature and the mind of man, cultural tradition, human relationships, the ideals of mankind, are also brought together and act upon one another.

This was in July when the trees cast a green shade over the place.

Intellectuals at an Impasse

The summer breeze blew past the surface of the pond, and cicadas filled the air with their singing the whole day. Our old neighbor also made a fishing line for us, and we used to angle together under the shade. Late in the afternoons, we would go up on the mound to look at the evening glow and compose lines of poetry, when we felt inclined to do so. Two of the lines were:

"Beast-clouds swallow the sinking sun,
And the bow-moon shoots the falling stars."

After a while, the moon cut her image in the water, the insects began to cry all round, and we placed a bamboo bed near the hedgerow where we could sit or lie down. The old woman then would tell us that wine had been warmed and dinner prepared, and we would sit down to have a little drink under the moonlight. After we had a bath, we would put on our slippers and carry a fan, and lie or sit there, listening to old tales of retribution told by our neighbor. When we came in to sleep about midnight, we felt our whole bodies nice and cool, almost forgetting that we were living in a city.

There along the hedgerow, we asked the gardener to plant chrysanthemums. The flowers bloomed in the ninth moon, and we continued to stay there for another ten days. My mother was also quite delighted and came to see us there. So we ate crabs in front of the chrysanthemums and whiled away the whole day. Yun was quite enchanted with all this and said: "Some day we must build a cottage here. We'll buy ten *mu* of ground, and around it we'll plant vegetables and melons for our food. You could paint and I could do embroidery, from which we could make enough money to buy wine and compose poems over our dinners. Thus, clad in simple gowns and eating simple meals, we could live a very happy life together without going anywhere." I fully agreed with her. Now although the place is still there, my bosom friend is dead. Alas! such is life. (p. 16; TH, pp. 93-94)

"Green shade," "evening glow," the moon's image in the water and the blooming chrysanthemums are all visual images. The singing of the cicadas and the cries of the insects are auditory images. Warmed wine with dinner and crab-eating by the chrysanthemums are images of taste and gastronomical satisfaction. And the fresh, cool feeling after bathing is a tactile image. Thus Yun and Sanbo's is a multifaceted appreciation of nature. The tranquility and beauty of the natural scene reflects and is reflected in the couple's immediate state of mind, their contentment and harmony, a mood that sets off by contrast the different kind of ideal life suggested by Yun's dreams of sewing and painting together, drinking and composing poetry. Yet all of these images and pleasures are deeply rooted in the Chinese cultural tradition. Their poems of linked couplets, for instance, are

undoubtedly composed of parallel verses of five or seven characters. The story of the elderly neighbor recalls the old concepts of retribution and vengeance. Their crab-eating and chrysanthemum-viewing on the Mid-Autumn Festival are traditional amusements. In terms of nature, brief instances like these might be experienced over and over again, but in the short life of man they are found again only with difficulty. The circumstances of their moon-watching and flower-viewing are, because of Yun's illness, never to be repeated. Nature here is not simply a phenomenon to be admired. It serves to set off the conventional world and to support and foster the ideals of Shen and others like him.

Mountains and rivers, forests and monasteries have always been places of refuge for disheartened intellectuals, and Shen Sanbo is no exception. After the loss of his wife and father he finds himself unable any longer to stand up to the pressures of society. "I then said goodbye to my mother and went to tell Qingjun that I was going to a mountain to become a Taoist monk" (p. 54; TH, p. 337). It is the Red Pine Master, Chisongzi, whom Shen Sanbo seeks to emulate, a Taoist adept who wandered the four seas proclaiming the doctrine of the Way and the path to transcendence.

While nature is objectively admired, it is also intimately allied with the protagonist's ideals and mental attitude. Descriptions of scenery in *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, therefore, are often of a quite distinctive and individual character.

I would value highly certain things that others look down upon, and think nothing of what others prize very highly. So it is also with natural scenery, whose true appreciation must come from one's own heart or not at all. There are famous scenic spots that do not at all appeal to me, and, on the other hand, certain places that are not at all famous but delight me intensely. . . .

I am by nature fond of forming my own opinions without regard to what others say. (p. 57; TH, p. 425)

What most appeals to Shen Sanbo is discovering for himself some rare spot not yet reworked by men's axes and chisels. Frequently he takes startling risks in his search for nature in its pristine state.

On reaching the place, I saw perpendicular cliffs rising over a hundred feet high, with a sharp crack in the center, dividing, as it were, the mountain in two. When one stood under the cliff and looked upwards, it seemed as if it was going to fall down over one's head. My guide told me that according to tradition, there was a cave on top commanding a most wonderful view, but there was no road for

going up. Unable to resist the temptation, I tucked up my sleeves and gown and climbed up to the very top like a monkey. The so-called cave was only about ten feet deep, with a crack in its roof admitting a view of the sky. Looking down, however, my knees trembled and I felt as if I was going to fall down. I had, therefore, to come down with my face against the cliff and gradually descended with the help of the creepers. This rather impressed my guide and beguiled him into exclaiming: "Bravo! I have never seen a fellow so adventurous as you!" (p. 85; TH, p. 458)

In his opinion, the beauty of a scene lies in its natural integrity. Nature may be aided by a "master architect" who would see to pruning and planning, but in such a way as to enhance natural beauty, not change it. Too much polishing results in contrived and artificial scenes, designs suggesting "too much mental effort" (p. 64; TH, p. 434). Some spots he criticizes as "too much belabored by human effort and contaminated by the atmosphere of social luxury, thereby losing all the quiet native charm of nature." The Lion's Forest of Suzhou, he finds, "resembles on the whole more a refuse heap of coal ashes bedecked with moss and ant-holes, without any suggestion of the natural rhythm of sweeping hills and towering forests" (p. 87; TH, p. 460). Yet elsewhere he finds that scenery, free of man's handiwork, can be "a straggling type of landscape, in need of some tightening."

From antiquity, traditional Chinese culture has shared a special bond with the famous mountains and rivers—China's culture derives, in fact, from its waterways and mountains—and in return, this bond adds a certain interest and appeal to the landscape.

We automatically think of the Hanguguan Pass in Henan, for instance, as the place that "Laozi passed through on the back of a black cow when he was retiring from the world," and we call to mind the verses of Han Yu regarding the nearby Tungguan Pass. Of Stone Mirror Hill outside Jiqi, Anhui, Shen Sanbo writes:

[O]ne sees a square stone pavilion, with perpendicular rocks on all sides as its walls. The sides of the pavilion are straight as a screen and of a green color, being brilliant enough to reflect one's image.

Immediately we recall the legend that tells us that this "mirror"

could reflect one's previous existence and that when Huang Chao [famous rebel-leader of the peasants during the Tang dynasty] arrived here, he saw his own image in the shape of a monkey and was so infuriated that he set fire to it; so from that time on, The Stone Mirror has lost its occult properties. (p. 68; TH, p. 438)

For Shen Sanbo and other intellectuals, nature is a world outside of the world, a refuge from society. It is a major factor in their lives and a concrete link between them and traditional Chinese culture.

The Style of the *Six Chapters*

There is a great deal of stylistic innovation in the writing of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*. Traditionally, in literary, historical, or philosophical works, one might expect to find passages of biographical writing. Biographies account for 70 of the 103 chapters of the *Shiji* (Records of the historian). But the biographical writing of *Six Chapters* is of a new and different sort. Shen Sanbo subjectively divides his life into four stages: "bliss, pleasure, sorrow, joy." Each chapter is presented in narrative fashion following a chronological sequence of events. The author's genuine emotions are the sole criterion for judging how much emphasis or detail will be granted his material. A passage that will help Shen Sanbo express his sentiments will be written carefully; sections that will not are glossed over. Shen Sanbo's abandoning the scholar's life to wander or take up business, for example, cannot be considered minor incidents in his life, yet they are passed over quickly in his writing. The death of Yun, on the other hand, is depicted in elaborate detail, especially the episode of Sanbo's vigil for her spirit.

I then went in with a lamp in my hand and saw the room was exactly as she had left it, only my beloved was not there, and tears welled up on my eyes in spite of myself. I was afraid then that with my wet eyes, I should not be able to see her form clearly, and I held back my tears with wide open eyes. Softly I touched her old dress and smelt the odor of her body which still remained, and was so affected by it that I fainted off. Then I thought to myself, how could I let myself doze off since I was waiting for the return of her spirit? I opened my eyes and looked round and saw the two candle-lights burning low on the table as small as little peas. It gave me goose-flesh and I shuddered all over. Then I rubbed my hands and my forehead and looked carefully and saw the pair of candle-lights leapt higher and higher till they were over a foot long and the papered wooden frame of the ceiling was going to catch fire. The sudden glow of the lights illuminated the whole room and enabled me to look round clearly, when suddenly they grew small and dark as before. At this time I was in a state of excitement and wanted to call in my companion, when I thought that her gentle female spirit might be scared away by the presence of another living man. Secretly and in a quiet tone, I called her name and prayed to her, but the whole

room was buried in silence and I could not see a thing. (p. 52; TH, p. 334)

There is a rhythmic repetition within this passage, three allusions to Sanbo's love: when he sits on the bed waiting for her shadow, when he wakes from his faint and continues writing, and when he refrains from summoning his companion. Longing for Yun, waiting for her, imagining her presence, Sanbo suppresses his own fears and apprehensions and demonstrates thereby the depth and sincerity of his passion. The reader feels only the intensity of these emotions without any sense of repetition.

This style of writing, in which sentiment is central, is more flexible in temporal terms and potentially more expressive. Relating incidents occurring in the past, the writer may allow his own emotional interjections at the time of writing to enter into the narration, revealing the ultimate outcome of events not known to him in the past. In "Wedded Bliss," for example, Yun lays plans to secure Hanyuan as Sanbo's concubine. The author concludes the chapter telling us that "eventually Hanyuan was married by force to some influential person, and our arrangements did not come off. And Yun actually died of grief on this account" (p. 23; TH, p. 101). Again, when Yun is driven away by her father-in-law and forced to leave her children, Sanbo writes, "Actually, mother and son never saw each other again" (p. 42; TH, p. 324). These interjections leave a mournful impression on the mind of the reader and give rise to feelings of nostalgia.

Structurally, this technique binds the different sections of the book together tightly by interweaving and correlations, and integrates them into a coherent whole. In the first chapter, for instance, we are told of the affair of Hanyuan and that it will lead, ultimately, to Yun's death. In the third chapter, before her death, Yun dreams and raves: "'How could Han be so heartless!' and her illness became worse every day" (p. 48; TH, p. 331). After Yun's death, Sanbo returns to their parental home with the wooden tablets for the worship of Yun's spirit: "Qingjun and Fengsen came home, wept bitterly and went into mourning" (p. 52; TH, p. 335). This scene corresponds to Shen Sanbo's earlier remark that the children and their mother would never again see one another. In "The Joys of Travel" he writes, "In the winter of that year, I incurred the displeasure of my parents on account of being the guarantor for a friend's loan, and moved to stay at Mr. Hua's home at Xishan" (p. 84; TH, p. 457). The story of the loan is earlier recounted in the third chapter, "Sor-

row" (p. 39). Likewise, the passage "in the spring of 1804 during the reign of Jiaqing, I was able to leave home and become a recluse consequent upon the death of my father, when my friend Xia Yishan kindly invited me to stay at his home" (p. 85; TH, p. 458) has its correspondent earlier in the book when Sanbo describes his return home in mourning for his father and his brother's attempts to cheat him of his inheritance (p. 54).

Related and corresponding passages such as these and others all serve the same purpose. When we speak of their flexibility and potential, we mean that they enable the author to smelt in a single furnace, as it were, narration, description, lyricism, and discourse. The author has greater freedom and is not bound to the restrictions of physical circumstance. *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, Lin Yutang points out, "in form... is unique, an autobiographical story mixed with observations and comments on the art of living, the little pleasures of life, some vivid sketches of scenery and literary and art criticism" (p. 3; TH, p. 75). Anyone who has read *Six Chapters* will agree.

In respect to language, *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* again is distinctive. The author employs, for the most part, four-character phrases in narrative, descriptive, and discursive passages. The following lines, in the original Chinese, are a good example of this.

The sun was beautiful and the breeze was gentle, while the yellow rape flowers in the field looked like a stretch of gold, with people in blue gowns and red sleeves passing by the rice fields and butterflies flitting to and fro—a sight which could make one drunk without any liquor. Very soon the wine and dishes were ready and we sat together on the ground drinking and eating. The *wonton* seller was quite a likable person and we asked him to join us. People who saw us thus enjoying ourselves thought it quite a novel idea. Then the cups, bowls and dishes lay about in great disorder on the ground, while we were already slightly drunk, some sitting and some lying down, and some singing or yelling. When the sun was going down, I wanted to eat some congee, and the *wonton* seller bought some rice and cooked it for us. We then came back with a full belly. (p. 35; TH, pp. 220–221)

With the exception of "empty words," certain words and phrases necessarily employed for reasons of time and space or to facilitate narration, the entire passage is written in four-character phrases. The ultimate source of this form are the four-character verse of the *Shijing* (Book of songs) and the four- and six-character verse of *Han fu* (rhyme-prose). These sentences and phrases have a refined simplicity

and terseness, yet are rich in their rhythm and powers of expression and possible variety.

In the original version of the passage translated above, there are a number of examples of parallel relationships between words and phrases. The clauses "the breeze was gentle" (*feng he*) and "the sun was beautiful" (*ri li*) are identical in structure, nouns followed by stative verbs. "Blue gowns" (*qing shan*) and "red sleeves" (*hong xiu*) are parallel adjective-noun phrases. "Passing by the rice fields" is, in the original, a parallel pair of verbs and objects, literally, "passing over the north-south footpaths, crossing the east-west footpaths" (*yue qian, du mo*). The phrases "some sitting and some lying down" and "some singing or [some] yelling" are also parallel. The phrase "drunk without any liquor" contains a contradiction. Without drinking one should not become drunk, and yet they have become drunk. The phrase forcefully conveys the enchanting and befuddling effects spring scenery can have on men. The narrative structure of "people saw us thus enjoying ourselves" and "[they] thought it quite a novel idea" appears by comparison somewhat loose. These four-character phrases, different in structure and syntax, cross over and weave into one another, producing a style succinct, rhythmic, and expressive.

In diction, too, *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* is distinct from the traditional romances about gifted scholars and beautiful ladies. Free of their tired cliches, in conveying emotion *Six Chapters* is even unique. When Sanbo and Yun, newly married, are forced to separate, Shen Sanbo writes not of Yun's streaming tears or broken heart, but of his own distress.

So when I got the news, I did not know what to do. I was afraid Yun might break into tears, but on the other hand she tried to look cheerful and comforted me and urged me to go, and packed up my things for me. Only that night I noticed that she did not look quite her usual self. At the time of parting, she whispered to me: "Take care of yourself, dear, for there will be no one to look after you." (p. 5; TH, p. 81)

This language does not only not conform to any conventional pattern or formula, it also throws into relief Yun's deep attachment and love for Sanbo and so moves the reader. Their subsequent reunion is described in a few short sentences: "Yun stood up to welcome me and we held each other's hands in silence, and it seemed then that our souls had melted away or evaporated like a mist. My ears tingled and I did not know where I was" (p. 5; TH, p. 81). The author uses unreal circumstances—their souls' melting—to express and em-

phasize real emotions with a force seldom achieved by straightforward psychological description. In description of scenery and setting, too, the author's language is original and unconventional. Describing the shade cast by an old tree, he writes of those who pass under it, rather than of the tree itself: "[I]t made the people's faces look green" (p. 5; TH, p. 81). The image allows the reader to imagine the heaviness and depth of the shade.

There is much dialogue in *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*. A good deal of it, in the original, approximates spoken language. For example:

"All right," I said, "you will be punished for this one day by marrying a pock-marked bearded fellow for your husband to avenge the flowers." (p. 12; TH, p. 89)

"I suggest one may be allowed to use one's hands in caressing, but not in hitting others."

"The 'mean little fellow' stinks all over the place. It makes me sick." (p. 19; TH, p. 97)

From the point of view of language and diction, *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* continues the precedent set by *Liao zhai zhi yi*, marking an important step in the development of Chinese vernacular fiction.

CHAPTER THREE

Modern Chinese Intellectuals in Modern Chinese Literature: *The Eclipse* and *Rainbow* of Mao Dun

In the years following the Opium War, China's feebleness and the encroachment of foreign powers created a state of national crisis. The transmission of models from the West and new trends of thought to a great extent stimulated the Chinese intelligentsia to search out new avenues, to salvage the hopes and aspirations of the nation, to offer new alternatives and possibilities. It was in the probing by these intellectuals into the possibility of transforming society and in their own contradictions and limitations that modern Chinese literature had its beginning.

The First Characterizations of Modern Chinese Intellectuals

It was impossible, given the restrictions of society and the times, that the intellectuals of the early twentieth century should resemble the celebrated scholars of the Wei-Jin period, retired and rusticated, unfettered and untroubled by the conventions and affairs of the world they had fled. It was also impossible that they should resemble the personalities of *The Scholars*, who sustain their beliefs by means of a moral ideal on the verge of collapse, or the protagonist of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, who forgets his responsibility to his nation, consoling himself with the little pleasures of life. The tremendous influx of foreign trends of thought in particular led them to feel increasingly the seriousness of the crisis approaching the nation and the urgent need to pass judgment and make decisions, even without ample time for reflection. In this way, the first modern intellectuals in China—Lu Xun's "madman" the first among them—could not but cherish ardent hopes for delivering their country and their people,

and, rejecting the past completely, face life with a tragic and heroic spirit of self-sacrifice.

This does not imply a break from the intellectual tradition of their predecessors. On the contrary, the continuity of the tradition is evident in many of the modern intellectuals. Lu Xun, for example, the foremost representative of May Fourth literature, is very clearly influenced by Ji Kang, Ruan Ji, Kong Rong, and other celebrated scholars of the Wei-Jin period in terms of thought, temperament, moral character, and, most important, the idea of "resisting position with virtue" and holding authority in contempt. Lu Xun's close friend Xu Shoushang once said, "Lu Xun was stern and forthright in character. He loathed political power and influence, despised it, and would rather see it toppled [than bow to its pressure]. . . . In some ways he is very close to Kong Rong and Ji Kang."¹

In "Wo zhi jielie guan" (My views on chastity) and "Women xianzai zenyang zuo fuqin" (What is required of us as fathers today?), two manifesto-style essays that perhaps best represent the new views and consciousness of the May Fourth intellectuals, Lu Xun quite clearly carries on the antiauthoritarian ideal of Ji Kang, who "belittled Tang and Wu, scorned the Duke of Zhou and Confucius," as well as the ideas Kong Rong expresses in his "Fu zhi yu zi dang you he qin" (What feeling has a father for his son?). In discussing the relationship of husband and wife, father and son—the most important of the five human relationships of the Confucian moral system, norms that have governed daily life in China for thousands of years—Lu Xun points out that "sexual intercourse results in children. . . . Thus the parents' duty to their children is to give them good health, the best education possible, and complete emancipation."² Sexual love is not a transgression, nor is childbearing a benevolence.

This antiauthoritarian tradition was carried on by Mao Dun. Mao Dun's literary activity actually started with his commentaries and editing of the *Chu ci* and the *Zhuang Zi* and his research on ancient Chinese mythology. Recalling his middle-school years, he writes, "In poetry I emulated the Seven Masters of Jian'an, and in letter-writing the 'small epistles' of the Six Dynasties. In my bearing I admired the unrestrained and romantic, and in my manner the refined yet uncon-

¹ Quoted from Cao Juren, *Lu Xun pingzhuan* (Lu Xun: a critical biography) (Hong Kong: Xin wenhua chubanshe, 1956), pp. 47–48.

² Lu Xun, "What Is Required of Us as Fathers Today?" in *Selected Works of Lu Xun*, 3d ed., trans. Xianyi and Gladys Yang (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1980), vol. 2, pp. 58, 65.

ventional."³ In 1936 he was still recommending *The Scholars* to younger writers, naming as his own two favorite novels *Shui hu zhuan* (Outlaws of the marsh) and *The Scholars*.⁴

This is the foundation, then, upon which Lu Xun and Mao Dun, the pioneers and preeminent figures of May Fourth fiction, built their literary careers.

Lu Xun was the first to depict in his short stories the three different generations of Chinese intellectuals: in "Kuangren riji" (Diary of a madman), generally recognized as the first piece of modern fiction to come out of China, and in its companion piece "Yao" (Medicine), Lu Xun portrays intellectuals of the era preceding the 1911 Revolution, precursors to the intellectuals of the Modern Chinese Revolution; in "Zai jiulou shang" (In the tavern) and "Guduzhe" (The misanthrope) he depicts the mood and environment of progressive intellectuals after 1911; in "Shangshi" (Remorse) he explores the relationship existing between society and the young intellectuals of the May Fourth era and the possibility of its future development.

His characters are all extremely sensitive to the sufferings of their times, concerned with the morbidity of life and society, defiant in the face of reality, and constant in the pursuit of their ideals and freedom. The madman believes urgently that China can only perish if it does not reform, for "man-eaters will not be tolerated in the future." "Even if you can still multiply," the madman warns, "you'll be distinguished by the real human beings just like wolves by hunters! Like vermin!"⁵ He would rather be considered insane if it will allow him to "save the children" and to proclaim the truth as he sees it. In "Medicine" Xia Yu gives his life for the same end, his blood an ineffective "medicine" for an ignorant and benighted people. At one point in his life, Lü Weifu of "In the Tavern" would spend entire days arguing, even fighting, over various methods of revolutionizing China, and once denounced superstition by visiting the temple of the city god to tweak whiskers from the idol's face. Wei Lianshu, "The Misanthrope," is another former modern. Zijun of "Remorse" flees bravely from tradition-bound home, insisting, "I belong to myself!

³ Mao Dun, "Wode zhongxuesheng shidai ji qi hou" (My middle-school days and after) in his *Yinxiang, ganxiang, huiyi* (Impressions, reflections, recollections) (Shanghai: Wenhua shenghuo chubanshe, 1936), p. 54.

⁴ Mao Dun, "Tan wode yanjiu" (A few words on my research) in *Yinxiang*, p. 52.

⁵ Lu Xun, "Diary of a Madman," trans. Harold R. Isaacs in *Straw Sandals*, ed. Harold R. Isaacs (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1974), p. 11.

None of them has any right to interfere!"⁶

The strength of tradition proves too great, however. As Lu Xun writes, "just to move a table or overhaul a stove" involves a sacrifice of blood.⁷ It is this insight that sets Lu Xun's fiction apart from the "novels of exposure" of the late Qing. He never believes that China can be saved by removing a few bad men from the government and replacing them with worthies. He concentrates rather on the reformers and vanguard of the intelligentsia who are completely misunderstood and rejected by society and who consequently feel themselves alienated and isolated.

For this clear-minded analysis of society, the madman is diagnosed insane and locked up in his study "like a chicken in his coop." He is viewed as "normal" only after he abandons his new consciousness and identifies himself once again with society when he moves to another district to await official appointment.

The sacrifice of Xia Yu's life is least understood by those for whom he dies. They value his blood only as the chief ingredient of a preparation for curing tuberculosis: a steamed bun soaked in fresh blood, a remedy calling for the death of an innocent life. Xia Yu devotes his life to enlightening the ignorant; yet his mother, his sole living relation, lingers at his graveside in blind hope of a sign from his spirit or a visitation from his soul. His blood proves worthless after all: it cures neither tuberculosis nor ignorance.

Wei Lianshu, the formidable modern who in his life opposed warlord government, is dressed in his death in the military uniform of an officer: khaki trousers with broad red stripes, glittering epaulettes, a gold-banded hat, and an officer's sword of pasteboard. He was persecuted by society during his life, yet now he wears "an ironical smile on his lips, mocking the ridiculous corpse," a sad, sarcastic salute.⁸

Juansheng and Zijun "talk about [the] tyrannical family system, about breaking away from the old ways, about sex equality, about Ibsen, Tagore, and Shelley," for they grew up in the aura of the May Fourth Movement.⁹ By all appearances, they live up to their ideals when they establish their small household. However, the indif-

⁶ Lu Xun, "Remorse (Handwritten Notes by Juansheng)," trans. Harold R. Isaacs, in *Straw Sandals*, p. 109.

⁷ Lu Xun, "What Happens after Nora Leaves Home?" in *Selected Works*, vol. 1, p. 248.

⁸ Lu Xun, "The Misanthrope," in *Selected Works*, vol. 1, p. 248.

⁹ Lu Xun, "Remorse," p. 108.

ference, the discrimination, the pressure of the world outside and the loneliness, despair, and emptiness of their inner world force them to abandon their life together. The circle is complete when Zijun sacrifices her life to no advantage, and Juansheng, longing to "step forward toward the new way," fails to comprehend that at this point his only guides are "forgetfulness and lies."

The intelligentsia's commitment to social reform, their frustrating search for solutions and their fruitless attempts at implementing them are all reflected in the marked bent of Lu Xun's protagonists toward introspection and self-criticism. His madman discovers that he himself has eaten men: he is one of the cannibals he fears. Lü Weifu recognizes that he has occupied himself with "futile work, amounting to nothing at all," and likens himself to a bug that "after flying in a small circle . . . comes back to stop in the same place."¹⁰ Wei Lianshu writes, "I am now doing what I formerly detested and opposed. I am now giving up all I formerly believed in and upheld."¹¹ He is winding himself in a cocoon of his own spinning, impenetrable and inescapable. "But tell me," he asks, "where does the thread for the cocoon come from?"¹² He wants to trace his failure back to its beginnings, but this is a problem neither he nor the author can unravel. "Remorse" is, as the subtitle "Handwritten Notes by Juansheng" tells us, the introspective record of a young intellectual's examination and critique of his psyche.

The attacks these young men make are as utterly ineffective as "arrows aimed at the sea."¹³ The corruption of society is everywhere, though the enemy himself is sometimes hard to locate. He raises magnificent banners and praiseworthy slogans, but he changes constantly the disguise he assumes. The social corruption this enemy moves in—"the lines of nothingness"—is described by Lu Xun in his prose poem "Zheyang de zhanshi" (Such a fighter).

He walks into the lines of nothingness, where all that meet him nod to him in the same manner. He knows that this nod is a weapon used by the enemy to kill without bloodshed, by which many fighters have perished. Like a cannon-ball, it renders ineffective the strength of the brave. . . .

. . . At last he grows old and dies of old age in the lines of nothing-

¹⁰ Lu Xun, "In the Tavern," in *Selected Works*, vol. 1, p. 192.

¹¹ Lu Xun, "The Misanthrope," p. 241.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 236.

¹³ Lu Xun, "Reply to Mr. Youheng," in *Selected Works*, vol. 2, p. 351.

ness. He is not a fighter after all, and the nothingness is the victor.

In such a place no war-cry is heard, but there is peace.

Peace. . . .

But he raises his javelin!¹⁴

All three generations of intellectuals portrayed in Lu Xun's short stories portray a common ideal: to declare war against all forms of social oppression. Although the path to victory, even the possibility of victory, may not be within sight, still they solemnly offer themselves up to the struggle.

Throughout his career Lu Xun never gave up exploring the possibility of an even more progressive, even more powerful intelligentsia. In the March 18th Massacre of 1926 a number of the younger generation of intellectuals, in complete and heroic disregard for their own lives, sacrificed themselves for the sake of their nation. Lu Xun was moved to write:

A rebellious fighter has arisen from mankind, who, standing erect, sees through all the deserted ruins and lonely tombs of the past and the present. He remembers all the intense and unending agony; he faces squarely the whole welter of clotted blood; he understands all that is dead and all that is living, as well as all that is being born and all that is yet unborn. He sees through the creator's game. And he will arise to resuscitate or else destroy mankind, these loyal subjects of the creator.

The creator, the weakling, hides himself in shame. Then heaven and earth change color in the eyes of the fighter.¹⁵

This is Lu Xun's ideal intellectual: a rebel who dares smash all chains to the past. His knowledge enables him to comprehend the past and see into the future, to learn from past failure and to grapple with the shifting "lines of nothingness." Sometime in the future he will rouse the people to consciousness and will exterminate the docile and the slavish. He will create a new heaven and earth.

This eulogy on the intellectual warrior was written in April 1926. In August Lu Xun left Beijing for Amoy. Canton was at that time the headquarters of the revolutionary Northern Expeditionary Army, so it

¹⁴ Lu Xun, "Such a Fighter," in *Selected Works*, vol. 1, pp. 354-355.

¹⁵ Lu Xun, "Amid Pale Bloodstains," in *Selected Works*, vol. 1, p. 362. The March 18th Massacre of 1926 broke out when police of Duan Qirui's warlord government opened fire into a crowd of demonstrators gathered at the Gate of Heavenly Peace to protest Japanese encroachment of China's sovereign rights. Forty-seven were killed and more than a hundred fifty wounded.

must have been with high hopes of finding a host of such warriors that Lu Xun traveled south.

A much more complex and sobering situation awaited Lu Xun in Canton, however. The massacre of a group of young intellectuals following upon the failed revolution convinced him of the inadequacy of purely intellectual endeavor. He resolved to involve himself directly in the actual struggle. The failure of the revolutionary movement during the Northern Expedition posed new problems for that generation of Chinese intellectuals. These problems can be seen reflected in the fiction of a rising new writer of the time, Mao Dun.

Probing the Mood of the Young Intelligentsia: Mao Dun

Unlike Lu Xun or Guo Moruo, Mao Dun (1896–1981) never studied abroad and never attended a university. Straitened family circumstances and his own obligations as eldest son forced him to discontinue his formal education after a three-year preparatory course at Beijing University and to accept a junior position at the Commercial Press in Shanghai.

Mao Dun's father held a *xiucai* degree but earned his living practicing medicine in the family's home town. He revered Tan Sitong, promoted science, and advocated reform.¹⁶ Mao Dun's mother was educated and an avid reader.¹⁷ From childhood Mao Dun had a tendency—perhaps due to his family's financial situation and relatively unimpressive social standing—to work hard and to sympathize with the oppressed. Thanks to his parents' influence, he was fairly broad-minded, inquisitive, and receptive to new ideas and developments.

Mao Dun began his literary career as a critic. He had devoted almost ten years of his life to the study of society, the latest intellectual trends, and Chinese and Western literature before ever attempting to write fiction. By that time he had developed his own opinions on the nature and character of literature, literary technique, and the social applications of literature, opinions leaning heavily toward realism.

The indiscriminate murder of revolutionaries following the failure of the Northern Expedition and the collapse of the United Front in

¹⁶ Tan Sitong (1865–1898), Qing philosopher and statesman, was the left-wing leader of the reform movement. Tan Sitong sharply criticized feudal orthodoxy and called for the breaking of all "nets" (of fame, self-interest, and traditionalism).

¹⁷ Mao Dun, "Wode xiao zhuan" (A short autobiography), in *Wenxue yuebao* 1 (1932): 173.

1927 produced violent repercussions among the intelligentsia. The different responses of Lu Xun, Guo Moruo, and Mao Dun are most representative of the intelligentsia at this juncture of the revolutionary movement.

The White Terror impressed upon Lu Xun the uselessness of all earlier attacks on social corruption, his "arrows aimed at the sea." The revolutionaries had been spared persecution only because these attacks had posed their opponents no threat, nothing beyond ineffective words. It was this realization that fixed Lu Xun's resolve to involve himself directly in the revolution. He joined the struggle just after it had suffered a major setback.

Guo Moruo took a different course. Roused to ire and indignation at the failure of the revolution, he was blind to the actual situation, hoping, impossibly, that all intellectuals would acquire the class consciousness of the proletariat overnight. His zealotry led him to stray from the masses, however, to follow a road unfavorable to the revolution.

Mao Dun reacted still differently. He was led to painful reflection by the aborted revolution. He temporarily left the vortex of the struggle to examine his own past actions and beliefs, and, after a period of drifting, entered once again into the mainstream of the revolutionary movement. In later years Mao Dun followed the revolutionary line even more unswervingly than he had before.

While many leftists were proclaiming stubbornly that the revolution was "nearing its peak," Mao Dun admitted with objectivity and reserve that the revolution had failed and that to continue making revolution regardless of the actual circumstances could lead only to a dead end.

Frankly, I disapprove of this "way out" so many people have been touting these past years. Haven't we seen clear proof already that this "way out" could very easily become a "dead end"?...I do not understand why it is considered progressive, this mindlessly hitting one's head against the wall, like a fly's hurling himself time and again against a windowpane.¹⁸

Nor was he willing to conceal his doubt, to assume a mask of optimism and point out the way to the masses.

I cannot offer any enthusiastic guidance....I will not make state-

¹⁸ Mao Dun, "Cong Guling dao Dongjing" (From Guling to Tokyo), in *Xiaoshuo yuebao* 19 (1928): 1140.

ments contrary to my conscience, nor have I the genius to discover a road the people can travel with confidence. . . . I am capable only of describing the times, with as much truth and integrity as I can muster.¹⁹

It was this spirit of realism and demand for truth that led Mao Dun to look critically at his own work. The readers of the new literature were, he observed, the intellectual petty bourgeoisie. Why, then, must the new literature be written for the illiterate, the toiling masses, as its proponents, the theorists of "revolutionary literature," insisted? Mao Dun proposed an end to the absurdity of a literature aimed at the working class yet read only by the leisure class and advocated a literature aimed at its readers, a literature of the petty bourgeoisie.

This is the theoretical background of *Huanmie* (Disillusion), written in September and October of 1927, *Dongyao* (Vacillation), written in November and December of the same year, and *Zhuiqiu* (Pursuit), written between April and June of 1928. Each novel concerns a distinct set of characters, yet common themes run throughout, and there is some overlap in temporal setting. In 1930 the trilogy appeared again under a collective title added by Mao Dun, *Shi* (The eclipse). Mao Dun left Shanghai for Tokyo in August 1928. In April of the following year he wrote *Hong* (Rainbow), never completed.

Both *The Eclipse* and *Rainbow* give an account of the younger generation of intellectuals, their life-styles and temperaments. *The Eclipse*, the author tells us, portrays

the three phases modern youth passed through in the grand course of the revolution: (1) exultation on the eve of the revolution and disillusion soon after its arrival; (2) vacillation as the revolutionary struggles intensified; (3) unreconciled loneliness and a determined longing to continue their quest in the wake of disillusionment and vacillation.²⁰

The three stories cover a period stretching roughly from May 1926 to the spring of 1928. *Rainbow*, on the other hand, spans the years between the May Fourth Movement of 1919 and the May 30th Movement of 1925. The social upheaval and intellectual transformation of the times are traced through the story of a young woman from Sichuan and her experiences as a student, teacher, private tutor

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 1139.

in the household of a warlord, and, finally, an intellectual in Shanghai.

At the onset of *Disillusion* we are introduced to Hui, a young woman who has just returned to Shanghai after two years as an exchange student in Paris. Unemployed, Hui decides to move into the apartment of a former schoolmate, Jing. After a romantic triangle develops the two women travel together to Wuhan to join in the Northern Expedition, Jing's resolve resulting from the discovery that her lover is an informant in the employ of warlords. Her disillusionment and depression are deepened as she becomes better acquainted with the uglier aspects of the revolution. Jing later finds work in a field hospital where she falls in love with a captain, a futurist who nonetheless longs for the excitement of combat and soon resumes military duty. Again, the pure love that forms the core of Jing's existence becomes the agent of her disillusionment.

Vacillation describes a series of events taking place in a small district center not far from Wuhan, now occupied by Expeditionary forces. The novel traces the course of political sympathies, "from leftist leanings to naïve radicalism, from remedies for naïve radicalism to the gradual emergence of rightist thought and, ultimately, reactionism" and the brutal slaughter of revolutionaries.²¹ Set against this historical panorama is the story of Fang Luolan, intellectual and head of the department of civilian affairs for the revolutionary government, and the story of his own vacillation between left and right, between marriage and illicit love.

Pursuit deals with the problems of a group of intellectuals who have withdrawn to Shanghai from the front lines of the defeated revolution. Some have devoted their lives to teaching and education, investing the next generation with the hopes of their own. Others are determined to make a more substantial contribution, to advance only half a step if a full step is impossible (called *banbu zhuyi* 'half-stepism' by contemporaries). Some seek to reorganize society. Others prefer to seek thrills, love, even death at their own hands. Nothing ever comes of these enterprises; even suicide attempts are repeatedly thwarted, even the pursuit of death is unsuccessful.

The tone of *Rainbow* is optimistic by comparison. The heroine, Mei, strives vigorously to adapt herself to a new world and a new way of life: "[T]he experience of homeless drifting had already set life in a new mold...the whirlwind of the May Fourth Movement

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1141.

had sent the needle of her compass spinning, reorienting her thinking."²² Through her own efforts she throws off the yoke of married life and, after some setbacks and reversals, makes her way to the heart of the mass movement.

The young intellectuals of *Rainbow* and *The Eclipse* emerge as real men and women of flesh and blood. They give us glimpses of social phenomena particular to the new intelligentsia and reveal mental attitudes the previous generation of intellectuals never shared.

Resisting the Authority of Traditional Society

One crucial social phenomenon faithfully recorded in both *Rainbow* and *The Eclipse* is the alienation of intellectuals from the traditional family unit. This was especially true of intellectuals from large land-holding families. As this alienation progressed, the traditional gentry class, a scholarly class tied to the land, began to crumble. Intellectuals began to drift into urban areas, becoming what Qu Qiubai called *bohaimin* 'Bohemians'.²³ They earned their livelihoods as intellectual laborers, migrating from one city to another. The appearance of this "free-floating resource," in Weber's phrase, had a great impact on the development of Chinese culture. The shaping of the Chinese Communist Party, the transmission and influence of Western thought (Marxism in particular), the mass mobilization and propaganda campaigns conducted during the War of Resistance, the establishment of a base in Yan'an, all were linked to the emergence of this new stratum of society.

These changes in the social structure necessarily precipitated a change in the relationship between the intelligentsia on the one hand and ruling authority and its prescribed social values on the other. The policy of "resisting position with virtue" employed by the intelligentsia against established authority since the Wei-Jin period amounted to nothing more than passive withdrawal, a partial solution at best. The notion implied, moreover, the possibility of future cooperation with the ruling class. Even Lu Xun's madman finally returns to the conventional track when he accepts the position of alternate appointee.

²² Mao Dun, *Hong* (*Rainbow*) (Shanghai: Kaiming shudian, 1930), p. 4.

²³ Qi Qiubai, "Lu Xun zagan xuanji xuyan" (Preface to *A selection of Lu Xun's random thoughts*), in his *Qu Qiubai wenji* (The collected works of Qu Qiubai) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1953-1954), vol. 2, p. 995.

The young intellectuals of Mao Dun's novels belong to a different age. The track they choose calls for active, absolute rebellion. They oppose their enemy on all fronts—political, social, moral, and cultural. And while they hold no illusions about the power of the military regime, they have no room in their hearts for compromise.

Never before had such a relationship existed between revolutionaries and the target of their revolution: the young women Hui and Jing both participate in the Northern Expedition; Fang Luolan remains virulently antagonistic toward the warlords even while he himself wavers between left and right; the intellectuals of *Pursuit* struggle desperately to find a way to the future yet refuse to consider collaborating with the government, even at the ebb of their fortunes.

Complete denial of political authority leads to complete denial as well of the social norms and standards it upholds. Traditional Chinese society is based on kinship and governed by filial piety and fraternal duty. Most of Lu Xun's intellectuals are portrayed through their relationships with parents or siblings. The madman, for example, is presented through his relationship with his elder brother, Lü Weifu through his relationship with his mother, Wei Lianshu through his relationship with his grandmother, Zijun through her relationship with her father and uncle. The madman and Zijun represent modern intellectuals' repudiation of all fraternal and filial ties; Lü and Wei exemplify the profound influence these concepts then still exercised over the thoughts and feelings of Chinese intellectuals. We are referring, of course, not to the orthodox concepts of filial piety and fraternal obligation, but to the "genuine sentiment" insisted upon by Ji Kang and Ruan Ji.

In Mao Dun's fiction the problem of familial relationships has already faded from the narration. His young intellectuals are urban drifters: their families and homes are only faintly sketched characters and scenes from the lives they have forsworn. We know, for example, that Jing has, or had, a loving mother, Hui a spiteful brother and sister-in-law. Parents and near relations are no longer an integral part of their lives; filial piety and fraternal duty have lost their validity as social standards. These young intellectuals are free of the restrictions and constriction of family life, free to roam from place to place, free to study, seek employment, plunge into the revolution.

Male dominance and male supremacy are also prominent traits of traditional Chinese society. Prominent in Mao Dun's writings, however, is his advocacy of equality between the sexes. Female intellectuals figure most importantly in both *Rainbow* and *The Eclipse*, an ar-

rangement unprecedented in the history of Chinese fiction. It is one of Mao Dun's greatest contributions to Chinese literature.

The "modern women" of Mao Dun's stories reject the way of life and the morality of traditional China. They declare that "there is no moral standard—whatever leads to happiness is moral."²⁴ And in a social environment as prosaic and stagnant as theirs, happiness is found only in intense, voluptuous stimulation: "[R]evelry... elation... We are in the spring of youth. We need every stimulation, every thrill—it's true. Excitement is sacred for us, it's moral, rational."²⁵ They call themselves "disciples of the present" (*Hong*, p. 10). "Ideal society, ideal life, even ideal love—traps, all of them" (*Shi*, p. 379). "We'll talk about the future when the future comes. We have a way now, we must act" (*Hong*, p. 31). It is a violent reaction against the social order of the past thousands of years, against the moral bondage and oppression of women of the past thousands of years.

These women's reaction and defiance illustrate vividly the part taken by the "new woman" in destroying the traditional relationship between the sexes by which man stood at the center of the universe and woman existed only for his sensual gratification. "Did heaven give me this fine flesh and bone solely to give pleasure?" Mei asks. "If so, I will live for my own pleasure, I will not sit passively by" (*Hong*, p. 80).

Sexual pleasure, these women openly declare, is as much a woman's right as it is a man's. It may even be a woman's means for wreaking vengeance upon a man. Sun Wuyang of *Vacillation* tells Fang Luolan:

I've had plenty of men after me, hanging about me. I haven't hesitated to get mixed up with them, either. I'm made of flesh and blood, too. I have instincts and impulses, too. Sometimes, I can't help but... But I cannot be bound by these sexual urges. And so, I've never loved any of them, I've only played with them. (*Shi*, pp. 214–215)

These women have upended the old masculine order and more; they have taken over the role of aggressor. Zhang Qiuliu, the new woman of *Pursuit*, goes so far as to declare, "There is nothing more

²⁴ Mao Dun, *Zhuyiqiu* (*Pursuit*) (Shanghai: Kaiming shudian, 1930), p. 195. This passage does not appear in the 1980 edition of the trilogy *Shi* cited in the notes below.

²⁵ Mao Dun, *Shi* (*The eclipse*) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1980), p. 465.

satisfying to a woman than to seduce an arrogant brute, to see him lying at one's own feet, and then to kick him with all one's might" (*Shi*, p. 379).

These women also adopt an uncompromisingly negative stand against the "capital punishment," traditional marriage, finding little to attract them in the prospect of living with an "unbending man who will not take orders, a man who uses his authority as a husband to inhibit the life of his wife" (*Shi*, p. 27). "I'll tell you frankly," Sun Wuyang confides, "I'm used to my freedom. I could never be any man's wife."²⁶

The development of this new concept of the sexes may be attributed to the increasing numbers of educated and professional women and the increasing emergence of women into the world. Barriers between the sexes break down easily where men and women are in close and frequent contact, as were the men and women of the Northern Expeditionary forces. On the other hand, the sexual promiscuity among the young intellectuals of the Expedition might be viewed as a result of this new concept. Men "would go wild at the sight of a single woman and want to make love to her. . . . They hunted frantically for the stimulus of physical pleasure and novel lusts" (*Shi*, p. 69).

Mao Dun interprets their behavior as "a reaction to their anxiety. In a quieter atmosphere, this anxiety would be reflected in the pursuit of sensual stimulation, and the term 'love' becomes an inviolable rationalization" (*Shi*, p. 70). This situation parallels in some respects the *beishui zhuyi* 'cup-of-waterism' or free love so prevalent in the Soviet Union after the October Revolution.

The new attitude of sexual liberation gave rise to another vogue among young women, lesbianism. *Rainbow* contains a carefully detailed description of lesbian lovemaking in a girls' middle-school dormitory. Similar scenes appear in both *Disillusion* and *Pursuit*. At the same time, prostitution is seen in a significantly new light. In *Pursuit* a pair of intellectuals, husband and wife, find themselves unemployed and penniless after the failed revolution. Under these extraordinary circumstances the wife decides that if it will preserve their ideological independence and conserve their physical strength for the struggles to come, "there is nothing wrong in selling oneself once or twice as a whore." Zhang Qiuliu reasons, "For a great cause,

²⁶ Mao Dun, *Dongyao* (Vacillation) (Shanghai: Kaiming shudian, 1949), p. 117. This passage does not appear in the 1980 edition of *Shi* cited in the notes above.

for one's own liberty and independence, even prostitution is within the bounds of reason and morality, isn't it?" (*Shi*, pp. 380–381). Incest, a problem rarely encountered in a society that lays such stress on the ethics of human relationships, is also introduced in *Rainbow* in the story of the romantic love between a brother and sister.

Thus, in Mao Dun's portrayals of love and marriage we are shown the overall collapse of the traditional society and its values. The conflict, long familiar to Chinese intellectuals, between emotion (*qing*) and propriety (*li*) now follows a course hitherto unknown. The traditional notion of propriety can no longer be used to measure and regulate social behavior, and sex has taken over the important position once occupied by emotion in the lives of China's intellectuals. In terms of relationships between the sexes, women have stepped into the role of initiator and aggressor. These phenomena, faithfully recorded in Mao Dun's works, reflect a unique development in the history of social change and the lives of the intelligentsia. Mao Dun's contribution is itself unique, for no writer past or present has explored the social experience with such boldness or creativity.

Between East and West, Past and Present

In his *Zhongguo zhishifenzi* (The Chinese intelligentsia) Qian Mu states emphatically:

In no way did the intellectual world of the late Qing greet the new age, make preparations or lay foundations for it. The new age, in other words, was in every sense the product of the intellectual onslaught from abroad; it was neither conceived nor nurtured from within.²⁷

While this is not entirely true, to a certain degree it does reflect the critical difference between this influx of Western culture into China and the earlier influx of Indian culture.

Western culture, political and economic thought, and military force arrived in China along with the twentieth century and its impending social crisis, while most of the academic world was busying itself with philological studies and textual analysis and criticism. Intellectual pioneers such as Tan Sitong and Kang Youwei, restricted by historical conditions, failed to work out a strong, coherent system of thought suited to the needs of the times. Western culture, at any

²⁷ Qian Mu, *Zhongguo zhishifenzi* (The Chinese intelligentsia) (Hong Kong: Zhongguo wenti yanjiusuo, 1961), p. 27.

rate, was superior in many ways to the feudalistic culture of imperial China, already in decline. When the tide of Western thought, then, "came rushing forward like a great, rolling wave," Chinese intellectuals found themselves occupying positions of involuntary passivity, or approving Western culture wholesale while rejecting their own past, or refusing determinedly to investigate the faults and limitations of their own culture for fear of its total collapse. Mao Dun's fiction mirrors vividly these young intellectuals' eager pursuit of new ideas and trends from the West during the post-May Fourth era, as well as the skepticism and introspection that emerged in the days following the defeat of the revolution.

The cosmopolitan world of Mao Dun's fiction testifies to the pervasiveness and impact of Western intellectual culture in a formerly parochial China. Shanghai is a city of French cuisine and bowling alleys, Hollywood films and the tango. Middle-school students in history class debate a second world war and whether it will break out in the Far East or in the Balkans. College students suffer from moral confusion, frustrated romanticism, and decadent impulses, reminiscent of the fin-de-siècle anxiety that is universal. Candidates for the Party cadre school in Wuhan are tested by the revolutionary regime on their knowledge of Zinoviev and Mussolini. Mei's husband, attempting to please his wife now stranded in the cultural backwater of Sichuan, buys her "any book or magazine with the word 'new' in its title. So, piled in a heap together with *New Youth* and *New Tide (Renaissance)* were *New Talks on Health and Hygiene*, *New Baseball Techniques*, *A New Discourse on Sexual Intercourse*" (Hong, p. 75).

The "new" imports from the West, however, often contained out-of-date or discordant elements, as described in *Rainbow*.

The new publications were everywhere now. Individualism, humanism, socialism, anarchism—contending and mutually exclusive doctrines of every sort often appeared in the pages of a single journal, applauded with equal enthusiasm. Indiscriminately, too, were they received by Mei. Writings attacking traditional thinking overjoyed her just as writings advocating individual rights aroused her. And articles describing the social utopia to come intoxicated her utterly. (Hong, pp. 51–52)

Western works and individuals mentioned in *Rainbow* and *The Eclipse* range from Tolstoy, Ibsen, Nietzsche, and Dostoevsky to Mussolini and Zinoviev, from *The Three Musketeers* to *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, *Modern Science and Anarchism*, *Marxism and Darwinism*,

and *Whither China?* Western intellectual trends, conflicting and compatible, flooded China in only a short period, each too quickly assimilated to allow its proponents a thorough appreciation before something newer took its place.

Many of these "new ideas" were nothing more than vaguely defined concepts collected under a fashionable tag. Superficially understood, these ideas replaced the Chinese intellectual and cultural tradition in the hearts and minds of the young intelligentsia. In *Rainbow*, for example, the women Mei and Xu,

those two good friends, assumed a grand air when they talked, as if one were Tolstoy and the other Ibsen. Actually, neither of them had any real understanding of these masters' philosophies. Their notions were vague, even misconceived, yet they would agree that, "all in all, Tolstoy and Ibsen were both moderns. They must be all right." (*Hong*, p. 28)

This is the backdrop, then, before which Mao Dun's characters appear, three character types embodying three distinct responses to ideas and influences from abroad.

The first type are the young intellectuals, eager to explore new ways and prospect. While they fall short of a complete, systematic understanding of Western thought, their attitude toward the flood of imported ideas is something more than passive approval or appreciation. The concepts and ideologies they draw forth are applied immediately in their daily lives.

When *A Doll's House* is to be staged by Mei's school, for example, no one will volunteer for the important role of Mrs. Linde on the grounds that she betrayed her first love, returning to marry him only after becoming a widow. Mei takes a different view. She believes Mrs. Linde "the most positive character in the entire play, a woman who does not allow herself to be dictated to by romantic love." Mrs. Linde first marries for the sake of her bedridden mother and young brothers; she later marries for Nora's sake. Nora, by contrast, "cannot use her sexuality as a medium of exchange, even if it is to save another person's life." Mei's perception of these two women "took root and grew in her mind, and came to serve as a magnetic compass, guiding her conduct in society" (*Hong*, p. 43). Subsequently, Mei does barter sex when she marries a cousin to whom her father is deeply in debt. Eventually she deserts him, robbing him of both his fortune and his home.

Mei's appreciation of Ibsen is perhaps imperfect, yet what little she does understand she accepts as principles for living. Such is

Weiyu's appreciation of Tolstoy: "I've read a few novels recently and some of the new periodicals... I realize now that the desire to possess another person isn't necessarily love. Genuine love for another is gauged by that person's happiness, not by the measure of one's own selfish concerns" (*Hong*, p. 22). This is the sum of his understanding of Tolstoy's philosophy, and this is what leads him to sacrifice his love for Mei, assured it is for her future good.

Zhang Weili of *Disillusion* similarly steers his life by a principle only half-understood, his futurism: "I sought strong stimulants, glorying in cannon, explosives, revolution, all extreme forms of the destructive force" (*Shi*, p. 84). And so he joins the ranks of the revolution.

These young intellectuals actively use the ideas they encounter in their search for alternatives to the past. Their urgent need to reform society and define the future prevents them from dwelling in the realm of pure theory. It prevents them also from the penetrating examination and study of theory that lead to true understanding. Their response to foreign ideas was unique to their times, distinct from the response to Buddhism of the earlier Wei-Jin intellectuals.

The second type are those intellectuals who are driven irresistibly by external circumstances to place themselves under the new standard. "Old ideas in new array" are present everywhere in Mao Dun's fiction. "Herbalists ought to carry a thermometer along when they go to diagnose a case," Mao Dun writes, for "a traditional Chinese doctor with a smattering of Western science could keep his waiting room as crowded as a marketplace." By analogy, "the writings of the philosophers and the Classics now decked out in vernacular language have become 'constructive re-evaluations of our cultural past' while the originals are dismissed as so much dross" (*Hong*, p. 192). Similarly, the normal school Mei attends flaunts itself as an experimental school dedicated to modern theories of education. Yet it differs appreciably from the conservative county-run school only in its National Day festivities, when four or five hundred students turn out in orderly lines holding lanterns and placards reading "Long live the Republic of China!"

The third type is even less admirable, intellectuals who make a pretense of modernity only to satisfy their own ambitions and desires. This type is well represented in *Rainbow* by Commander Hui, the military governor of Sichuan. He advocates careers for women, supports their right to cut their hair short, sponsors public talks, and even makes large-scale plans to invite a few of the major

figures of the New Culture Movement from Shanghai or Beijing to deliver a series of lectures. Actually, it is all for no other purpose than to cloak his search for good-looking coeds.

Commander Hui's brand of artful self-interest reaches critical proportions in the course of the Northern Expedition. *Vacillation*, for example, describes a "brand new campaign" for "the liberation of all female slaves, concubines, nuns." The campaign, designed to abolish the bondage of several thousand years, is rational in itself but in actual practice full of complications. In farming villages the persistent influence of tradition and the ignorance of the peasants lead to a complete distortion of the intent and purpose of the campaign. As "land to the tiller" is the byword for rural economic reform, "wife-sharing" becomes the byword for the misunderstood women's liberation movement. A conservative Husbands' Rights League rises in opposition, formed by polygamous husbands fearful for their conjugal brood. When members of the league are seized and paraded through the streets, the slogan "Down with the Husbands' Rights League!" is somehow transformed into "Down with proper husbands, Hail the promiscuous lover!" (*Shi*, p. 184). When news of this reaches the city, intellectual cadres out of touch with the real situation in the countryside praise the agitators as "pioneers of the emancipation of female slaves and concubines," "the clap of spring thunder that will awaken the female consciousness." Local petty despots and unprincipled gentry propose that "all concubines and slaves, nuns, and widows be made common property, to be allotted by the state." Anything less, they argue, would be counterrevolutionary (*Shi*, p. 188). By this, one of their number at least accomplishes three worthy tasks in a single stroke: he makes good use of a chance to flaunt his influence and ability, he solves the problem of his concubine's embarrassing advance of a lawsuit, and he relieves himself of all responsibility as far as his designs on a certain attractive widow are concerned. The very essence of the campaign is turned inside out.

The victors, at last, are the old ways and ideas in the trappings of the new iconoclasm, a situation that undermines the young intelligentsia's faith in the New Culture Movement of the May Fourth era. Mei observes: "All evil is attributed to the old ethic, yet this evil, even now, is being perpetuated under the standard of those who would overthrow the old. Such is our glorious, modern New Culture Movement" (*Hong*, p. 82). Her friend Xu agrees.

The new thinking that in ordinary times would have been so easily, so firmly believed in is now the object of skepticism. The people

have been roused, they have been called out and are marching forward. But they are advancing into darkness, not into the light. And the champions of idealism, those who raised the battle cry that stirred our youth, failed to design a society enlightened or blessed enough to contain these fugitives of the light. (*Hong*, p. 114)

While this skepticism demoralized a good portion of the young intelligentsia, it also forced upon them a certain critical awareness, a caution that would never again allow them to rest content with half-understood truths and doctrines without further investigation and study. Thus were the young intellectuals of the thirties readied for the introduction of Marxism into China.

Innovation in Artistic Technique

It has been noted that the modernization of Chinese literature initiated by Lu Xun is carried on in the works of Mao Dun. The modern society Mao Dun writes of differs drastically from the society of traditional China; and Mao Dun himself was profoundly influenced by an extensive knowledge of Western literature in translation and his own investigations into Western literary theory.

Mao Dun lays great stress on—and is skilled at—the study of society at large. Social analysis outweighs personal expression in his works. His “creative process” is actually a concretization of character types he has observed and studied and seldom includes any excursions into individual sentimental experience. While working on *Ziye* (Midnight), for instance, he collected material assiduously, analyzing distinctions among industrial, financial, and commercial capitalists before molding the figures that appear in the novel.

Mao Dun first introduced Naturalism to the Chinese literary world in the 1920s, praising in particular the works of Zola. His enthusiasm for this school can be traced to shared emphases in the study of social problems: scientific observation in advance followed by objective recording.²⁸ This method of study explains the richness and reliability of Mao Dun’s novels and stories as sources for the study of social history. It explains, too, why individual characterization and vivid description are not counted among his strengths as a novelist. This weakness appears even more acute when we compare Mao Dun to a writer such as Lao She, who excels in dialogue, action, and character development.

²⁸ Mao Dun, “Ziran zhuyi yu Zhongguo xiandai xiaoshuo” (Naturalism and modern Chinese fiction), *Xiaoshuo yuebao* 13:7 (July 1922): 8.

Mao Dun deals with personality types rather than individual characters in *The Eclipse*. He writes: "There are a number of female characters in *Disillusion*, *Vacillation*, and *Pursuit*, but I concentrated my efforts in portraying only two types: the type represented by Miss Jing and Mrs. Fang, and the type represented by Miss Hui, Sun Wuyang, and Zhang Qiuli."29

But these modern female types are not identical to those of *Midnight*, not entirely the abstract product of his social investigations. The images that appeared and took hold in his mind during the creative process were not those of abstract types, but of real, live persons of flesh and blood. He recalls:

I decided once again to try my hand at fiction, seizing every moment I could spare, for my attention had been arrested by various examples of the female ideological consciousness. It was the eve of the "Great Revolution," and many women students and intellectuals of petty bourgeois backgrounds felt it would almost be doing an injustice to their educational experience not to enter the revolutionary party. The extraordinary, impassioned illusions one of them cherished of the revolution led her to join its forces but remain at the periphery, in spite of this, looking on. Another turned to the revolution in frustration over rebuffs suffered in other aspects of her life; there was a tinge of skepticism shading her illusions. . . . They left me with a sharp impression and a resolve to write that grew stronger daily.³⁰

This impulse to write from real life was at times overwhelming. Mao Dun recalls another instance, walking in a downpour with a young woman: "All of a sudden I was overcome with a flood of thoughts and the desire to get them down. . . . I would've put pen to paper right there in the middle of the rain."³¹ He also recalls seeing many of these modern women lose their sanity, or the will to go on.

Traveling from Wuhan to Guling in the third-class cabin of the steamer *Xiangyang*, he discovered two women he had met before in both Shanghai and Wuhan.³² In "Guling zhi qiu" (Autumn in Guling) Mao Dun describes in fine detail the Miss Wang he met aboard the *Xiangyang*. She had been a member of the standing committee of the Women's Association of Hubei and had been active in organizing

²⁹ "Cong Guling dao Dongjing," p. 1140.

³⁰ Mao Dun, "Jiju jiu hua" (A few old words) in Lu Xun et al., *Chuangzuo de jingyan* (The creative experience) (Shanghai: Tian ma shudian, 1933), p. 50.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 54.

female cotton-mill workers in their protests against foot-binding.

Mao Dun's modern women are clearly based on real life counterparts, women who left him feeling that not to put down what was in his mind and heart would be to do a disservice to others as well as to himself.³³

He was obviously in a similar frame of mind when writing *Rainbow*. Mei's maturing, her relations with those around her, her change and development, her particular circumstances, thoughts, and feelings are delineated with an accuracy and acuity not found in Mao Dun's later works.

What is curious is the novel's setting, Sichuan. Mao Dun had never visited southwest China before 1928. How was he able, then, to achieve authenticity in his descriptions of people and places and local customs? In this past, this authenticity has been ascribed to the influence of his wife, Kong Dezhi, a native of Sichuan. But *Rainbow* was written while Mao Dun was in Japan and wife was still in Shanghai.

This question puzzled scholars until 1980, the year Qin Daijun (a former member of the Chinese People's Consultative Conference) completed her memoirs. In them she discloses that she lived with Mao Dun in Japan in 1928 and that she assisted him in writing *Rainbow*. She even claims authorship of one section of the book. Qin Daijun's memoirs have not yet been published, unfortunately, so the reliability of her statement is difficult to judge. But she is a native of Sichuan, and her recollections might provide leads for further study.

Both *The Eclipse* and *Rainbow* are achievements in terms of individual characterization without sacrificing sober social observation. Mao Dun uses contrasts to portray his modern women. Contrasting environments, contrasting tastes in clothes or furnishings bring individual temperaments into relief. Hui and Jing of *Disillusion*, for example, Sun Wuyang and Lu Meili (Mrs. Fang) of *Vacillation*, Zhang Qiuliu and Miss Zhu of *Pursuit*, Mei and Xu of *Rainbow* are all related by contrast.

Hui, Sun, Zhang, and those other young women of their type are characterized by an impetuous romanticism and a reckless self-indulgence. They seek excitement and idolize sensual gratification. They defy the moral strictures imposed on women and assault the

³³ Mao Dun, "Hui gu" (Looking back) in Sun Zhongtian and Cha Guohua, eds., *Mao Dun yanjiu ziliao* (Sources for the study of Mao Dun) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1983), vol. 1, p. 85.

corrupt social order of millennia. They are sanguine and uninhibited in their dispositions, brimming with youthful energy.

The women of the contrasting group embody the characteristically feminine virtues of traditional China. They are gentle and unassuming, prudent and circumspect, with an inner tranquility that is consciously and laboriously preserved.

The contrasts are brilliantly drawn. Hui's sensuality is stimulating, threatening, suffocating; Jing's quiet beauty soothes strained nerves, exudes a subtle fragrance, lends an indescribable charm to her balance and harmoniousness. For Hui, the present is all, while Jing must search everlastingly for meaning in life, miserable in the idea of aimless, hopeless existence. Jing, dissatisfied with the status quo of the revolution, keeps a critical distance and preserves her moral integrity; Hui's egoism allows her to deal easily with any situation, any change in situation. Lu Meili is a gentle, refined woman, innocent of the overbearing awesomeness of romantics; Sun Wuyang, on the other hand, dazzles, like a "glittering heap of silver."

The physical environment these women move in reflects the contrasts in character. Mao Dun describes Lu Meili's living room:

In the very middle of the room was a small square table muffled in a white cloth. A porcelain vase, light blue, rose tall from the center of the table, a branch of winter plum nestled obliquely in its mouth. To the right, against the wall, was a small rectangular table with a clock, pots of narcissus, and so forth, one or two miscellaneous, typically feminine items. A quadrangular "palace lantern" of glass was hanging from the floorboards of the room overhead, its panels pasted with characters cut out from paper: *tian xia wei gong*, "All under heaven for the people." (*Shi*, p. 29)

The room's atmosphere—traditional scholar-gentry with a touch of the contemporary—suggests the temperament of the woman: exquisite, elegant, delicate.

Sun Wuyang's living arrangements are altogether different. Where she lived "there was a plum tree [in the courtyard], a scattering of blossoms.... Some square-stalked bamboo leaned listlessly against the wall, its tops a tangle of spiders' webs." A strong odor hits Fang Luolan as he enters the living room. Her clothes and accessories litter the place, and a small table by the window is loaded with a variety of objects. He is attracted by a tiny yellow paper box on the table. Raising its lid he exclaims, as if struck by sudden enlightenment, "'Why, it's face powder!'" Actually it is Neolides H.B., a contraceptive widely used at that time among the moderns (*Shi*, pp.

170–173). Descriptions and details such as these accent and elucidate the women's distinct personalities.

The women contrast in personal appearance as well. Lu Meili has pure, white skin and a soft, graceful demeanor, with a hint of shyness or languor in her eyes. She always wears navy blue blouses with flat, round collars over dark, full-length skirts. Sun Wuyang wears a bottle-green coat sprinkled with tiny red stars, "like a shower of sparks from a Roman candle"; a yellow-green light shoots from her eyes.

At the disastrous close of the revolution, both women find refuge at a nunnery in the wilds. Sun Wuyang, dressed in the ragged uniform of a common soldier, recounts with calm the scenes of slaughter she has witnessed. Lu Meili is "dizzy, giddy, as if spinning and reeling in a void." The sensation is acted out by a spider suspended before her, "its six slender legs striking out wildly . . . its fat, overstuffed body dangling in the emptiness by a gossamer thread, heaving and struggling futilely . . . panting in numb frustration" (Shi, pp. 258–261). Even the stylistic contrast between this elaborately constructed simile and the straightforward, unadorned passages concerning Sun Wuyang point to fundamental differences between the two women. Mao Dun's skillful use of contrast serves to heighten the individual nature of each woman and to deepen our impression of these two types of female intellectual.

Mao Dun draws much from Western literature in terms of craft and technique. It is very rare in traditional Chinese fiction, for example, to find long passages of psychological description outside the narrative. But Mao Dun believes the "subtleties of psychological analysis" to be one of the major characteristics of modern Western literature, and so both *The Eclipse* and *Rainbow* contain sections devoted exclusively to psychological analysis.³⁴

They are presented through the narrative of the all-knowing author, or through the voices of an ego and alter-ego in conflict, or through the subconscious imaginings of one of the characters—the whirling black columns that fly through Jing's mind, for instance, or the phonograph and records planted just beneath Wang Zhongzhao's skull. Sometimes a character's frame of mind is revealed symbolically through minute descriptions or detail: as Jing worries over her job

³⁴ Mao Dun, "Jindai wenxue tixi de yanjiu" (A systematic study of modern literature) in Liu Zhenhui, *Zhongguo wenxue bianqian shi* (A history of change in Chinese literature), 2d ed. (Shanghai: Xin wenhua shushe, 1934), p. 14.

prospects, for example, a fly dashes itself against the glass pane of the western window, "true to its instinct to fly toward light and set on battering its way through that impassable route, emitting a series of short, anxious buzzes." As Jing calms herself, the fly ceases its blind assault and quietly, silently crawls to a corner of the window, rubbing its hind legs together (*Shi*, pp. 36–38).

Mao Dun, like Emile Zola, lays great importance on scientific observation and objective reporting. But this approach is often dull and always constrained by actual events. When the background becomes overloaded with insignificant, if realistic, details, therefore, both writers use other techniques—symbolic imagery, highly charged action—to enhance the meaning of the narrative and to fire the reader's imagination. Many parallels can be traced between Zola's and Mao Dun's descriptive passages. Here is Mao Dun's description of the Hanyang Arsenal after nightfall.

The huge crane of the Hangyang Arsenal crouched darkly in the moonlight, like some black monster with its mouth open wide, waiting to devour awestruck prey. Wuchang was asleep. The great chimneys of the four plants—hemp, cloth, silk spinning, and cotton spinning—towered silently, halfway to heaven, like a night sentry standing guard over the black monster across the water. To the northwest, where a spread of lights flushed half the night sky, lay Hankow and its 300,000 workers. The swift current of the great river hissed while the steam whistle of the Wuhan ferry let out, from time to time, a long, trembling cry, mournful in the night air. (*Shi*, p. 75)

The verbs Mao Dun chooses to use conjure up a dynamic scene. The crane, "crouched" and "waiting to devour," is given the attributes of a monster, which it does not otherwise possess, and the smokestacks assume the nature of sentries. In the opposition of monster and guard we see the opposition of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary in the period immediately preceding the Northern Expedition. The sounds of the river and whistle take on a tragic note, compounding the tension in the atmosphere on the eve of the decisive battle. The overall effect of the image is stronger by far than the intrinsic meaning of each word would lead us to believe.

Compare this to Zola's description of the Voreux in *Germinal*.

The Voreux was now emerging from the gloom...the shed tarred with siftings, the pit frame, the vast chamber of the winding machine, the square turret of the exhaustion pump. This pit, piled up in the bottom of a hollow, with its squat brick buildings, raising

its chimney like a threatening horn, seemed to him to have the evil air of a gluttonous beast crouching there to devour the earth.³⁵

Before him the Voreux was crouching, with its air of an evil beast, its dimness pricked with a few lantern lights. The three braziers of the bank were burning in the air, like bloody moons, now and then showing the vast silhouettes of Father Bonnemort and his yellow horse. And beyond, in the flat plain, shade had submerged everything, Montsou, Marchiennes, the forest of Fandame, the immense sea of beetroot and the wheat, in which there only shone, like distant lighthouses, the blue fires of the blast furnaces, and the red fires of the coke ovens. Gradually the night came on, the rain was now falling slowly, continuously, burying this void in its monotonous streaming. Only one voice was still heard, the thick, slow respiration of the pumping engine, breathing both by day and night.³⁶

Here again we see the image of a monster, crouching and voracious, we hear its slow, heavy breath. But this beast is the direct representative of another, more rapacious: modern industry, devourer of countless millions of workers.

Writing of this sort is most rare in traditional Chinese fiction; but this comparison makes clear the source and inspiration of the technique.

³⁵ Emile Zola, *Germinal*, trans. Havelock Ellis (New York: Knopf, 1925), p. 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Young Intelligentsia in the War Years: *Lu Ling's Children of the Rich*

In July 1945 Hu Feng, chief editor of various serial publications and an increasingly prominent figure in Chinese literary circles, predicted:

Time will bear witness that the publication of *Caizhu de ernümen* (Children of the rich) is an important event in the history of modern Chinese literature.

Since the outbreak of the war, since the beginning of the New Literature Movement, no one novel has been so grand in scope, so magnificently deserving of the name "epic." In it the author Lu Ling traces the dynamic developments of modern Chinese history and the young intelligentsia that constitutes its radiant core. What Lu Ling offers, however, is not a record of historical events, but the spirit underlying those events, the ebb and flood of universal turmoil, their origins and orientation, the experience of passionate hearts and minds wrestling with the impersonal trials of historical destiny.¹

Lu Ling and His Age

The Lu Ling referred to above was a young writer in his mid-twenties; *Children of the Rich* was his first novel. Lu was born Xu Siyu in Nanjing in 1923, the son of an office clerk. At the outbreak of the War of Resistance in 1937 he followed his school, the Jiangning Middle School, when it relocated first in Wuhan and later in Sichuan. In 1938 he was expelled from Sichuan's Second National High School for his participation in student movements, and in 1939

¹ Hu Feng, preface to Lu Ling's *Caizhu de ernümen* (Children of the rich) (Nantian Chubanshe, 1944; Xiwang Chubanshe, 1948). Except where otherwise noted, all citations in text are to this work.

he joined the propaganda unit of the Three People's Principles Youth League. That same year he wrote his first short story, "'Yaosai' tuichu yihou" (After retreat from the "fortress"), which appeared in number 55 of Hu Feng's *Qiyue* (July). He taught for a semester at the Yucai School in 1940 before returning to Sichuan to work in the research division accounting office of the Tianfu Coal Mines. He started writing *Children of the Rich* that year, but the manuscript, completed and sent off to Hong Kong, was lost in the crossfire. From 1941 to 1942 he worked as a library clerk at the Central School of Political Science and from 1943 to 1945 held a clerical position in the Fuel Regulatory Commission. In March 1943 he published the novella that first earned him literary recognition, *Ji'e de Guo Sue* (The hungry Guo Sue), and began rewriting *Children of the Rich*. The first volume was completed that year and published by Nantian the following year; the second volume was completed in 1944 and published by Xiwang in 1948. During this time Lu Ling also wrote a number of short stories which in 1945 were collected into *Qingchuan de zhufu* (The blessings of youth). With the conclusion of the War of Resistance in 1945, Lu Ling followed the Regulatory Commission back to Nanjing and stayed with them until his dismissal in 1948. During this time he wrote a collection of short stories, *Qiu'ai* (Court-ing), and a novel, *Ranshao de huangdi* (Burning wasteland). In 1949, just after Liberation, he worked in the literature and arts department production team of the Nanjing Military Control Commission. In 1950 he was transferred to Beijing, where he worked in the scriptwriting office of the Young Artists Theater (Beijing Qingnian Yishu Juyuan), a position he held until 1954. In 1950 he wrote a play, *Yingzhe mingtian* (Greeting tomorrow), and published another volume of short stories, *Zai tielian zhong* (In iron chains). For the Young Artists Theater he wrote *Zuguo zai qianjin* (The fatherland is advancing), *Yingxiong muqin* (Hero-mother), and other scripts, as well as a short story collection, *Zhu Guihua de gushi* (The story of Zhu Guihua). In 1952-1953 he spent six months at the Korean front, where he wrote *Banmendian qianxian sanji* (Random notes from the front lines at Panmunjom), *Wadishang de zhanyi* (Lowlands campaign), and *Chuxue* (First snow), among other stories, and started his third novel, never completed, *Chaoxian de zhanzheng yu heping* (The Korean War and peace). His last collection of short stories, *Pingyuan* (The plain), was published by Zuoja shuwu in 1952. In 1955, when he was thirty-two, he was arrested and imprisoned in connection with the Hu Feng injustice. He remained in prison twenty years. He

was released in 1974 and is currently a member of the Tianjin Writers Association.

Children of the Rich represents Lu Ling's highest achievement as a writer. It deals with certain important aspects of Chinese society during the period of upheaval that started with the outbreak of the war in Shanghai in 1932 and continued until the declaration of war between Germany and Russia in 1941. During those ten years China was faced with a serious national crisis: five times the Nationalists attempted to encircle and eradicate Communist forces, driving them north where they carried on with their resistance work in the vast area of Japanese-occupied China, establishing bases behind enemy lines. The central government, which had been under Nationalist control, collapsed, and northern China, Nanjing, Guangzhou, and Wuhan fell in quick succession. The first question that posed itself to intellectuals under these dire circumstances was how to save the nation; the second was how to preserve Chinese culture.

To avert disaster, a large number of intellectuals traveled to the countryside in 1935 to propagandize and to organize the masses in anti-Japanese activities—what is now known as the December Ninth Movement. In 1937 one sector of the intelligentsia was advancing “a new enlightenment movement” with the aim of “arousing our 400 million compatriots to arise and defend our imperilled homeland.” Chen Boda believed it “a second New Culture Movement, even more encompassing, more penetrating than the May Fourth Movement.”²

“Even more penetrating” because we are applying developmental theory in incisive analysis of every aspect of Chinese life to point out the most feasible of present struggles and the most feasible of historical prospects; “even more encompassing” because, given the national and historical conditions before us now, this movement of enlightenment, if it succeeds in becoming allied with a broad segment of the educated class, will then become widespread among the masses and link up with an even greater segment of the population.³

The national crisis and the pressing desire to avert disaster became the intellectual main current of the educated class. When it be-

² Chen Boda, “Sixiang de ziyou yu ziyou de sixiang” (Freedom of thought and free thought) in his *Zai wenhua zhenxianshang* (On the cultural front) (Hong Kong [?]: shenghuo shudian, 1939), p. 9 and p. 12.

³ Chen Boda, “Wenhuashang de da lianhe yu xin qimeng yundong de lishi tedian” (Historical characteristics of the new enlightenment movement and the great cultural alliance) in his *Zai wenhua zhenxianshang*, p. 44.

came evident that this desire could never be realized in Nationalist-controlled areas, young intellectuals flocked to Yan'an, the holy land of the War of Resistance. Still, a large portion of the intelligentsia did stay behind in Nationalist territory, so these two groups, separated geographically yet allied intellectually, eventually arrived at different experiences, different ideas, different struggles.

If Chinese culture were to be preserved, it would be necessary to find new outlets under the rush of cosmopolitanism that had begun with the May Fourth Movement, to dispel the sense of loss and confusion that had arisen from the clash of old and new, East and West. In 1934 Chen Xujing wrote *Zhongguo wenhua de chulu* (The future of Chinese culture), asserting that European culture was far more advanced than contemporary Chinese culture and that, whether the prospect was welcome or not, the trend of the modern world and of the future was toward the West; Chinese culture must also develop in a westerly direction. Hu Shi expressed similar views in his "Jieshao wo ziji de sixiang" (Introducing my own thoughts).

These theories of wholesale westernization drew widespread criticism. In 1935 Wang Xinming, He Bingsong, Sa Mengwu, and seven other university professors coauthored "Zhongguo benwei de wenhua jianshe xuanyan" (Manifesto on Chinese cultural construction in China), opposing wholesale westernization. They argued that cultural construction must be both unique and opportune, appropriate to the needs of place and time. It must retain that in traditional culture that merits retention, excise what merits excision, absorb from Western culture only what merits absorption; the crux was creativity. It would be necessary to build up a unique Chinese culture before any contribution to world culture could be made.

Similarly, Mao Zedong raised the problem of nationalizing Marxism at the Sixth Plenary Session of the Sixth Central Committee in October 1938: "[W]e can put Marxism into practice only when it is integrated with the specific characteristics of our country and acquires a definite national form. . . . Foreign stereotypes . . . must be replaced by the fresh, lively Chinese style and spirit which the common people of China love."⁴

Between 1939 and 1940 large-scale discussions on the problem of the national cultural form were generated from Yan'an and Chong-

⁴ Mao Zedong, "The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War," in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1975), vol. 2, pp. 209-210.

qing. Before this ideological and cultural backdrop Lu Ling's portrayal of intellectuals in Nationalist-occupied zones unfolds.

Children of the Rich

Children of the Rich is the saga of a family of power and wealth, the family of tycoon Jiang Jiesan. The clan is based in Suzhou, where it has extensive real estate holdings, and has branches in Nanjing, where a good deal of its capital has been invested in cotton mills. It is a large family of three sons, two daughters-in-laws, four daughters and their husbands, their children, and a concubine and her children.

Jiang Jiesan wields the imposing authoritativeness of the feudal gentry: he openly rebukes the current district magistrate and boxes the ears of the former magistrate. He also cherishes a deep concern for his country and his people in the tradition of the Chinese scholar-statesman: at the brink of the national crisis he cries out bitterly, "My country for more than four decades, / Mountains and streams over three thousand *li*" (lines composed by an eighth-century ruler after losing his kingdom to northern conquerors) (p. 312). He has a strong sense of posterity. He maintains the extravagant lifestyle of the grand gentry replete with concubine, opium, and decoctions of ginseng, yet he is somehow different from the patriarch Gao of Ba Jin's *Jia* (Family), different, too, from the patriarch Wu of Mao Dun's *Midnight*. He manages colossal cotton mills, he reconciles himself to his son's rebelliousness and repudiation, he "coolly yet wisely attempts to send his children out to contend in a world he himself cannot understand" (p. 286). His death symbolizes the end of the scholar-official class, founded on political power and landownership. It became obsolete with the War of Resistance and, finally, extinct.

The novel focuses on the lives of the old man's sons after his death. The three sons represent the three generations, or three different types, of intellectuals. At the same time, they are more than mere concepts; each is a character of individuality and substance.

Jiang Weizu, the eldest son, belongs to the past. He wears the elegant long gown of the Chinese scholar; he is refined, intelligent, and sincere. No one in Suzhou can compose better prose or verse; no one is better skilled at calligraphy. He moves in a world of music and poetry, of pavilions and gardens under fallen snow, of birds that rise in the early dawn, of brilliant lanterns and candle glow on the eve of the new year. He is passionately devoted to his wife. Had

they lived at the time of *The Scholars* or *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, they probably would have "amused themselves with poetry and wine, in perfect accord, like a pair of well-matched zithers." They could have passed their lives in the old manner of the scholar-gentry class—had the upheaval of the 1930s not made it utterly impossible. Jiang Weizu's wife is an attractive and yet shrewd woman, a lawyer's daughter who is herself studying law. She despises her husband for his almost effeminate docility and schemes for his property. Caught in a tangle of love affairs and psychological turmoil, Jiang Weizu, the paragon of the traditional intelligentsia, loses his mind. He is reduced to beggary, commits arson, and finally drowns himself in the river.

Jiang Shaozu, the second son, is the rebel of the family. At sixteen he leaves Suzhou to study in Shanghai, cutting all ties with his father. He finishes college, travels to Japan to continue his studies, and at last returns to Shanghai and Chongqing, where he becomes a newspaper and magazine editor of repute, an exemplary member of the cultured and educated class. Through the story of Jiang Shaozu the author painstakingly describes the decade of war and struggle and the process of the ideological metamorphosis intellectuals such as Jiang Shaozu underwent. Early on, he raises the banner of "individual heroism, elitist, independent, radical." He believes firmly in embracing modern civilization. His vast knowledge, ability, and rhetorical eloquence move his young audiences and impress intellectual circles. Leading political figures such as Wang Jingwei and Chen Duxiu hold private interviews with him, hoping that through him their own views will find their way to the public. He is unwilling to ally himself with any one faction, however, and pursues a course of solitary struggle from beginning to end. He serves in the government and on the faculty of a university, yet feels he has failed to make any progress and comes to wish heartily that he could withdraw from it all. He buys a house and land, maintains his dignity and a household of three children, tolerates a wife he does not love, and forgets a woman he has loved and has fathered a child by. The sum of all his thoughts and deeds is a sense of irretrievable loss: "A hundred years of singing and dancing, a hundred years of drunken stupor... I, Jiang Shaozu, do not believe in Rousseau, do not understand Kant. Even less do I understand my ancestors who composed the *Book of Changes*. All is blank and bewildering wherever I turn" (p. 1316).

Jiang Chunzu's is similarly a story of failure, although it is a different story. A young man of new-found maturity at eighteen or

nineteen, Jiang Chunzu is faced not with the prospect of student life, but with the gunfire of the War of Resistance. He joins the ranks of a band of defeated soldiers, and with them ranges barren, trodden lands. If Jiang Shaozu knows China only through its literature and cultural tradition, Jiang Chunzu knows his fatherland only through this cruel landscape and the near-savage men with whom he associates. Fleeing Nanjing on foot to refuge in Sichuan, he witnesses fraud, extortion, plunder, and rape, every inhumanity of man, including the victimization of good and innocent people. In Sichuan he enters a theatrical troupe engaged in anti-Japanese propaganda work; he teaches, composes music, and acts as principal of an elementary school in a remote village. He never succumbs to pessimism or despair. Ardent in love, he falls in love first with his cousin, the daughter of an older sister, later with an actress in his troupe, and again with a teacher in the elementary school, the daughter of a county official. He is ardent, too, in hatred: he hates the mother who sells her daughter to a wealthy merchant, he hates the barbaric feudal kinship system, which suppresses all freedom of marriage. He is prey to slander and rumor and the victim of public and vicious persecution. He uses up his life in a lonely and bitter fight, all to no avail—even the elementary school is burned to the ground, leaving no trace of his heartfelt efforts. Jiang Chunzu dies on the hopeful eve of the German invasion of the Soviet Union, crying, "I am thinking of China, this China!"

If the misfortunes of the three brothers spin a thread that runs through the book, the stories of the four sisters are sporadic patterns woven into the narrative. The eldest daughter embodies all the traditional virtues of the Chinese wife and mother. Her husband is a run-of-the-mill, not too successful businessman. The second daughter, the model of a gifted and capable woman, is gentle and aesthetic, a woman of great inner depth and life. Her husband is a naval captain, reserved in demeanor, earnest and upright in character. He dies heroically when his ship, outclassed, meets the Japanese in battle. The third daughter is best suited for life in the society of her time, skilled in social intercourse and business dealings, capable of using any connection for personal advancement. She is a worthy wife to her husband, a successful textile industrialist. The fourth daughter, a devout Christian, attends a missionary school where she falls in love with a student of theology. With the assistance of the church, she studies in the United States, returning to China in the 1940s to live as one of the influential "upper-class" Chinese in

Nationalist-held territory.

The third generation scatters in different directions. Some head for Yan'an to save their country from the threat of extinction and the Japanese, some become anonymous petty bureaucrats, some earn their livings as laborers. For these descendants at the end of a merciless war, the grace of the old man's power and wealth has vanished.

Authority and the Individual

The moral strength of the Chinese intelligentsia had always allowed it to look with disdain upon the authority of those in power; it had always countered brute force with reason. This tradition erupted with the war years and the imminent national crisis.

The conditions facing the Chinese intelligentsia differed considerably from those of European intellectuals during World War II. No political power existed in Europe that could direct popular resistance after Nazi Germany had seized most of the continent. It was the intelligentsia, relying on its own efforts, that organized and initiated the massive resistance movement.⁵ In China's case, it was the recently formed government of the Nationalist leadership and the workers' regime of the Communist Party that sounded the anti-Japanese appeal. As we have seen, many promising young intellectuals chose to go to Yan'an, while others chose to remain in Nationalist-controlled China. *Children of the Rich* is the story of the latter.

As Lu Ling portrays them, Jiang Shaozu and Jiang Chunzu are fine men of unquestionable intelligence and ideals. They are concerned for the fate of their nation and hope to make their contribution to the resistance movement. Why, then, do their efforts end in futility and tragedy?

First, the exigencies of wartime require that the masses be organized, that the leadership be invested with policy-making powers, that the citizenry be respectful of these powers and abide by them. What interests Lu Ling, however, is "man's primitive strength and the radical liberation of the individual."⁶ This is apparent in Jiang Shaozu's notion of heroism and in Jiang Chunzu's goal to cultivate an idealistic individuality and a heroism of historical dimension. "Liberation

⁵ See, for example, James D. Wilkinson's *The Intellectual Resistance in Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).

⁶ Hu Feng, preface to *Ji'e de Guo Sue* (The hungry Guo Sue) (Shanghai: Shenghuo Shudian, 1947), p. iii.

of the individual is what China most needs!" he cries. "'We are being crushed to death! Crushed to death!'" (p. 1111 and p. 1286).

These predilections bring the brothers to set themselves against all power and authority. "'Power can never represent the people,'" Jiang Shaozu declares. "'Power and the people will always be incompatible. One either obeys or opposes'" (p. 599). He finds one current political party uninspired, the power structure of the other conducive to jealousy and hate. Clearly, the brothers will never enter the mainstream of the anti-Japanese current.

Secondly, this animosity toward authority leads to a one-sided perception of the Communist Party, by then a considerable power. The brothers consider its leadership an association of the blindly compliant and the self-seeking. Within his troupe, for example, Jiang Chunzu notices that "a small clique exists, secretive, authoritative, quite influential. . . . The unanimous actions of its members, their authoritative attitudes and secretive airs arouse general envy and resentment" (p. 975). Lu Ling convincingly describes the hypocrisy and unscrupulousness of certain members of this clique who advance themselves under the cover of the revolution. The head of the troupe, Wang Ying, in love with the same woman Jiang Chunzu loves—Gao Yun, an actress in the troupe—targets him in a vindictive attack, all in the name of the revolution. Although it is possible that affairs of this sort may have occurred, we must not allow that possibility to overshadow the real work of the Communist Party in the resistance movement. It is just such exaggerated and one-sided perceptions of the dark side of the Party that blocked the effective participation of intellectuals of Jiang Chunzu's brand in the anti-Japanese movement.

Lastly, the brothers are burdened with pasts of abundance and ease. Jiang Shaozu believes "good food and fine clothes, swimming pools, tennis courts, cafes and theaters indispensable. . . . He can't conceive of leading a different sort of life, a life in which he would have to sacrifice the pleasures and avocations" of his student days (p. 258). They are accustomed to social advantage as well, taking the deference and respect of others for granted. Jiang Chunzu feels weary, depressed, overlooked when "beautiful women do not single him out and authorities cease turning to him for aid and advice" (p. 1170). When a group of youths leaves Jiang Shaozu to throw in their lots with the revolution, he curses them: "'They've left me for the lure of egotistical power and a romantic illusion. . . . They don't see the truth, that what I offer them is no less than what Mao Zedong offers.'" He

swears he will become "an unmerciful devil," he "will exact fierce vengeance on those odious boys, exact fierce vengeance on those who are robbing China!" (pp. 964-965).

For these reasons Lu Ling's protagonists remain at the periphery of the anti-Japanese movement although they engage individually in the struggle. Jiang Chunzu, for instance, risks his life to assist a student and his lover in flight; he mobilizes the entire staff and student body of his elementary school to protest the sale of a young girl to a merchant in town; he runs his school in accordance with his ideals and without regard for the animosity of town authorities. The school is razed by fire as a consequence, and Jiang Chunzu and his companions are forced to flee.

These young intellectuals oppose reactionary political power and influence, but they also fear and resent the power and influence of the revolutionaries. In an age that called for mass organization and leadership with the ability to command the organized masses in war, intellectuals in the pattern of Jiang Shaozu and Jiang Chunzu who found action impossible felt dispirited and alone. "'Aren't most assessments of the French Revolution overly enthusiastic and as a result hollow and hypocritical?'" Jiang Shaozu asks. "'Isn't this true, too, in the case of the October Revolution? Both fostered and empowered a small privileged class'" (p. 598). He cannot and will not understand the simple fact of the necessity of authority in years of war. Therefore he scorns youth supporting the Communist Party; he even despises them for having been deceived, for "having let others become government officials and make their fortunes," for being "hypocritical, idolatrous, and incapable of critical thought" (p. 379). Since he refuses to recognize any authority, he cannot assume the authority he would need as a leader of the resistance. At last, he has no alternative but withdrawal.

He felt now he would rather banish all thought of adversity and strife in the nation—what did it have to do with him anyway?—and claim independence and spiritual autonomy for himself. (p. 379)

How could he, at this juncture, turn from the struggles and the suffering of his country to claim his freedom? The intelligent, adept Jiang Shaozu, the heavy-hearted pessimistic Jiang Shaozu, had served as a representative in the government these four years without advancing a single step on the battlefield of human existence. Now he wished he could retreat. (p. 1303)

The Chinese intelligentsia had always checked the authority and brute force of reactionary rule with virtue and reason. But this

honored tradition brought about their demise when it was directed toward the Communist Party, which was spearheading the popular resistance and was to determine the direction of the course of history.

Jiang Chunzu, unlike his brother, "bursts into the world with tempestuous fervor" (p. 823). His character, unlike his brother's, is molded by his experiences in the wilderness beyond Suzhou and Nanjing among other refugees, common people from the lower strata of society. He steadfastly resists the compromise with government authorities that other intellectuals in Nationalist-held territory, including his brother, find unavoidable. He believes that "what is most appealing, most poetic, most beautiful about human beings is that quality in their natures as yet unfixed and from which their passions and their dreams are born. . . . [But] he senses the weight of a invisible, intangible matrix in which he will be cast, in a rigid and inflexible form. The awareness of this filled him with horror" (p. 1202).

He continues to resist compromise nonetheless and to seek distinction and praise. He has great faith in the people and he loves life keenly, but his early individualism and original bias toward the Communist Party decide his tragic end.

In China today what we call "the strength of the people" is one thing in reality, a living thing; it is something else in abstract revelation, something wooden, facile, simpler than its real counterpart. It is an idol, an insensitive and unfeeling idol, at whose feet kneel youth delirious with inflated promises and slaves crippled by their own timidity. Intellectuals must cease all proselytizing, all hyperbolizing, all worshipping of idols. They must touch the heart of life. (p. 1182)

The principal butt of this attack is clearly the Communist Party, which makes its appeal in the interests of the people. Jiang Chunzu answers his own call. He marches into the people's midst without the aid of bombast or idolatry and pushes through to life's inner depths. There, a gray, forbidding atmosphere stretches out before him.

It had enveloped everything, making it impossible to move. . . . He wished time would pass quickly, he wished his youth would dissipate soon. He wished he knew what awaited him after death and dissipation, what shape his end would take. (p. 1203)

His end occurs on the brink of the German invasion. His health and his youth finally spent, his heart overwhelmed by a feeling of unfulfilled obligation, he dies crying out in pity for his nation.

Lu Ling's anticommunist bias is unmistakable—the invectives that appear in his works are testimony to that. Yet this bias does not prevent him from an honest unfolding of his protagonists' destinies. Politically, there were already two Chinas by the war years of the 1930s, and there was no place for individual battles or individual liberation. The fates of Lu Ling's protagonists confirm the decision made by the majority of China's youth who traveled to Yan'an.

Western Civilization and Chinese Culture

Intellectuals of the war years approached cultural questions with an urgency and depth unknown in the May Fourth era. Cultural exchange—and conflict—intensified during this period. The intensification was double-faceted.

First, a portion of the intelligentsia had become imbued with the culture of the West, accepting selected philosophies as dogma. Since the degree and nature of influence varied, the intelligentsia were stratified.

Second, the national crisis forced the intelligentsia to consider the problem of preserving China's native culture, thus sharpening the conflict between Western and Chinese culture. Both sides of this cultural dilemma are reflected in Lu Ling's *Children of the Rich*.

Jiang Shaozu is conspicuously influenced by European intellectual trends. He hangs his room with portraits of Rousseau and Kant and declares his faith in Reason. Although in a moment of disillusionment he feels that he has failed, that he does not understand their doctrines and has never truly believed in them, he lives by their precepts for a good part of his life.

Nietzsche is another of his idols. In his despair Jiang Shaozu "curses China and eulogizes the pessimism of the superman" (p. 234). He is drawn to the Nietzschean notion of the loneliness of the autonomous being and believes that "Nietzsche's works are a source of poetic inspiration, incomprehensible to anyone else. . . . Lonely contemplation led him into desolate and magnificent terrain. . . . He caught glimpses of a distant, mystic vision" (p. 479). In Lu Ling's words, "Jiang Shaozu worships Voltaire and Rousseau, he worships the strong champions of Schiller, the superman of Nietzsche, the gloomy heroes of Byron" (p. 941). His appreciation does not stop at the surface. He absorbs their ideals and incorporates them into his own philosophy of life.

Jiang Chunzu is also influenced by Western thought. His ideas on love possess "an energy, warmth, and poetic sensibility derived

from Western literature" (pp. 1019–1021). But Jiang Chunzu belongs to a younger generation; he is far more extreme than his brother in his acceptance of the West. In the matter of love, for instance, his heart is dominated by young women of the type found in Russian fiction. The ideal of his romantic imagination is forever caught up in study of Lenin's *State and Revolution* and is as bold and pensive as a Turgenev heroine. He worships "the symphonies of Beethoven, marvelous explosions of sound. . . . He seeks the gleaming vigor of youth and the brilliance of personal success" (p. 919). An artist, he attacks impressionism as a movement in decline. "Great art," he pronounces, "must be unequivocal, sincere, passionate, profound. It must proceed from within, from animation and frenzy to majesty and mystery; it must lash out from agonized yearnings within," like Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* (p. 1045). He abominates the slow, mournful music of the two-stringed *erhu*, he longs to hear the "impassioned, exquisite piano allegro of the brilliant Jean-Christophe" of Romain Rolland (p. 1306). These passages are about music, but the real subject is Jiang Chunzu's attitude toward life. Unlike his brother, he is not entranced by Kant's or Rousseau's philosophies.

Jiang Xiuju, the youngest daughter, falls under another kind of influence from the West as the pampered student of a missionary school. Of the school, Lu Ling writes:

The people of Nanjing, whether from fearful alarm or envious heterodoxy, hated the thought of bringing several hundred young girls together in religious and academic enterprise. For the young men of the city it was a source of perplexity and the scene of mild transgression. Others saw it as a breeding ground for sirens. A third group, somewhat insecure in themselves, praised it with the lofty gestures of a liberal. (p. 430)

The rise of missionary schools—colleges as well as secondary schools—and their increasing influence among the intelligentsia had been important factors in society since the 1930s. They produced students of distinctive style and point of view.

Jiang Xiuju "is pious in her devotions. She sings hymns, plays the piano, has new clothes fitted . . . and conceals, beneath her charm and her blooming exterior, a timorous heart" (p. 431). A personality of this sort was frequently scorned by the self-possessed young intelligentsia: Jiang Chunzu finds fault with his sister, who knows nothing more than the world of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. But, with the mission's backing, Jiang Xiuju and others like her come into their own kind of power in society.

Her husband, Wang Lun, the theology student, believes that

China must modernize. China's hope rests with the young and affluent, those with a thorough knowledge of Europe and America and with a perspective of the world. This is the type of person that will win international renown and trust, will build modern cities in China, will foster power plants and industry, science and religion. (p. 949)

Wang Lun hopes to cultivate such acquaintances in political and diplomatic circles and then travel with a diplomatic mission for four or five years. He looks forward to seeing this hope speedily become a reality with the aid of a Father Xiluo (Schiller?), an Englishman Xini (Sidney?), and a well-known Mr. Meite (Mather?). After several years of study abroad they return to China, sagacious and respected members of society. Wang Lun accepts "rather a good position" in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Jiang Xiuju, declining other job offers, teaches at a girls' middle school run by missionaries. Graduates of these missionary schools, men and women like Wang Lun and Jiang Xiuju, were to form an influential segment of the intellectual class.

But the deeper Western thought and culture penetrated Chinese culture, the stronger the resistance to it grew. Unlike the early 1920s, when resistance was generated by conservative scholars with scant knowledge of the West, this was generated by enlightened intellectuals who had themselves come under the influence of the West. In the face of the national emergency, they were forced to consider the problem of redeeming their own culture and to explore the possibility of cultural synthesis.

Jiang Shaozu senses the problem: "'This war is the Chinese people's alone; it will obliterate all foreign tendencies'" (p. 962). The war of the national revolution brought people to realize that "'Chinese culture must be generated from within China. . . . We are a nation of bold, forceful spirit. Why must we pay homage to Western culture and the Western intellectual class?'" This, Jiang Shaozu believes, "'is the root of all China's trouble.'" He who has immersed himself in Western culture and struggled over a decade to establish the new culture comes to see in the war years that "'the Chinese people must have a way of their own. . . . For example: I admire Goethe; I am an intellectual. But this is an individual, subjective predilection. I cannot command the entire Chinese nation to admire Goethe—it would never happen.'" The Chinese people should "'love and revere Confucius because he is the premier statesman and humanist of all the ages. He can inspire the nation with self-confidence and self-respect'" (p. 965). Jiang Shaozu finds that the

cultures of East and West are compatible and complementary.

There is some of Dante in Qu Yuan, the Renaissance in Confucius, Stalin in Lü Buwei and Wang Anshi, there is Tolstoy in *Dream of the Red Chamber* and in all of Chinese popular literature. I admire Dante and Tolstoy as much as I admire the others—perhaps even more than I admire the others—yet the others are the reality and legacy of China. (p. 965)

The tragedy of Jiang Shaozu lies in his helplessness to make a reality that which he recognizes, the possibility and necessity of incorporating elements of Western culture into the Chinese tradition. His passiveness in actual struggle leads him to withdraw into the passive reclusiveness that has always been present in Chinese culture, to remove himself even further from actual struggle. Lu Ling writes interestingly of this psychological transition.

The modern Chinese intelligentsia lived in cities. They were not by any means devoted lovers of nature, though they had this element in their blood. . . . One day, then, unexpectedly, they found in the stillness of nature evidence of their philosophical needs. Solemnly, deliberately, they developed a love for nature. Everything appeared to have been readied for them; the dignity and tranquillity of nature existed for the sake of their anguished souls. (p. 956)

From this time forward, Jiang Shaozu “turns to the grand ancestors, to the tranquillity of the soul.” He censures those who are spilling their blood for the country’s redemption as “selfish and ignorant men who scramble for power and profit, who cherish the new and original, who are willing slaves to particular isms and foreign powers.” He censures them for “being incapable of creating a new culture because they do not understand history, they do not understand China, they do not love this nation.” They can only “import gorgeous and gaudy foreign goods or receive directives from Moscow, believing this to be creating a new culture” (p. 966).

In identifying himself with traditional culture, Jiang Shaozu also identifies with the previous generation and its society, against which he has revolted: “Jiang Shaozu thought fondly of Suzhou, he felt that he loved his late father and respected him more than ever before. The upright life of the old man was revealing itself now, shining in the mind of his rebel son.” He recites to himself lines of Tao Yuanming: “I had rescued from wilderness a patch of the Southern Moor, / And, still rustic, I returned to field and garden.”⁷ “From now on,” he resolves, “I will seek only to deaden my heart, I will

⁷ Tao Yuanming’s lines are translated in *Chinese Poems*, trans. Arthur Waley (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1976), p. 106.

not seek fame or profit, I will not seek power or authority. I'm weary already of this world'" (p. 967). Deserting the struggle, he returns to hide in the gardens and fields, completing the circle

rebellion and progressiveness	
Chinese culture	Western culture
retirement and reconciliation	

Jiang Chunzu is similarly misguided on the issue of Eastern and Western culture.

He admired European art; that is, he admired those works which people styled "classical." He looked on the works of his own homeland, whether new or old, with comprehensive contempt. This contempt stemmed partly from his own lack of understanding, his own negligence, and partly from the fact that those art works were indeed deplorable. (p. 1128)

He is aware that he does not live in the abstract, poetic world of classical Greece or Rome, but in China. And yet he fails to turn to the genius of Chinese culture. Rather, he sets his mind on expunging all ugliness and corruption himself and on championing for the world the causes of love, freedom, and light. "Everything that could help him realize his goal, everything that could magnify his strength, he wanted; anything else, he had no right to want" (p. 1129).

At this point he still might have been able to make some contribution toward the cultural synthesis of East and West. But, persecuted by society and driven to an early death, he finally accomplishes nothing.

Artistic Characteristics of Lu Ling's Work

In 1948 the theorist Hu Sheng criticized Lu Ling's works in his "Ping Lu Ling duanpian xiaoshuo" (A critical review of Lu Ling's short fiction).

In his "Ping Qiu'ai" (On Courting) Lu Xiang writes: "Lu Ling's fiction dispenses with the superficial display of social phenomena and the telling of dull tales. He plunges right into his characters' psyches." These words are intended to applaud Lu Ling, but in fact they describe precisely the quicksands into which his works are gradually sinking. No writer, no matter what sort of genius he may possess, can "plunge straight into his characters' psyches" without proceeding by way of specific social phenomena and a specific story (the actions of specific characters in specific living environments).

Without these, no writer can "plunge straight into his characters' psyches"; he can only soliloquize. Works of this sort, if carried to the extreme, can amount to nothing more than interesting variations on Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.⁸

It is an interesting passage which points to a number of issues meriting further discussion.

First, Hu Sheng concedes that Lu Xiang hits upon the distinctive characteristic, whether strength or weakness, of Lu Ling's works. Is this characteristic present in *Children of the Rich*? Does Lu Ling "plunge straight into his characters' psyches" here?

Second, if the answer to our first question is affirmative, how does the author "plunge"? Does he make any use of social phenomena and narrative?

Third, are there any similarities between *Children of the Rich* and Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*?

In his foreword to *Children of the Rich*, Lu Ling writes that what he wanted to examine were the different worlds—both material and spiritual—of the intelligentsia. What he strove to portray was "the symphony of struggle and light, the fierce joys of a young world." That is to say, his ultimate aim was not to recount a tale, nor to describe the experience of life, but to probe the mental and spiritual state of the educated class, the conflict between intellect and emotion, the psychological struggle. Even now, his themes and their treatment are considered innovative in relation to modern Chinese literature.

But if new themes are to be given expression, old forms must be transcended. Most of traditional Chinese fiction is narrative with a strong emphasis on original causes and final consequences. There is a well-marked beginning and end. All clues are elucidated, all explanations pronounced. The old framework was clearly ill fitted to Lu Ling's new material. He experimented and created in accordance with his needs until he felt that "the more I write, the less certain I am what 'fiction' is." Hu Feng believed this "the sound of his efforts to find a literary form for the substance of life; it is the sound, too, of literary style that will not follow the formal tradition."⁹

If we compare *Children of the Rich* with the usual form of traditional fiction, we will find in it more descriptive cross-sectioning than

⁸ Hu Sheng, "Ping Lu Ling de duanpian xiaoshuo" (A critical review of Lu Ling's short fiction), *Piping lunwen xuanji* (*Dazhong wenyi congkan*) (Beijing: Xin Zhongguo Shuju, 1949).

⁹ Hu Feng, preface to *Ji'e de Guo Sue*, p. vi.

vertical development of the narrative. Lu Ling plumbs the depths of the spiritual self more than he lays before us an elaboration of daily life. He unveils at once the mentalities of his characters more than he chisels, carefully, at gradually emerging personalities.

We are speaking relatively, of course. Never does he absolutely disregard the latter in favor of the former. We cannot speak of Jiang Shaozu's life, for instance, in a continuous sequence of events; we know it only through a montage of episodes and scenes. In the second half of the novel we see him only in conference with Wang Jingwei or Chen Duxiu, participating in meetings, delivering addresses, mulling over political issues. There is no narrative. Even Jiang Shaozu's filial rebellion and reconciliation (which more resemble narrative) remain a collection of isolated and independent scenes, with no attempt at linking origin and effect or tracing the development of the affair. In the final scene,

he walked back to the pool's edge, turned his head, and smiled bitterly at the disordered tracks of his footsteps.

Suddenly he saw the large figure of the old man appear on the stones of the rockery, facing the direction of the pine woods. The old man, propped up by a cane and wrapped in a large scarf, stared frozenly at the lonely park.

In the falling snow the old man had appeared in the grounds like a phantom above the rockery. The apparition had startled Jiang Shaozu.

As Jiang Shaozu watched his father, he felt his father catch sight of him. Hesitantly, Jiang Shaozu walked out of the woods.

But the old man hadn't spotted him; the old man had been staring frozenly at the highest branches of the pine woods. Jiang Shaozu turned and gazed at the high branches. He saw the tips of trees under a cover of snow, a sky dazzling and swollen with snow.

"What's he looking at? What's he seen?" he wondered, walking toward the rockery.

Without moving, the old man let his regard fall on him. His gaze was clear and bright; between his brows was an expression of irritation and contempt.

Jiang Shaozu smiled anxiously.

"Aren't you cold, Father? What're you looking at?"

The old man grunted. "Just looking," he said, staring once again at the high branches of the pines. (p. 295)

In their direct disclosure of characters' sentiments these lines recall a short scene from drama rather than narrative fiction.

In spite of the length of *Children of the Rich*, very little of the narrative is given over to concrete details of day-to-day life. The exhaustive portrayal of a character's appearance, speech, and deportment or the detailed sketches of his living environment that we encounter in Mao Dun's *Rainbow* and *The Eclipse* are virtually absent from Lu Ling's works.

This is true even in the case of Jiang Chunzu and his life at Shiqiaochang. We have only the faintest knowledge of his living arrangements and daily affairs, and little idea, too, of his own physical presence. Is he fat or slim? What are his facial features? Does he resemble his elder brother Shaozu?

What Lu Ling does devote much space to is analysis of his protagonist's inner presence. Passages such as the following in which the omniscient author discloses the psychological activities and conflicts of his character are representative.

Concerning the relationship between the sexes Jiang Chunzu had entertained some rather puritanical notions, notions which he shattered with the help of his forlorn career. This career was something magnificent for him, a free and unrestrained way of life. Childhood experience and the regimentation of school life had shaped his attitude toward the sexes, dubious, anxiety-ridden, dour. The relationship, he had often felt, was an ignominious one. He had also entertained fantasies, however, vaguer, and yet more powerful, than anything else in his life. He was now immersed in his dreams, locked in a tenacious struggle with ideas that agonized him. He began to believe that human desires were beautiful and wholesome, that human existence ought to be free and unbounded. There was no force between heaven and earth that could obstruct humanity, aside from humanity itself—those agonizing ideas would eventually prove themselves a profitless obstruction. He was confused: at one time possessed by both forlorn ambition and the ideal of wholesome living, those anxiety-ridden notions were resuscitated when he came into contact with hard reality. The agony of desire no longer affected a moralistic guise and therefore revealed itself stronger than ever before. Through the workings of his heart he could harmonize or ignore everything. Only this agony was impossible to harmonize; at the same time, it was impossible to ignore. Like all other people of intense nature, Jiang Chunzu's voice was extraordinarily loud, his movements extraordinarily heavy, his emotions violent, his sense of competition keen. And, like all intense people whose desires cause them to suffer agonies far greater than other people's, Jiang Chunzu was timid and confused. (pp. 973-974)

Psychological revelation of this kind appears quite frequently in Lu Ling's work.

In his works Lu Ling prefers not to carve out temperaments or personalities, but to dissect the hearts and minds of his characters. Personalities in Mao Dun's fiction, by contrast, are shaped by their differing attitudes toward daily routine, their participation in the action of the novel, their relationships with one another. Lu Ling relies almost entirely on psychological analysis. In the passage above, for example, we learn of the intense, ponderous, timid, and confused aspects of Jiang Chunzu's nature not by way of any social situation, but through the direct expression of inner activity.

Disclosure and analysis by the narrator along with lengthy mental monologues by the characters are the chief stylistic features of *Children of the Rich*; social phenomena and a specific sequence of events are no more than a backcloth or frame for situating the characters. To use such a technique to tell a story involving more than seventy characters, spanning ten years and a geographical area stretching from Shanghai, Suzhou, and Nanjing to Wuhan and Chongqing cannot have been easy. Hu Feng writes in his preface:

Readers will probably be surprised at the atmosphere of pain, foreboding, joy, and solemnity present in this epic. . . . These could never have been brought into being without passion and a sensibility to life. But how can a writer complete any creative work if this passion and sensibility are not modelled by stronger intellectual needs and analytical incisiveness?

The author's sensibility and passion, Hu Feng argues, are what breed and nurture his mental powers and intellectual needs, which, in turn, stir his sensibilities and passion. In this way "the author extracts sorrow, joy, struggles, quests, and dreams from real life and, having extracted them, creates poetry of life."

This direct technique prevents the author from concealing himself behind a tortuous plot in the role of objective narrator; he confronts the reader head-on. An author less perceptive, less empathetic toward the suffering and joys of humankind, less thought-provoking or less lucid in his understanding could never apply this technique successfully.

Lu Ling uses symbolism and emotional correspondence between man and nature to bring a richer color and variety to these descriptions of the inner world. There is a skillfully written passage demonstrating this sympathetic response between man and nature occurring

after Jiang Shaozu had fled a succession of struggles to tranquility, the refuge of his ancestors.

Dusk shone softly at the window, the balcony was swept clean and bathed in the quiet radiance of the evening sun, a late breeze blew, gentle and refreshing. Opposite the balcony was a slope spread with green grass and wildflowers. Far off to the left was a large pool glimmering in the evening sun. Even further off were the deserted foothills of Snake Mountain. The tiny black figure of a man had halted on a ridge illuminated in the dying sun, lending a peaceful dignity to the scene. In the sky were layer upon layer of massed clouds shot through with brilliant light. Slowly and silently the massed clouds rolled back and unfurled, cleaving the gloom and letting through a faint crimson glow.

Jiang Shaozu stood at the railing and took a few deep breaths, his eyes fixed on the clouds.

"Why am I always rushing so? What meaning is there in this life?" Jiang Shaozu asked himself. His heart beat violently for a second; he felt as if some great pressure were congealing inside around his heart, and the thought brought on a grave, uneasy sensation. He leaned upon the railing and gazed doubtfully at the sky. A slender and fashionably dressed woman appeared on the adjacent balcony. Standing between the lines on hanging laundry, she looked out into the distance at the setting sun before going quickly back inside. . . . A sad smile hung weakly from Jiang Shaozu's lips. . . .

"Is this what life amounts to in our age, in our China? No one has gone through more than I in this respect: mine's been a unique process, nothing has been commonplace, I think. I've had great happiness, and I've had very good reason to believe that, with the proper fulcrum, I could have lifted the world. . . . What have I been rushing toward these past twenty years? . . . Every day there is a dusk like this, a universal stillness like this. That tree in the far distance will stand there like that, always, until it dies. This is how my ancestors lived. Why am I so blind, so frantic? Why am I rushing toward my grave?" At this Jiang Shaozu launched vehemently into the search for quietude and tranquility. This search would become the supreme, and the final, preoccupation of the outstandingly selfish, outstandingly self-esteeming mind of modern China. . . . In the earth's tranquility came to Jiang Shaozu revelation of what was, for him, the sublime philosophy. . . . Something mysterious and solemn moved his heart as the radiance of the falling sun dimmed and the breeze blew yet more gently.

Jiang Shaozu realized that in his heart resided the soul of his ancestors. That stirring before the tranquility of heaven and earth had been the stirring of the ancestral soul. How moving it was, this communion, this trust between heaven and earth and the ancestors, the foundation of the lives of countless generations to come.

“From this time on, I will look to my ancestors and to the tranquility of the soul. I love this nation and everyone, anyone of it,” thought Jiang Shaozu as tears rose in his eyes. The sun sank into a bank of long, low clouds. Darkness thickened, lights glinted on the distant slope. Jiang Shaozu stood solemnly, gaze fixed on the mountaintop, on a single tree standing alone in the black of night. This tree would stand firm in the future, in storm and sunlight alike it would stand firm, for the sake of another tree or the next generation, until it died. (pp. 955–957)

Presently his wife comes out to ask about his meeting with Wang Jingwei. She asks whether it is true that Wang “is always throwing his arms around people,” whether his wife is really so “very fat and very ugly” as people say.

In the passage above we can see clearly how natural spectacle is used to trigger psychological activity, as the tranquility of dusk touches off the protagonist’s yearning for inner tranquility. The jarring contrast between the pristine tranquility of nature and the ferment of his own cultural environment (a comfortable residence with swinging glass doors, stylish neighbors, and a gossip-mongering wife) suggests somewhat mockingly the unrealistic and irrational nature of the protagonist’s yearning. The solitary tree, a symbol of the constancy and permanence of nature, implies the brevity and mutability of human life. The small dark figure on the ridge who has achieved a perfect union with nature is quite likely a symbol of the working class.

This passage also gives the reader an idea of the potential dullness and monotony of Lu Ling’s prose. The author reduces the oppressiveness of this monotony by frequently changing the style of his narration. He might interpose, for example, descriptions of landscape or people, long psychological monologues, personal commentaries, realistic action scenes.

Lu Ling manipulates symbols effectively and successfully. A good example of this is his use of the *erhu* and the piano to illustrate the moods of Jiang Chunzu.

There had long been something chill and barren in his heart. Unfulfilled youth, unfulfilled yearnings for what he believed blessed, pains out of the past, every humiliation and persecution that could be suffered in life... had created this desert in his heart. (p. 1354)

This vast, barren waste finds voice in the melancholy *erhu*.

For Jiang Chunzu the sound pointed to another kind of life, a life

which had sealed off his country. . . . It had become a terrifying sea of people moving in weary routine. . . . It had become a submerged reef, a masked pitfall in a network of fossilized institutions. His brothers and he had stumbled over these, their blood had run and their corpses had been left in the wilderness, exposed. (p. 1360)

He had felt he could conquer anything, but he could not conquer the barrenness and petrification of the nation. (p. 1354)

In his mind's eye the sound of the *erhu* becomes the image of "a blind man alone and drifting in darkness" (p. 1360).

In contrast to this symbol of the sterility and inflexibility of the old China was the "impassioned, exquisite piano allegro." When "a fragrance fills the courtyard and flowers from the Japanese pagoda tree drop in a light wind along the top of the wall," he hears the piano.

Leaning on a wooden cane, he stopped beside the house of an American in the neighborhood and stood, infatuated, in the deep shadows of its trees listening to the lively laughter within and the sweet, fervent music of the piano. . . . He longed to be at the piano himself. (p. 1358)

The piano and the music of the West—works such as Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* or Schubert's *Ave Maria*—mark the sounds of another kind of life, alluring in its "warmth, gentleness, and unadulterated joys" (p. 1359). Successful symbolism brings the reader into direct contact with the hearts and minds of characters without the distraction of facts or events.

Whether or not Lu Ling's direct method "amounts to nothing more than an interesting variation on Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*" is arguable. Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* had a tremendous impact in China. Lu Xun, Mao Dun, and Guo Moruo—the three pioneers of modern Chinese fiction—all translated various portions of the book.¹⁰ During the time Lu Ling was writing his *Children of the Rich*, Nietzsche's philosophy was very much in vogue in Nationalist-controlled areas. Two new books also appeared at this time: *Cong Shubenhua dao Nicali* (From Schopenhauer to Nietzsche), a learned study, and *Wenxue piping de xin dongxiang* (New directions in

¹⁰ The manuscript of Lu Xun's "*Chaluodusideluo ru shi shuo*" *yigao* (Draft translation of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*), vol. 1, is preserved in the Beijing Library. Mao Dun's partial translation was published in *Jiefang yu gaizao* 1:7 (December 1, 1919). Guo Moruo's translation was serialized in *Chuangzao zhoubao* between 1921 and 1923.

literary criticism), an attempt to explore the future of literary criticism from a Nietzschean point of view.¹¹

Lu Ling was clearly influenced by this trend in thought. Nietzschean terms and concepts such as "superior man," "superman," and "slave morality" crop up repeatedly in *Children of the Rich*. The Nietzschean image is present, above all, in the character of Jiang Chunzu, a man of violent passions and intense joys, tenderness, compassion, and purity. He adamantly believes that "he must leave behind him some relic, some legacy that will awe his progeny and ensure their happiness and their gratitude." And he struggles obstinately with his weaker self, testimony to his introverted and frustrated disposition, his pessimistic outlook on life, and the bleak antipathy that frequently overcomes him. The contrast between the rough, restless, irregular, and extreme Jiang Chunzu and his elder brother, the refined, quiet, moderate, and well-balanced Shaozu time and again calls to mind the Dionysian and Apollonian souls epitomized in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

In terms of artistic technique, the psychological analysis inserted by the author-narrator and the unrestricted monologues of the protagonists of *Children of the Rich* are similar to techniques used by Nietzsche. *Children of the Rich* does not, however, adopt the dialectic of *Zarathustra*. The novel as a whole is built around a large, consistent time frame, though not confined by it. Time and space expand freely in the psyches of one or two chief characters, when the flow of the narrative, emotional expression, analysis, or monologue demands. In this respect *Children of the Rich* resembles a work frequently mentioned by Jiang Shaozu, Romain Rolland's *Jean-Christophe*.

Of course, if we were to judge the literary technique of *Children of the Rich* by the stricter traditional criteria, we would find it seriously flawed. It is cumbersome and repetitive. The majority of the seventy-some characters in the novel receive incomplete treatment, materializing when a need for them happens to arise and vanishing again when that need has been filled. Many of them lack individuality or any sort of personality. They are not three-dimensional figures, not "painted in oils" in Hu Feng's phrase, but shadows drifting in the wind. Even the passions of the protagonists lack essential

¹¹ See Yue Daiyun, "Nikai yu Zhongguo xiandai wenxue" (Nietzsche and modern Chinese literature), *Beijing Daxue xuebao (Shehui kexue ban)*, no. 79 (1980:3), pp. 20-33.

context and induction; this diminishes the persuasiveness and appeal that otherwise would have been present. We see, assuredly, in *Children of the Rich* the "stunning passion and talent of a writer in his early twenties; we see, too, the predicament of one wrapped in the tentacles of life and unable to counter its blows."¹²

Even with these imperfections *Children of the Rich* can still be viewed as "a poem of youth in which we find the joys and sufferings of an agitated moment in history, the search for the latent strength and resources of the people, the bitter cry and full-throated song of the young author himself" (Hu Feng, preface).

¹² Hu Feng, preface to *Ji'e de Guo Sue*, p. v.

Chinese Intellectuals of the 1950s as Seen in Wang Meng's *Bu li*

If we say that the intellectuals of the 1920s depicted in the writings of Mao Dun and those of the 1930s depicted in the writings of Lu Ling all paid a heavy price for their resistance to ruling authority, their refusal to cater to society and their unwillingness to curry favor with those in power, then the intellectuals of the 1950s reflected in the writings of Wang Meng are of a completely different sort. They wholeheartedly recognize and approve of the dominant position occupied by the Chinese Communist Party not only from an ideological or theoretical standpoint; even emotionally they are imbued with reverence and zeal. They love the new society fervently and long to contribute to their state and its people, to raise up and develop China. Yet without knowing exactly how it comes about, some of them become, contrary to expectation, the targets of attack, mortal enemies of the Communist Party and the new society. For more than twenty years they live in continual suffering, fear and perplexity, loss. To grasp the reason for this we must assess the weaknesses and worth of this generation of intellectuals. Their story is the subject of Wang Meng's novella *Bu li* (Bolshevik Greetings).

A New Generation of Intellectuals

The novella was published in 1979, although Wang Meng completed it some months earlier.

I had some difficulty writing this piece. At the time, what I wanted to write about were the trials the people suffered in their hearts and souls during the changes taking place in our country in specifically those ten to twenty years. This is what I felt to be most interesting . . . the spotlight here is on the wound the spirit receives.¹

¹ Wang Meng, "Zai tansuo de daolushang" (On the road to find out) in *Ye de yan*

Wang Meng describes the career of the protagonist of *Bolshevik Greetings*, Zhong Yicheng.

At thirteen he approached the underground Party organization. At fifteen he entered the Party, and at seventeen he took on the post of branch secretary. At eighteen he left school to work for the Party, becoming chief of the investigation and research group for the staff office of the Chinese Communist Party municipal ward people's committee in the heart of the city of P. At twenty-five he was named an enemy of the people and a bourgeois Rightist. He was forty-seven before he was rehabilitated.²

Given the circumstances then prevalent in China, men of his sort were labeled intellectual cadres to distinguish them from cadres of worker-peasant origins, and always they were treated as part of the intelligentsia. Their thoughts and feelings, their states of mind, were typical of most intellectuals.

The intellectuals of the 1950s whom Zhong Yicheng represents are different from the intellectuals of the 1940s, the 1960s, or the 1970s, for they are products of an era characterized by its abundant vitality and its rich ideals. Most of them were seventeen or eighteen, just at that point when their world views were taking shape, when they experienced the liberation of the entire nation, a monumental turning point in history. They were stirred endlessly by the prospect of founding a new state. Full of enthusiasm, they welcomed the new leaders, whom they saw as completely unlike decadent officials of the past. These new leaders were

travel-worn and weary, with eyes bloodshot from staying up all night. The oldest among them was no more than fifty, while the majority were in their thirties or forties. A few, leaders who had only recently been passed, were still in their twenties. For the most part they were neat and capable of body, agile in their actions, exuding energy and vitality. Among them not a one was overweight, old and senile, unyieldingly tough or sluggish. . . . Like soldiers, hastening about, bold and rugged; like young boys, absolutely sincere and pure; like a family, harmonious, intimate among themselves and fond of one another. (pp. 19, 21)

And then, like some foreigners who were once so boastful and swaggering on Chinese territory, these leaders suddenly vanished.

ji qi ta (The eye of night and others) by Wang Meng et al. (Canton: Huacheng Chubanshe, 1981), p. 217.

² Wang Meng, *Bu li* (Bolshevik greetings) in *Ye de yan ji qi ta*, p. 23. Except where otherwise noted, all citations in text are to this work.

Viewed from another perspective, the intellectuals of the 1950s had all escaped from the old society. For them, the suffering and deformities of the old society were still vivid and clear: "What they first were taught after arriving in the world was hunger, poverty, oppression, humiliation, and terror; what they succeeded in learning, naturally, was hatred and resistance" (p. 15). These formative experiences contribute importantly to the distinctive character of this generation of intellectuals.

Above all they are full of confidence and enthusiasm for the Communist Party and the future. This is not a pretense assumed only for others to see, nor is it a kind of one-sided zeal. It is rather a conviction of the inner heart, staunch and true, which permeates every aspect of the way they conduct themselves and the way they treat others. The thoughts and feelings of this generation of intellectuals, their very way of living, are all enveloped in the warm, all-embracing glow of their idealism, an outlook that sets them apart from their predecessors. To take one example, they actually consider the chief factor in love to be mutual criticism: "In my heart, dear Comrade, your criticism is love itself, love!" (p. 36). When they make a date and one is temporarily called back to work, leaving the other to a seven-hour wait, he does not swear, he does not despair, but, "taking advantage of those seven hours, he reads several selections from Chairman Mao's writings" (p. 42). The author strives to describe this love as an experience that is "decent yet desirable, substantial and warm."

While such sentiments seem in retrospect exaggerated, affected, artificial, Wang Meng accurately captures that generation's emotions and feelings.

"To make the world more decent, we must first see to it that everyone makes himself a bit more decent. To understand our work, our struggle, the true meaning of our lives, we must first see to it that our own hearts are brighter and more open. Then, eager as starving people for food and drink, we will solicit criticism from one another, we will encourage one another to overcome personal weaknesses. Even when we correspond with one another, in the place we would write, 'I kiss you,' we will write, 'Bolshevik greetings.'" (p. 41)³

³ The story's title is an abbreviation of the phrase "We extend Bolshevik greetings." In the 1940s when official documents were passed back and forth between Party organizations and offices, people used these two words to send their respects to one another, to convey that they extended their highest regards.

As concerned and idealistic as they are, however, it is clear that such characters understand little of society as it really is. The society they understand is a subjective world, society as it should be, as it is in their mind's eye. The creed they profess and which guides their lives is not drawn from the sum of their practical experience in society, but is based on the arguments of others, one-sided and absolute. An example of this is the author's careful and painstaking description of the Party lecture, delivered by Old Wei, that moves Zhong Yicheng so deeply.

"Let's take the example of individualism. Among the proletariat there is no individualism. . . . The proletarian's individual interests are completely melded with class interests. Among the interests of the entire population, his are selfless and unselfish, his are the most far-sighted. . . . Individualism, moreover, comprises the world view of small private-property holders and exploiters of the proletariat. It came into being with the formation of classes and privately owned property. . . . Individualism is utterly incompatible with the nature of the proletariat political party. . . . Someone who is strongly individualistic and unwilling to remold himself will ultimately follow the road of Chiang Kai-shek, Truman, Trotsky, and Bukharin." (p. 24)

In fact, Wang Meng intends us to see Old Wei's words as hollow and absolutist, to understand that the concept behind them is not clear, to realize that what is meant, for example, by "individual interests" is vague and muddled. If the individual interests mentioned here refer to the particular interests of each and every member of the proletariat, how could they possibly meld with one another, not to mention with class interests? As for "class interests," how can they be spoken of as melding with or without the interests of an entire population that is divided into classes? Individualism comprises the world view of "small private-property owners" and came into being as a result of the rise of privately owned property; in this case, where private property exists and is widespread, how can we claim that individualism is not widespread, does not exist? Even more absurd is the idea that unreformed individualism will lead us to espouse Chiang Kai-shek, Truman, Trotsky, and Bukharin. How can this be? These are four fundamentally different men. It is very likely that among those listening to the Party lecture, no more than a handful would know the past history of Trotsky or Bukharin. Everyone, however, can accept the logic behind the names: Chiang Kai-shek and those like him are the mortal enemies of the people. If you embrace individualism and are unwilling to reform, then you are your-

self Chiang Kai-shek; you are the enemy and to the enemy no consideration or solicitude can be offered, no sympathy extended. To oppose this line of reasoning is to come to the defense of Chiang Kai-shek.

Such obviously simplistic logic is actually adopted by not a few people who wholeheartedly take it for the guiding principle of their lives: "'Exactly! Exactly!' Zhong Yicheng almost shouted out. How vile, how disgraceful individualism was! Individualism was like a festering ulcer, it was like snot dripping from someone's nose. And individualists were like cockroaches, like maggots" (p. 24). Individualism, then, becomes an abstraction, a hateful, terrible epithet. What it really means, however, is never explained concretely.

In a more positive attitude, Old Wei says that Communist Party members have "the greatest courage, the greatest wisdom, the greatest future, the greatest ideals, the greatest tolerance, the greatest dignity, the greatest modesty, the greatest joy, the greatest stamina" (p. 25). What does he mean by "the greatest"? Why are they "the greatest"? How have they come to be "the greatest"?

The tenor of his argument is indeed typical. The intellectuals of the 1950s were nurtured on countless Party lectures of just this sort. All too often they had a single, simple concept of life: to recite and repeat all kinds of brave words and proud slogans even while, in actuality, they hadn't a thorough understanding of them. In the flaunting of Zhong Yicheng who has worked for ten to fifteen years to Bolshevize his own thinking only to become, seven years later, a Rightist, an enemy of the people, quite clearly, the author's own bitter taunts are buried.

Because the intellectuals of the 1950s lack the capacity for a concrete understanding and analysis of society, they follow their leaders closely and flow with the main current. This is their third distinctive characteristic. Very seldom do these intellectuals think independently or make a decision on their own. If one day it happens that society undergoes a great change and they are called upon to pass independent judgments or formulate their own verdicts and conclusions, they will find themselves at a loss. They will not know what to do or say, and they will find unintelligible what is being said around them.

When that short quatrain of Zhong Yicheng's is interpreted as an attempt openly to stir up rebellion and unrest, for example, he hasn't the least idea how such a thing could have happened. He is utterly without foresight; even less has he the capacity to defend himself.

He is incapable of any independent judgment.

His wife, Ling Xue, who is better able to deliberate, feels, "This is too grave, we have no choice but to think it over seriously. Then again, it's too absurd. Really, there's no way to take it seriously." She really does not know what to make of the situation. She can only identify the attack on her husband as a cruel incident involving several million people, and speculates:

"Maybe it's just all a misunderstanding, a wave of anger that will pass. The Party is our own mother. A mother may spank her child, but the child never holds a grudge against his mother. After she spanks him, her anger evaporates and she cuddles him close while he has a good cry. Maybe this is just an unusual way of teaching us a lesson, a way to draw out your vigilance, to make you pay attention. They give you a big jolt and then leave you to reform yourself." (p. 38)

Her wishful thinking and delicate feelings are evidently no help in dealing with objective realities this complex.

This same weak attitude on the part of the entire intelligentsia is one important reason that the unchecked wrongs of the Anti-Rightist Campaign could remain unredressed for twenty years.

In fact, in this harsh environment it is only highly romanticized faith in the revolution and in the future that sustains the unjustly treated intellectuals in times of crisis. Alarmed and panic-stricken, they do not dare confront the reality of their situation. Rather, they put all their effort into deceiving themselves, into once again uniting themselves as quickly as possible with that authority that has remained absolute in their view and with that faith that has come to dominate every aspect of their lives. Now that the authorities have proclaimed them the enemy, they do not judge and assess the general situation by first looking at their own actual circumstances, but nearly break their hearts sifting through the details and minutiae of official verdicts, trying to draw connections where none exists.

Zhong Yicheng tells Ling Xue:

"I would never have imagined I was originally this bad! Ever since I was small, my soul has been full of the poisonous germs of individualism and individual heroism. When I was in school I always hoped to test the highest, to pull down the prize, to be head and shoulders above the rest. My motives for entering the Party were not pure. I hoped I would accomplish blazing, thundering, great things, that my name would go down in history. There is absolute egalitarianism as well in my soul, and liberalism and sentimentalism. . . . During critical

junctures of the socialist revolution all of these isms evolved into irreconcilable opponents of socialism and the Party, and they have made me an enemy of the Party within the Party. Ling Xue, don't rush off. Listen to what I have to say. Suppose the comrades criticize you, saying that deep in your bones you harbor a hatred for the socialist system. At first I wasn't convinced. But if you aren't convinced, you must think as hard as you can. If you put all your energy into it and think as hard as you can, you will, sooner or later, be convinced. Later it came to me. Last year, in February, we went to eat at that Cantonese restaurant next door to the New China Bookstore. Well, they skipped our order, and after an hour of waiting we still hadn't been brought anything. Finally I lost my temper—do you remember? At that time you tried to talk me round. I said, 'If all work is this careless, then we were better off in the days of private enterprise!' Look, what kind of talk is that? Doesn't it reveal dissatisfaction with socialism? I have made a clean breast of these words; I have accepted criticism—Ah, Ling Xue, don't shake your head. Do believe me. Don't doubt me. And do not, not ever, be dissatisfied with the Party. Even the slightest spot of dissatisfaction, like a seed in your heart, will sprout, root, and grow tall. It will lead you down the road of misdeeds and crimes against the Party. I *am* bad. I *am* the enemy. Originally I was impure and later I sank even lower." (p. 34)

Such logic is a desperate effort on the part of Zhong Yicheng, and other intellectuals like him, to reconcile his own understanding with the will of the authorities and with his own past faith.

When the "nova of literary criticism" and the "surgeon" Comrade Song Ming diagnose him as having weakened and incurred a cancer and when they take up the scalpel to excise it, he has no trace of doubt as to the accuracy of their diagnosis. Moreover, his own ardent love for the Party, his support, his trust, his reverence and compliance spur him to want to take up the knife himself and dig it out or, at the very least, to point out the way: "Start cutting from here, now here..." (p. 27).

Such a contradiction between convictions and action is due in part to his own blind faith in authority and in part to his panic and alarm, his weakness and incompetence, his inability to assess facts objectively or to formulate countermeasures independently. All the energy and effort that go into this admission are wasted; it does not even slightly aid his being exonerated or accepted.

After more than twenty years' time, more than three hundred thousand words of self-criticism, an accounting of every word spoken since his birth, every detail of every dream have all been put through

an analysis as fine as the splitting of a single hair into strands for seven braids. As a result, he is

metamorphosed into dog-piss moss [a kind of fungus], self-generating and self-destroying. It was somewhat comparable to putting on a play. At the opening there is the clash of cymbals, the roll of drums, real swords and real spears, stage lights and backdrops, men and women, young and old—it's nothing if it isn't alive and bustling. But when the last scene is played, the people suddenly leave and the scenery is carted away, the lights shut off. (p. 64)

Aside from making use of them in the labor force, no one takes any further interest in these unrehabilitated intellectuals.

What progress does Zhong Yicheng make over those twenty years? In his mind and heart questions start to arise and doubts concerning authority start to take shape. When he looks at the accusation against him as it formally appears in the press and on documents—"Bourgeois Rightists are the agents of Chiang Kai-shek and of imperialism"—he cannot understand it.

How could a child such as he, who from boyhood had cherished an irreconcilable hatred for Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist Party and had, even as a boy, taken part in the deadly struggle against that regime—how could he have become an agent for the affairs of Chiang Kai-shek and imperialism? From what day, after all, did it begin? For what end? Where did imperialism and Chiang Kai-shek learn such cunning? How, on the mainland of liberated China among the heroic and stalwart, how did they ever manage to commandeer new recruits from within the Chinese Communist Party, reactionaries scared stiff? How did they engage so many agents, young and old, high and low? If, in truth, their agents really were so numerous, if they really were everywhere concealed, lurking in every hole, how is it they collapsed so quickly, so completely back in '49? (p. 65)

As before, however, he still does not think matters out completely. He cannot consider these questions or find answers to them. He succeeds only in numbing his own intellectual senses: "Oh, drop it! No matter how much I think, anyway, I'll never think it out clearly.... The great benefit of manual labor is that you haven't the time or energy for reckless thoughts or wild deliberations." By ceasing to think, he essentially renounces his role as an intellectual.

His wife, Ling Xue, seems somewhat stronger. From beginning to end she believes firmly that Zhong Yicheng is not the enemy. Preferring expulsion from the Party to separation, she insists on

remaining Zhong Yicheng's wife. But over those twenty years she, too, is powerless to offer any fresh insight into their situation. She can only think, "When lies and rhetoric, groundless extortion and slander are heaped on the scales of history, the scales will tip; things will turn around again" (p. 74). Although she does nothing but wait—in accordance with the traditional Chinese philosophy that "At the end of the road is another road, and this road will continue through"—finally she does recognize lies, extortion, rhetoric, and slander for what they are.

Through the response of Zhong Yicheng and his wife, we can see that representative intellectuals who matured in the 1950s loved the new China ardently and believed in the Communist Party. They were filled with a pioneering spirit, idealistic, zealous, and romantic. Yet they had rather too many abstract notions and too little concrete understanding of the complex social realities of the times. Accustomed to blindly following authority, they lacked the ability to think over or analyze matters independently and to solve problems on their own. As Zhong Yicheng himself says,

"It's true. We have acted mechanically. In our love and esteem, I suppose, were reserves of dull-wittedness. In our loyalty there was blindness; in our trust, excessive naïveté. In our quest we were unrealistic and in our zeal we were absurd. In our reverence were buried the seeds of our deception. Our cause was harder than anything we had ever known, and much more trouble." (p. 31)

Of course, Zhong Yicheng cannot be taken as representative of the entire intelligentsia of the 1950s. There were those who were much bolder and brighter, who raised questions or suggestions much more penetrating. There were those who buried their heads in books and never inquired after the affairs of the world. There were also those who held the position of "rectified men," similar to Comrade Song Ming and the "nova of literary criticism" in *Bolshevik Greetings*. But the merits and weakness of intellectuals like Zhong Yicheng are fairly widespread.

To be considered an intellectual one must have certain abilities and techniques: one must be analytical, original, and farsighted in thought; one must be able to anticipate the incidence of error and hazard; one must be able to propose strategies for coping with difficulties; and one must be able to work out measures for improving an existing situation. But intellectuals have personal weaknesses: they make significant contributions when the leadership is correct; but when the leadership is in error, they seldom have any effect in

rectifying the error. On the contrary, they welcome even errant policies and foster their unfolding. After twenty years of painful tempering, finally, these intellectuals recognize a single point: what is most valuable in their hearts and minds has endured to the present. As before, "they are still in possession of their love and esteem, their loyalty, their trust, their quest, their zeal, their reverence, their cause." These have been preserved, and are "even more solid at the center, more mature." Zhong Yicheng says,

"I have walked through these twenty-one years one step at a time. I am convinced that not a single step was taken in vain. My only wish is that we bear in mind this lesson learned in exchange for our blood, tears, and unimaginable suffering, that the actual situation can retain its true aspect and be recorded in history." (p. 57)

The Tragedy of the Rightists

From the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957 to the Great Cultural Revolution of 1966, affairs such as Zhong Yicheng's instantaneous transformation into the enemy were not the bitter encounters of only a particular few among the intelligentsia. What was the social backdrop behind these attacks? From *Bolshevik Greetings* we can see that several different factors were involved in this tragedy of intellectuals.

When Old Wei, secretary to the district Party committee, is on the point of death, he looks back to the late 1950s:

"The people placed their trust in us, but we... exaggerated the situation of the enemy, we were immoderate in our suspicion and mistrust. We have poisoned our lives. We have poisoned the air of our homeland. We have poisoned those who genuinely loved us, those who supported the hearts and minds of our youth... Truly, this is a great tragedy!" (p. 71)

In such an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust human relationships are reduced to callousness and constraint; people do not hesitate to employ malice and ill will in their appraisal of others.

When Zhong Yicheng confronts the Red Guard and, respectful and well-intentioned, tries to gain the understanding of the seventeen-year-olds, they reply, "You old fart! You really dare try to rope us in? Shut up your dog's trap quick!" He is beaten to unconsciousness and, in a coma, mutters, "I extend Bolshevik greetings!" The young people's response is: "What? What did he say? 'I'll ask again but will not heed him'?" Heed who? Who is this

mangy dog dares not heed?" "No, not. What I heard was *zhiyibeiqinxi*—Japanese, probably. It must be a password; he must be a spy" (p. 13). During the Cultural Revolution incidents such as this were not unusual.

When Zhong Yicheng sees the storehouse blazing in the middle of the night, he rushes forward regardless of his own safety to put out the flames. "Half his hair had burned away, his eyebrows had burned clean off. His face, his back, his hands, his legs—he had been burned everywhere." And then he finds himself confronting unimaginable questions and insinuations.

"What were you up to, running over to the road construction team that night?"

"Past midnight, and you still hadn't fallen asleep? What were you doing if you weren't sleeping?"

"The wind had started up... How is it that the others didn't wake up, only you?"

"Why didn't you ask your leader for instructions before running off to the road construction team storehouse? There's a good deal of hazardous material in there, or didn't you know?"

"What was your purpose in ramming the kitchen door open?" (p. 68)

The accusers refuse to believe that Zhong Yicheng went to put out the fire, and instead suspect him of arson, theft, sabotage.

When suspicion develops to such an extreme, it becomes blind impulse, unreasonable and destructive. The author bitterly writes, "Charging, beating, ramming and smashing to bits... With reddened eyes they could build a world that was red through and through, but they still wouldn't know who their adversary was." The objective, concrete man is completely annihilated: he is seen only in terms of the label assigned to him. Zhong Yicheng is interrogated on the basis of his tag, enemy of the people.

"Speak up! Why do you resent the Communist Party? Why do you dream of striving to regain your lost paradise?"

"Speak up! What reactionary dealings were you involved with in the past? What plans will you make in the future for overthrowing the Communist Party?"

"Speak up! What are the restoration records you've been holding onto? You're hoping Chiang Kai-shek will fight his way back, aren't you? You want revenge, don't you? You want to exterminate the Communist Party, don't you?"

Woosh... a belt. Zzz... a chain. Ow!... a miserable cry.

"You old fart! How could you love the Party? How could you

possibly love the Party? How dare you say that you love the Party? How could you ever be worthy of even saying that you love the Party?" (p. 7)

This typical Red Guard-style interrogation occurred frequently during the Cultural Revolution.

More serious than exaggeration of the enemy's situation or excessive suspicion and mistrust is the nationwide system in which those on top make arbitrary decisions while those below blindly follow. A democratic centralism in which "the lower level is subordinate to the higher level" and "the minority submits to the majority" has become distorted and twisted out of shape. In actuality, such a system calls for the entire body to unite under the will of a single person. When this person's will no longer reflects objective reality and mistakenly follows the wrong course, then even if there are those who oppose him, they will form only an ideological splinter group. They will have to be disregarded, perhaps even criticized. A system like this one brings forward a large number of people adept at exaggerating and pandering to the intentions of the leadership. Consequently, not only is there no way to put error right, but the errors, moreover, grow in intensity. An instance of this occurs in *Bolshevik Greetings*: above, the leadership erroneously magnifies the situation of the enemy; below is the case of Zhong Yicheng.

In 1957 Zhong Yicheng is finally designated a Rightist after the explication of his short poem by the "nova of literary criticism." His verse runs as follows:

When wild chrysanthemums wither,
We are born and grow up tall.
When ice and snow blanket all the earth,
We are pregnant with promise of abundant harvest.

Zhong Yicheng
"Winter Wheat, in Its Own Words"

In his interpretation the "nova of literary criticism" says:

"In the line 'When wild chrysanthemums wither,' he states his wish that the Communist Party step down. He styles the Party 'wild'. In maligning our Party and seeking to crush our cultural heritage he is, in essence, a distant echo of Austin, United States Ambassador to the United Nations. In 'We are born and grow up tall' he says that the capitalist die-hards—Rightists, that is—will ascend the stage of political power. 'We' refers to the Zhang-Luo Alliance, to Huang Shiren and Mu Renzhi, to Chiang Kai-shek and Song Meiling. 'When ice and snow blanket all the earth' expresses his extreme blackness, his

extreme hostility, his extreme fear toward the mighty proletarian dictatorship of our socialist homeland. His is none other than the dead heart of a reactionary. The sound of his teeth gnashing can be heard distinctly. The author's innuendo, moreover, does not stop here. 'We are pregnant with promise of abundant harvest' is actually an appeal to instigate open rebellion and unrest." (pp. 2-3)⁴

Such illogical reasoning was widespread during the Anti-Rightist Campaign and later the Cultural Revolution. Some went so far as to say: "Suppose you are very fond of asking others, 'Will it rain today?' and in your poem is a line 'Who knows whether tomorrow's weather will be fine or cloudy?' How will this be taken? It will be taken as a typical example of the weary heart of the declining reactionary class" (p. 29).

Such distorting analysis would cause anyone to "stare tongue-tied with their hair standing on end, and then to throw himself down and to prostrate himself," yet critics of this sort could be found everywhere.

One very important factor contributing to this tragedy is the work system in which "high and low are equal, identical." In Zhong Yicheng's district, for example,

when they first started, out of the entire district only three people, all well known for their public airing of Rightist views, were exposed and criticized. But later they had quotas to fill. This district was supposed to ferret out 31.5 Rightists. With the appearance of such formidable political pressure, even we lost control. Altogether we pinpointed ninety Rightist elements and took disciplinary action against an even greater number for their implication.

Old Wei, on his deathbed, says,

"If only we could be more clear-headed, more responsible. If only we could give more weight to facts and not to intentions alone. If only we weren't—not even a hair's breadth—afraid of losing office or of suffering a cudgeling or of standing up straight and tall and stepping forward, then, perhaps, we could quash this leftist imperiousness." (p. 72)

But he knows that such errors and faults are difficult to correct.

⁴ The alliance is named after two leaders of the Democratic Alliance, Zhang Bojun and Luo Longji. At the time they were believed to be opponents of the Communist Party and careerists, conspiring to seize political power. Huang Shiren and Mu Renzhi are a pair of villains from the popular opera *Baimao nü* (The white-haired girl). Huang is a reactionary landlord, Mu his partner in treachery.

The experiences of these many unfortunates, designated the enemy without fuss or feeling, are tragic. As Old Wei says, "'After someone has been declared 'the enemy' we no longer need, it seems, extend to him our sympathy, our care and concern; we are no longer responsible for him'" (p. 72).

The enemy is no longer considered a human being; he no longer has any worth, as the Red Guard's comments reveal after Zhong Yicheng is beaten senseless: "'Report! Has he regained consciousness? Is he—dead?' 'Calm down. One of the enemy, a mangy dog. Revolution is blameless; to rebel is justified!'" (p. 13). No longer is this man a human.

When Zhong Yicheng reads that the "nova of literary criticism" has criticized his verse, he feels that he can "hear the sound of his own bones cracking. The nova of criticism had rolled him right up like a spring roll and popped him into his mouth, and now he was grinding him to bits between his incisors, canines, and molars, crunch! crunch!" (p. 4). He has lost forever his human worth.

During the Cultural Revolution the Red Guard tell him:

"Okay, first take your problems and hang them up..."

Hang up what? What was Zhong Yicheng? A hat? A jacket? A bottle of soy sauce?

"First, dig in from all sides. Grind them down, digest them on the spot."

What were they? *Wotou*? A dish of rice pudding studded with dates? Or a platter of oat-flour rolls that would demand a hearty appetite? After digesting them, what would they become? A puddle of piss? A pile of shit? A belch? A fart? (p. 55)⁵

Once people have been so completely dehumanized, one may do with them as one will. The tragedy is endlessly repeated and propagated.

In *Bolshevik Greetings* a suspicion and mistrust of others arising from exaggerated appraisal of the enemy's situation; a system in which the individual's and the group's wills are subordinated to and reconciled with the will of the authorities; a policy that views the enemy as nonhuman; an atmosphere that results in overwhelming

⁵ When, during the Cultural Revolution, investigators were unable to arrive at the verdict required and had to pause in their examination, it was called "hanging up" (*guaqilai*) the problem at hand. When the "enemy" was sent down to the countryside to carry out a program of penal labor under the surveillance of local peasants, it was called "digesting on the spot" (*jiudi xiaohua*) what they were being taught.

numbers of good people being painted as the enemy—these are factors contributing to the tragedy of the intellectuals in the 1950s.

Psychological Realism in *Bolshevik Greetings*

In comparison with *The Eclipse*, *Rainbow*, and *Children of the Rich*, *Bolshevik Greetings* describes a much longer period of time, yet is a shorter work. As the author himself has said: "The material in *Bolshevik Greetings* spans an extraordinary amount of time and space. It encompasses some thirty years, the city and countryside, Party committee offices, schools, the home" ("Zai tansuo," p. 218).

What the author wants to write about, however, is not the experiences of daily life, but "the course of mental and spiritual activity." He says, "I wanted to omit the experiences and encounters of the characters, even certain descriptions of setting, because the spotlight here is on the wound the spirit receives" ("Zai tansuo," p. 217). Beatings, bloodletting, divorce—all these could be found in the old society as well, he reasons. His subject is not these, but the inside of the new revolutionary society, "the persecution and unjust treatment of men under the guise of extreme Leftism which has its own particular grimness, an overwhelming test for the soul" ("Zai tansuo," p. 217). For these reasons—the scope of the novel and the author's aim—the structure found in most other novels would be unsuitable for *Bolshevik Greetings*.

In analyzing another of his works, "The Voice of Spring," the author says:

I broke conventions, adopted the protagonist's stream of consciousness and exceeded the restrictions of time and space. My brush extended to both past and present, to China and abroad, to the city and the countryside, to a sky filled with blossoms and radiating rays of energy. On the one hand there was an unchecked stream of consciousness, lightning change, overlapping, boundlessness. On the other hand, there were myriad changes without any essential departure from my original aim. What is transmitted can also receive. All the rays share a common point...and that is the heart and soul of the protagonist."⁶

Within the body of contemporary Chinese fiction, the stylistic innovation of *Bolshevik Greetings* lies in its breaking the thread of time and action, in being a work "structured around the behavior of the

⁶ Wang Meng, "Guanyu 'Chun zhi sheng' de tonglun" (Some general remarks on "The Voice of Spring") in *Ye de yan ji qi ta*, p. 239.

protagonist's innermost being" ("Zai tansuo," p. 218).

Wang Meng believes that the mental activities of the subjective world follow their own laws, which are different from those of the objective world. The objective world always proceeds from the past to the present, according to the proper sequence of time, and from near to far or vice versa, unfolding in a set direction. Mental activity, however, is not so restricted. It is rooted in the strength and weakness, profundity and superficiality of impression. "More often than not, the strong is up front and the weak at the rear; the superficial is up front and the profound at the rear" ("Zai tansuo," p. 218). The structure of *Bolshevik Greetings* is laid out according to exactly this kind of logic.

For Zhong Yicheng, what is most intense, most difficult to forget, most frequently recalled is that, having been a Party cadre, he has suddenly become an enemy of the people. In the novel the author depicts this dominant recollection four times before introducing those impressions secondary in strength, in a manner somewhat like radial beams emanating from a central core. These four impressions touch upon past, present, and future and lay the groundwork for the story.

The first instance occurs when Wang Meng presents the skewed interpretation of Zhong Yicheng's short verse as "an appeal to instigate open rebellion and unrest." Zhong perceives

the flowers, the sky, the air, the newspapers, the sound of laughter and the face of every single person. Suddenly, in a split second, they had all frozen stiff. The world, in a split second, had dropped to the temperature of outer space—was it absolute zero? The sky was an expanse of blue sheet iron. The flowers were a confusion of stones and rocks. The air had liquefied and congealed, forming solid chunks of ice. The newspapers had a seething, murderous look about them. The laughing abruptly died and there was a cold glaze over the faces. His heart had lost its sanguine hue and was as hard and stiff as a pair of watchman's clappers, bang! bang! (p. 1)

These are Zhong Yicheng's earliest, most intense impressions upon learning that he has been judged an enemy. Afterward, when the author writes of the bitter experiences of the Cultural Revolution, he makes Zhong Yicheng again look back to see what kind of person he had been.

The second instance occurs when Zhong Yicheng is named an "anti-Party, anti-socialist bourgeois Rightist," a judgment that means he has been ousted from the ranks of the people. At the same moment he has been formally, irreversibly ousted from the political

scene, from economic consideration, from human relationships, and transformed into an alien element. He perceives that

the sky is murky and muddy. The earth is sallow and yellow I am an "element!" I am the enemy! I am a renegade! I am a criminal. . . .

If I'm sitting on the streetcar, I don't dare look at the ticket seller or any one of the passengers with open, unflinching eyes because I should only receive the contempt and disdain of the ticket seller and every one of the passengers. If I walk into the post office, everything goes black before my eyes and my hands tremble when I pick up a postage stamp with an illustration of Tian'anmen Square and go to fix it to the outside of the envelope because I am "the enemy!" I am the enemy who tries to overturn socialism, to overturn the People's Republic of China, to topple the Five-Starred Red Flag and Tian'anmen Square whose brilliant rays shoot out in the four directions. If I walk into a breakfast shop, I don't dare buy a bowl of soy-bean milk. (p. 27)

Cut off from the enormous body of humanity, he projects a scattering of mundane experiences that will be forever denied him. Next, his train of thought turns to the suffering of Song Ming and Old Wei during the Cultural Revolution, one having committed suicide and the other having been hounded to death. Zhong Yicheng reflects on his own past, discussing his impressions of his marriage, of falling in love, and of laboring in the countryside as a Rightist.

The third instance occurs during the Cultural Revolution. In 1970 a workers' Mao Zedong Thought propaganda team enters the school factory and initiates a movement to "purify the class ranks." They are the representatives of central authority; their verdict passed on a particular person is taken for absolute authority, a judgment absolutely without margin for change. They write in the "verdict of the purification team":

Zhong Yicheng...from his youth has been an extreme ideological reactionary. He harbored indescribable personal ambition in his heart in 1947 when, without having gone through the necessary procedures, he insinuated his way into the Party organization dominated by Liu Shaoqi and his henchmen....In '57, using the writing of a poem, he launched a savage attack against the Party....Even now he is rigid in his refusal to admit his guilt, rigid in his refusal to unmask the heinous crimes of Liu Shaoqi's henchmen and their bogus communist party....He belongs, in fact, to that group of bourgeois Rightists who have not fully reformed.

This tells us clearly not only that Zhong Yicheng's ten years of desperate exertions and toil, like his three hundred thousand words of ideological self-criticism, have been a wasted effort, but that what he has held most precious in his heart, his Party membership, has been completely and utterly revoked by the authorities. At this time he perceives

the black night was like jelly dyed by thick China ink, sticky and gelatinous, quivering and shivering. It had no shape, and yet it wasn't really shapeless....

The black night was spinning, swinging, surging, drifting. A violent wind was charging and rushing, wailing and crying, scattering in the four directions, soaring skyward. Masts were toppling under monstrous waves; snowcaps were avalanching from mountain summits. Spring water spurted and gushed up from rocks; skulls, on the street's pavement, were rolling back and forth, back and forth...

As for Zhong Yicheng, he was dead. (p. 56)

The death Wang Meng describes is the extermination of the soul.

The fourth instance occurs after Zhong Yicheng extinguishes the fire at great risk to his own safety and yet is suspected of having started it. Politically and organizationally, the Zhong Yicheng laboring down in the countryside is the antithesis of the Zhong Yicheng planted in a social collective. If anything at all of his spirit remains to sustain him, it is his constant belief that this selfless labor will always be of some benefit to others, that he can still carry out some slight service to the people. Yet when he is burned trying to extinguish the fire and is subjected in the hospital to interrogation, he begins to understand that he is suspected of having started the blaze, and even these fragments of his spirit crumble. "This matter of putting out the fire has opened my eyes. It has made me aware of what a dangerous position I am in." He perceives that "heaven and earth were spinning, his head was splitting, his body was floating, drop by drop his blood was trickling from his heart" (p. 69). From these cataclysmic images we can deduce the outcome of the story because, excluding any fundamental changes in the overall situation, the protagonist already finds himself in a dead end, a hopeless position.

These four instances from the story of Zhong Yicheng illustrate both the way the authorities have managed to intimidate and forcibly transform a loyal, enthusiastic youth into a despicable enemy guilty of crimes against the state, and also the cruel wrenching and mortal wounding of a once energetic spirit. From these bitterly intense im-

pressions emanate a number of less powerful images, laying out the foundation of the piece.

There are several other less important threads running through the structure of *Bolshevik Greetings*, such as the gradual deepening of Zhong Yicheng's perception of society and of the entire scheme of events. At first he simply cannot comprehend the situation. He imagines that wrongs will be righted, injustices exonerated, and he hopes that by writing an interminable self-criticism and putting tremendous effort into manual labor he will be understood and forgiven. Later he starts to entertain doubts: "Why, using a thousand means and a hundred schemes, were they so eager to fashion an enemy who would fit the mold?" (p. 55). How did he, Zhong Yicheng, come to be an agent of Chiang Kai-shek? "Xianglin Sao! How is it that a communist living in the new, socialist China, a youth exuberant and vigorous, sincere and blameless—how is it that his lot after all should resemble yours?" (p. 55).⁷ Finally, he recognizes his own blindness and naïveté, his failure to respond to the realities of life, his manipulation and deception at the hands of others. When his wife cries out to him, "Who is, after all, to blame has yet to be determined by history," he does not object.

The "Bolshevik greetings" of the title is a refrain that crops up over and over again, echoing throughout the story from beginning to end. The polite formula represents a certain relationship between sender and receiver, the bond of common ideals and beliefs. After the liberation of the city of P., the young Zhong Yicheng takes leave of his girl friend. She says, "I extend Bolshevik greetings"—seeming testimony to the revolutionary friendship between the two. Three days after the city's liberation a meeting for all Party members throughout the city is convened. To gain entry, it seems, the members salute a soldier with "We extend Bolshevik greetings" (p. 12). Yet more than twenty years after the Revolution their counterparts, the seventeen-year-old Red Guards, are puzzled by this slogan "like a blazing, fiery whirlwind," this salutation that is "sacred yet fills one with joy." They suspect that it is a secret password exchanged by Japanese spies (p. 13).

When Zhong Yicheng, adjudged a Rightist, is still offered the steadfast and loyal love of his fiancée,

⁷ Xianglin Sao is a character from Lu Xun's short story "Zhufu" (Benediction). In the course of the story she is tormented to death by the oppressive forces of the old society.

his heart, which had been crushed by words poisoned and befouled, by attitudes imperious and rude, crushed with a momentum as great as if Mt. Tai itself were bearing down upon it—this heart, frozen stiff and hard, began to melt. “Bolshevik greetings! Bolshevik greetings! Bolshevik greetings!” Once more this cheer, this chorus, this aurora and rainbow became the sound of his strangled heart calling out to him. (p. 39)

When, because of her continued association with him, Zhong Yicheng’s wife is expelled from the Party—“sentenced to death, politically speaking”—all he can think of at the time is “Bolshevik greetings, Bolshevik greetings, Bolshevik greetings! Suddenly, tears welled up in his eyes” (p. 54).

After the Cultural Revolution, having been identified as one of the “bourgeois Rightists who have not fully reformed,” he feels that his soul has already died in the deep blackness of night. All that remains is a “need and desire to pursue these Bolshevik greetings.” This single thought is what brings him to lift his head, forcibly bowed by the Red Guard and so hard to lift, to “want to open his eyes and gaze off into the distance as far as he could see” (p. 57). His spiritual mentor, Old Wei, as he dies, “quietly lowers his head—to extend Bolshevik greetings!” (p. 73). Finally, under the new leadership and new government policies Zhong Yicheng’s case is reopened and he is rehabilitated. The first thought to enter his mind at this time is to “extend Bolshevik greetings.”

Zhong Yicheng’s gradually deepening understanding and the concept of “Bolshevik greetings” are complementary motifs, two lines of a double track. Single-track construction, Wang Meng has said, is strong in

its clarity, explicitness, easy comprehension. It is weak in its limited powers of expression. Life is an experience of ceaseless development and change. In contrast with antiquity, the most outstanding characteristics of modern life are its complexity and its accelerated tempo. Such a life can be reflected and expressed in terms of composition by using a multiple-track or radial structure. In terms of rhythm we can express it by leaps and overlap. This can give rise to reproach, it can lead the reader to think that he hasn’t understood what he’s read, that the threads of the story are tangled and confused. But I believe that there is no harm in experimenting with multiple-track or radial structure. Symphony and harmony are inevitable developments.⁸

⁸ Wang Meng, “Guanyu yixie wenxue guannian de tantao” (Investigations into certain literary concepts) in *Ye de yan ji qi ta*, p. 232.

And they are the distinctive features of the structure of *Bolshevik Greetings*.

Structure aside, the narration of *Bolshevik Greetings* is distinctive as well. It differs from most traditional Chinese fiction in which the whole story is related by an omniscient narrator. In *Bolshevik Greetings* the relationships between narrator and protagonist, narrator and author, are comparatively complex.

While third-person narration dominates the relationship between narrator and protagonist, it is used innovatively. Sometimes the narrator and protagonist merge: the protagonist becomes the narrator, addressing the reader directly and relating his experiences in the first person. Examples of this occur in the middle of the fourth section and throughout the fifth section. This merging appears, too, at the very beginning of the story, in the description of the sudden freezing sensation.

Sometimes the author enters his work and engages in a dialogue with the protagonist. In the section "Year Uncertain," for example, Zhong Yicheng has fallen into an abyss of hopelessness. "He raised his cane and beat it against the nothingness... Zhong Yicheng, Zhong Yicheng what's wrong with you? Zhong Yicheng, Zhong Yicheng is dead." At first the narrator conducts a dialogue with the protagonist, then he again resumes his narrative in the third person objectively.

Sometimes the narrator ignores the protagonist and addresses the reader directly. In the sixth section, for example, is the dialogue already quoted above (p. 121).

"Okay, first take your problems and hang them up..."

Hang up what? What was Zhong Yicheng? A hat? A jacket? A bottle of soy sauce?

"First, dig in from all sides. Grind them down, digest them on the spot."

What were they? *Wotou*? A dish of rice pudding studded with dates? (p. 55)

In this direct calling to account the narrator is filled with despair and resentment.

By switching the person, "you, me, he," the narrator not only relates the story, but also enters into it by merging with the protagonist, by conversing with him or by addressing the reader directly. Such a style enables the author to reveal the mental attitudes of his characters from several different angles and brings to the work a rich and intense emotional timbre.

The attitudes of the narrator and author are, on the whole, in agreement. The author's thoughts and words comprise the greater part of the narrator's account. But in not a few paragraphs we find discordant notes, even contradictions, that force us to look between the lines for their meanings.

The great benefit of manual labor is that you haven't the time or energy for reckless thoughts or wild deliberations. After working for nineteen hours on a single meal of three *wotou*, a half serving of pickled vegetables, and several bowls of cold water, who could possibly maintain interest in political reasoning and metaphysical reverie? Spades, sickles, *wotou*, and pickled vegetables... his head was already crammed full of these things... Intellectuals... therefore who wanted to consider questions odd and curious—"What is Life?" "What should I do to make life more meaningful?"—intellectuals who wanted to pursue vexation did so chiefly as a result of having overeaten. They were, in a word, gluttons. (p. 66)

Taken at their face value, the narrator's words are neutral; the narrator neither commends nor condemns. But the author's attitude is different. Many words are left unspoken, though not unexpressed. He does not believe that these questions are "odd and curious" or that they are raised only after "overeating." If we contrast Zhong Yicheng's wish—that within ten years he might realize the Bolshevization of his own thinking (p. 25)—to his present circumstances ten years later, then we might imagine ourselves in just such a spiritual state. And if we relate these experiences to the people's emphasis on "physical labor as a mighty force which purifies one's thoughts and renews the soul" (p. 58), we might ask ourselves whether this state of mind "without knowledge or awareness," "without thought or deliberation," can really be considered "purified" or "renewed."

The distance between the author's intention, revealed between the lines, and the narrator's meaning, inherent in his words, intensifies the story line and presents many instances of poignant irony. In the seventh section, for example, is a description of the "morning, noon, and night battles":

Whenever they had spare time they had to contemplate their own offenses, contemplate how, through the virtue of labor, the "force and torch," they had progressed toward recognition of their own hideous aspects, how they had progressed toward gratitude to the Party for having redeemed them.

And in the third section we read:

If only he had died wearing the cap of his crime, if only he had been beaten to death with a strap or chains by some adorable, seventeen-year-old little general of the Revolution, if only he had died at the hands of a comrade, beneath a bullet shot in the name of the Party, he would have harbored not a trace of personal rancor.

Behind the backdrop of approval and praise, the reader can sense the author's sympathy for the protagonist's lot and for his denial of all that happens.

At times the author's intention is expressed not explicitly in the narrator's account but implicitly between the trains of thought touched off by two contrasting scenes. The first section of the novel, for example, is composed of two parts, the first dealing with the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957 and the second dealing with the Cultural Revolution of 1966. The chief method of castigation employed during the Anti-Rightist Campaign was speech. Comrade Song Ming, responsible for the criticism of Zhong Yicheng, is even "courteous and urbane, calm and unhurried." During the Cultural Revolution, however, there are only "straps and chains, fire and ice, blood and salt," images that show how unreasoning and cruel, benighted and blind people had become.

The author's intention is not restricted to these two scenes. It may be found also in what the narrator does not tell us about those intervening ten years, what the reader is left to surmise. In the fourth section, for example, Zhong Yicheng resolves to Bolshevize his thinking within the coming ten years, but succeeds only in becoming a Rightist after seven years have passed. The first part of the second section, which concludes with "I extend Bolshevik greetings," is closely followed by the Red Guards' misconstruing that phrase to mean "I'll ask again but will not heed him" or to be a Japanese password, *zhiyibeiqinxi* (p. 13). They consequently beat Zhong Yicheng senseless. These sharp contrasts all have a wealth of meaning extending beyond the tableau of the novel.

Apart from the structure and narrative form, Wang Meng also employs a number of new descriptive techniques suited to the expression of mental activity and the subjective world.

First, the author is quite skillful at adapting objective descriptions of environment to counterpoint the subjective feelings of the protagonist. In the first section, for example, he writes:

Queer, hot weather...at its highest, the air temperature reached thirty-nine degrees Celsius. It is a fever-raising, emergency-making temperature, a temperature of headaches, dizziness, lips dry and

cracked, lost appetites. The coating on your tongue turns yellow and yet you shake with chills and cold. Your face is green and white, your lips are brown and purple. You muffle yourself under two layers of cotton quilts and still can't get warm. You feel the table, the walls, the railing of the bed—all are warm. You feel rocks and ironware—burning-hot to the touch. You feel your own body—icy cold. The heart of Zhong Yicheng is colder still.

At this time Zhong Yicheng has just learned that his short poem has been criticized as an "appeal to instigate open rebellion and unrest." The author does not explicitly describe his alarm and despair, but through this description of strangely hot weather and sickly, feverish body temperature he transports the reader immediately into the bitter, oppressive, and crazy atmosphere of the protagonist's subjective world.

Next, the author often uses concrete, easily comprehended events and facts to illustrate abstract and elusive emotions. For example:

If a car were to charge fiercely about, driving up onto the sidewalk and into a department store; if a bandit in broad daylight were to rape a young girl and wield his axe in murderous assault; if he were to dig a pit three meters deep and overturn a skyscraper into it; and if, clutching a heavy machine-gun, he were to strafe a grammar school classroom—even if all these things were to happen, it is not likely that they would shock Zhong Yicheng any more than this criticized verse of his had. (p. 4)

These four realistic analogues underscore the protagonist's feelings and allow the reader to experience the intensity of emotion.

The author often uses a series of analogues to emphasize a certain psychological state. This technique is unavoidably verbose and cumbersome at times, but at times becomes a type of "symphony and harmony" and lends an even richer quality to the descriptive passages.

Elsewhere the author may occasionally employ a striking simile to present a particularly complex emotion. For example:

Abstractly to analyze what "isms" exist in one's own mind, what viewpoints, what sentiments, and to analyze what ideological trends these isms, viewpoints, and sentiments represent, and what perniciousness abounds in them that so drastically intimidates people—this is easily done, after all. No matter how bitter, how rough-going, how speechless it leaves one, it is a form not really fixed, after all. It is like a very rubbery fruit. While too bulky and impossible to swallow at one gulp, it can be swallowed, by pulling

and tugging and pushing and shoving, without the least bit escaping. While trying to swallow it one may also use a kind of lubricating medicament, very effective—it was Zhong Yicheng's firm belief that the Party absolutely could not destroy him, absolutely could not destroy a child so infatuated and true to the Party. (p. 65)

The simile of fruit and lubricant expresses very vividly Zhong Yicheng's only alternative, to avoid acknowledgment of any bitter emotion that might add force to the charges against him.

Sometimes a purely imaginative scene may very effectively express complex emotion, as in the section "Year Uncertain."

White hair with a touch of gray, two eyes wide open and staring like the mouths of two dry wells, Zhong Yicheng leaned on his stick and walked in the midst of the jelly's quivering [the night]. A howling, wild wind came down from the vast sky and rolled over the unending open plain, vanishing into the black sea at the sky's edge. Was it lightning? The flashes of light that precede an earth tremor? A will-o'-the-wisp or a shooting star? Occasionally it would shine on Zhong Yicheng's cheeks, gaunt and raw-boned, drawn and wrinkled. He raised his cane and beat it against the nothingness as if knocking on the panels of an old, worn gate, sending out a wooden "bap, bap, bap."

No other means could so effectively, so soul-shakingly present the utter despair of the protagonist than this strange and haunting illusion.

Finally, to prevent the protagonist's observations on life and his answers to certain questions from becoming too dry and dull, the author creates a "shadow," a figure who acts as the protagonist's partner in conversation and debate. The shadow has no fixed form or appearance. Sometimes it is a youth with "very long hair and a filter-tip cigarette dangling from his lips, hugging an electric guitar against his chest." Sometimes it is a middle-aged man, "without a speck of lint on his whole body from tip to toe, fastidious about food and clothing, fastidious about social intercourse," a man who considers all and everyone beneath his notice, a man with no particular skill or ability. Sometimes it is a woman, prematurely senile and perennially sighing. It is, in short, a representative of post-Cultural Revolution trends of thought, nihilistic, indifferent, suspicious of everything. In his conversations with the shadow, the protagonist displays clearly that he has not yet lost all his faith in life.

To summarize, the author employs several methods to give shape and form to abstract mental activity, avoiding the monotony and pro-

licity of straightforward psychological description. This is an important artistic achievement of *Bolshevik Greetings*.

POSTSCRIPT

The Man—or Woman—of Letters as Hero

CYRIL BIRCH

“Men of letters are a perpetual priesthood, from age to age. . . in the true Literary Man there is thus ever, acknowledged or not by the world, a sacredness: he is the light of the world; the world’s Priest;—guiding it, like a Sacred Pillar of fire, in its dark pilgrimage through the waste of Time.”¹ This, Carlyle’s view of the intellectual, however romantically expressed, might well have been “acknowledged” more readily, through history, in China than in the rest of the world. The sociologist Ezra Vogel has compared the Chinese writer of the 1920s and 1930s not with priest or pillar of fire but with the kind of folk hero represented in the West by the film star or pop singer.² The Chinese culture of the past offers many and varied images of the intellectual, but the attitude these images seem to elicit from the beholder is normally one of veneration.

At the level of popular fiction and drama, the *caizi*, the man of genius, is a common type of hero for tales of love and courtship, a figure far removed from the swashbuckling Romeos and Tom Joneses of the Western world. The famous stage lovers, the heroes of plays such as *Xixiangji* (The guest chamber), *Mudanting* (The peony pavilion), and the rest, are without exception young scholars of high literary talent. *Pipaji* (The lute), the great prototype of the Ming dramatic romance, exhibits the Confucian intellectual in one of his

¹ Thomas Carlyle, “The Hero as Man of Letters,” quoted in Maynard Mack, *Alexander Pope* (Yale, 1985), pp. 712–713.

² Ezra Vogel, “The Unlikely Heroes: The Social Role of the May Fourth Writers,” in Merle Goldman, ed., *Modern Chinese Literature in the May Fourth Era* (Harvard, 1977), pp. 145–159.

classic dilemmas, torn between the conflicting imperatives of service to the state and care of his aging parents. Even in the realm of the knightly warrior, the Chinese case will usually prize brain above brawn. So in *Shuihuzhuan* (Men of the marsh) it is the uniquely literate bandit-hero Song Jiang who commands not only the band of brethren itself but the respect of the reader, while in *Sanguo yanyi* (The three kingdoms) Zhou Yu is a fair representative of the brilliant young strategist whose intellect even more than his martial prowess commends him to the reader's favor.

This same majestic chronicle of Chinese history and statecraft offers a still more impressive example of the thinker as hero in the figure of the great third-century statesman Zhuge Liang. This is the man who must be wooed by his prince, in Liu Bei's celebrated "three visits to the thatched hut," before he will consent to leave the purity of his seclusion to engage in the struggles of the dusty world. But once so engaged he is a model of selfless service, and his *Chushibiao* (Memorial on the expeditions) is forever after memorized by Chinese schoolboys. Zhuge Liang is the Daoist wizard who bears no weapon but a feather fan, which he nonchalantly plies as he sits above the city gate, awaiting the arrival of an overwhelming enemy force in the popular opera *Kongchengji* (Ruse of the empty city). Most unforgettable of all is the image of this master strategist at a moment of failure—at least in his own eyes. In his seventh and final attempt to subjugate the Man barbarians, Zhuge Liang has lured their horde of warriors into a steep ravine.

Elated, King Wutugu urged on his men in pursuit. But as he approached the exit from the valley he saw no sign of the troops of Shu, but only logs and rocks which came cascading down to block off the pass. He ordered his men to clear these away, only to find his way obstructed by carts big and small bearing loads of tinder, and all afire. At once he ordered retreat, but heard shouting from the rear and discovered that the mouth of the valley also was sealed off with tinder, and all in flames from the gunpowder packed in the carts. The valley was bare of vegetation, and Wutugu did not panic but sought for alternative routes of escape. Suddenly from the hilltops on either hand burning torches came raining down. Wherever they landed they ignited trains of gunpowder which in turn set off landmines. In no time flames danced through the length and breadth of the valley, and wherever they touched the rattan armor of the Man troops this caught fire also. The flames drove the thirty thousand rattan-clad barbarians of Wutugu's force together into a

huddled mass, which perished in the conflagration in this Coiled Serpent Valley.

Zhugé Liang watched from the heights. The Man warriors writhed in the flames. Many had been mangled and mutilated in the landmines and every last one of them died there in the valley. The stench that arose was unbearable. Tears ran down Zhugé Liang's cheeks, and with a sigh he said, "I have served my country in this, yet this very act must shorten the span of years allotted to me!"³

We see Zhugé Liang here not just as the supreme intellect of his time, but as its conscience also. Reluctant to assert his claim to leadership, he is nevertheless dedicated to service. As a military strategist his task is to defeat the enemy, but in the holocaust he manufactures here he fears for the loss of his virtue—a pillar of fire he has become indeed, but in a sense Carlyle could never have intended. Perhaps some of the horrors of modern warfare could have been reduced had our commanders been able to bear this image of Zhugé Liang in mind during their own exercise of power, the image of the victor weeping over the overwhelming success of his plan. For the popular mind (and we recall that *Three Kingdoms* is one of the most widely known classics in the history of the world) Zhugé Liang is the archetype of the intellectual as fictional hero.

Archetype of not, Zhugé Liang is only one type of intellectual portrayed in literature. He is the servant of the nation, the man whose talents are drawn upon to the benefit of all. Another type entirely is the bohemian, the man of ability who fails to meet with his prince, or his time, and can only withdraw into private life, to drink and weave flowers in his hair like the author of the *Six Chapters*, to preserve his purity, the "holiness of the heart's affections" in Keats' phrase, perhaps to exercise his gifts as a major poet like Ruan Ji or many another of the figures who have become legendary in the Chinese lore of the recluse.

Through soundings in carefully selected literary works, Yue Daiyun's chapters plot a history of relations between the intellectual and the regime under which he lives, between the extremes of mutual rejection and total interdependence. A significant feature of this history is the emergence of the literary genre of fiction as a vehicle for self-expression. The intellectual writes himself into existence, as we see from Yue Daiyun's instances, first as a biographer, telling of men he admires in the anecdotal forms of the *Tales of the World*, the

³ *Sanguo yanyi*, ch. 90.

fifth-century anthology whose complete translation by Richard Mather is a notable achievement of modern sinology.⁴ Exemplary biography of this kind has the closest links with fiction (an art at that time in infancy or even in embryo) and was in the Chinese case a major contributor to the development of the art.

By the eighteenth century, the age of the *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, fiction had taken a prominent, even a dominant place on the Chinese literary scene. It was not a highly esteemed genre. The bibliographers ignored it and most of its early practitioners are forever unknown to us by name. Works of fiction in actuality were far more than mere entertainments. They functioned as channels for satire and allegory, often in arcane or clandestine ways known only to a handful of inner-circle commentators; modern scholarship is only now beginning to open up some of these hidden meanings to us.⁵ But the writers of fiction themselves assumed on the whole a curiously impersonal stance, which Patrick Hanan has identified as the simulation of the marketplace storyteller.⁶ The views and comments of such a person tended usually toward a totally public character: he expressed the shared morality of the audience he was addressing; his thoughts and feelings were completely masked. This is why Liang Qichao, Lu Xun, and others in the early twentieth century, when they advocated fiction as a vehicle for social commentary, took their cue not from the Chinese tradition but from Dickens and Dostoevsky, writers of whose individual stance no reader could remain long in doubt. The Czech scholar Jaroslav Prusek, searching for the beginnings of subjectivism and individualism in Chinese writing of the premodern era, found them not in fiction but in autobiographical writing of the type of the *Six Chapters*.⁷

It is in the fiction of the very last decades of the Qing dynasty,⁸

⁴ Liu I-ch'ing, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü* (A new account of *Tales of the World*), with commentary by Liu Chun; trans. with intro. and notes by Richard Mather (Minnesota, 1976).

⁵ See, for example, several essays in Andrew Plaks, ed., *Chinese Narrative* (Princeton, 1977); and Anthony Yu, trans., *Hsi-yu-chi* (Journey to the West) (Chicago, 1977), vol. 1, intro.

⁶ P. D. Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story* (Harvard, 1981).

⁷ Jaroslav Prusek, "Subjectivism and Individualism in Modern Chinese Literature," *Archiv Orientalni* 25 (1957): 261-283; see also Milena Dolezelova-Velingerova and Lubomir Dolezel, "An Early Chinese Confessional in Prose: *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*," *Toung Pao* 58 (1972): 137-160.

⁸ See Milena Dolezelova-Velingerova, ed., *The Chinese Novel at the Turn of the Century* (Toronto, 1981).

and especially of the years following the Republican Revolution of 1911 and the May Fourth Movement of 1919, that the intellectual has begun to appear as a projection of the author's own self. It is in the twentieth-century Chinese novel, that is to say, that the intellectual has begun to write himself into being, and this is where Yue Daiyun finds most of her material. Her book may be seen as a meditation by an intellectual on the experience of her kind, as they have pursued their quest for service and self-expression. Hence her interest in Mao Dun, in whose works the woman intellectual appears almost for the first time. Closest to her of all is Wang Meng, whose novella *Bu li* (Bolshevik greetings) is the last of her examples. Wang Meng is a mainstream writer of contemporary China, only recently appointed to the exalted position of Minister of Culture (Mao Dun was a predecessor in this post). Of Wang Meng's dedication to the cause of the Communist revolution there has never been any doubt, despite the label of Rightist that he bore for twenty years. Wang Meng's own heartfelt creed is reflected in the enduring faith of his protagonist, Zhong Yicheng; it is the faith also of Yue Daiyun herself expressed in the closing pages of her own remarkable testament, *To the Storm*.⁹ In the pages of that memoir we find the self-seeking politicians, hypocrites, and petty tyrants inseparable from the revolutionary political scene. But we follow also Yue Daiyun herself as she surmounts the agonies of her own isolation, in the most turbulent and distressful days of the Cultural Revolution at Beijing University, to admire the resourcefulness of the young people about her—even though these very youngsters, whether aware of what they are doing or not, are the instruments for the persecutions that are turning the country into a living hell. Later as she herds pigs in internal exile, she consoles herself by reciting traditional bucolic poems—the remedy sought through the centuries by the scholar in disgrace. Perhaps most admirable of all is the extraordinary frankness of her confession of complicity, as in subservience to authority she participates in the early witch hunts. The irony of these attempts to be a good citizen comes back to haunt her in the later days of her own victimization, but fails to quench the spark of her conviction. Her personal experience is in full concordance with the analysis she makes of Wang Meng's protagonist in *Bolshevik Greetings*.

⁹ Yue Daiyun and Carolyn Wakeman, *To the Storm: The Odyssey of a Revolutionary Chinese Woman* (California, 1985).

There is an element of frustration throughout the present study: perhaps it is a fact that at the center of it is the figure of the frustrated intellectual. Obviously in the long history of China, as in any other society, the intelligentsia or educated elite class has included men and women of every kind of character and persuasion. The representatives of the traditional intellectual selected in this work by Yue Daiyun are not the highly placed servants of the state, men like Han Yu of the Tang or Su Shi or Wang Anshi of the Song, though these men also figured as protagonists in popular works of fiction and drama. She has ignored also the comic pedant, butt of often cruel humor in plays and in specifically satirical works such as *Rulin waishi* (The scholars). For the early periods, indeed, her subjects are not characters from fiction, but are as it were proto-fictional, the inhabitants of those territories—of philosophical anecdote, of biography or of autobiographical memoir—that fiction in modern times has come to encroach upon more and more as its own domain. Many of the subjects of the *Tales of the World*, and certainly the author of the *Six Chapters*, are as Yue Daiyun describes them, “at liberty to pursue naturalness,” to fulfill the ideal of the untrammelled mind, seeking harmony with the Way and maintaining their purity against the dusty struggles of the world of power. The impressive thing is that in the face of this idyllic dream is set always the desire to serve. The result is that Yue Daiyun’s intellectuals, so far from providing moral exempla, positive or negative, as would the subjects of traditional biographies, exhibit rather involvement in a dilemma.

The dilemma is that of how to live decently in adverse circumstances. The eccentrics of *Tales of the World* are very often acting in self-conscious protest against the denial of a place in the hierarchy of social power. We may see the *Six Chapters*, in one sense, as Shen Fu’s unceasing lament over his exclusion from public office. He is the classic representative of that huge corps of superfluous men of Ming and Qing times, trained through the examination system for office (and thereby disqualified from most other forms of gainful employment), but denied entrance to the bureaucracy which alone could provide them with scope to remedy the ills of the nation.

The greatest of Chinese novels, *Hong lou meng* (Dream of the red chamber),¹⁰ offers an entire gallery of men who are in search of

¹⁰ Trans. David Hawkes under its alternative title as *The Story of the Stone* (Penguin, 1977 onwards).

values in the ways they live their lives (though not yet of women—the women characters who are so central to the novel are confined in the scope of their lives to the domestic and private world). Jia Zheng, the very model of the servant of the state, comes to grief through the very uprightness of his moral stance. Jia Jing, who lives a life of withdrawal from society in search of immortal life, poisons himself at last with the elixir he has devoted years to concocting. Jia Lian seeks and of course fails to find satisfaction in the simplest of hedonist pursuits. Jia Rui follows the paths of venery with predictable results; Xue Pan's ventures into gangsterism fare no better. There seems no viable path. At the center of all is the intellectual Jia Baoyu, gifted beyond his fellows, filled with ideals yet questioning the means to fulfill them, rejecting conventional paths to maintain the family position yet consenting in the end to sit for (and brilliantly succeed in) the state examinations. His solution, the unsatisfactory yet apparently inevitable resolution of the entire action of the novel, is total renunciation of the world in favor of a Buddhist-Daoist retreat.

Given our present stage of understanding of the Cultural Revolution of the decade 1966–1977,¹¹ we may find a ruefully parallel characterization in Yue Daiyun's listing of features of the Wei-Jin period of the third to fifth centuries: "political corruption, moral decay, social injustice, a world in which interpersonal relationships had become tainted by jealousy and mistrust, slanderous accusation, and criminal guilt through association." In such an age the community of intellectuals are impelled to question existing systems of values. Such questioning is at the root of the patterns of behavior recorded in the *Tales of the World*, just as it is central to the important new works of fiction emerging from the post-Mao period.

The eighteenth century, age of the *Red Chamber* and the *Six Chapters*, is a very different time, yet its parallel with the modern age is drawn by Yang Jiang in the title of her memoir, *Ganxiao liuji* (Six chapters from a cadre school).¹² Yang Jiang is a gifted woman, a dramatist, an intellectual who is also the wife of a distinguished scholar and novelist, Qian Zhongshu.¹³ During the Cultural Revolution the two of them, like Yue Daiyun herself and so many others, endured the privations and humiliations of life under the conditions

¹¹ See Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution* (London, 1974 onwards); Tang Tsou, *The Cultural Revolution and Post-Mao Reforms* (Chicago, 1986).

¹² Trans. Djang Chu (Boulder, 1986).

¹³ See Theodore Hutters, *Qian Zhongshu* (Twayne, 1982).

of labor reform. But what most distresses Yang Jiang, as she makes clear by the allusion in her title to Shen Fu's work, is the appalling waste of talent, of energy, of the reservoir of ability (and goodwill) which the intellectual community constituted and which the regime so desperately needed and so recklessly squandered during those catastrophic years. That is as far as the allusion goes, of course. Although Yang Jiang faced her ordeal with admirable philosophic calm, she does not suggest for a minute that she or her fellow sufferers had available to them the kind of consolations that Shen Fu found. Unemployed in terms of anything more than trivial secretarial jobs, hard up and threatened with punishment for debt, he at least had freedom from interference with the ordering of his day. He had the liberty to experiment with miniature gardens, to plan and undertake novel kinds of picnic. Perhaps someone like Lin Yutang in our own day will prove to have been one of the last Chinese intellectuals to fall back on this cultivation of the art of living, developed in the Chinese culture to such an extraordinarily high degree, as consolation for his powerlessness to change the world.

Yue Daiyun is a university professor; her prime concern as an intellectual has been the study and teaching of the art of fiction as it has been practiced in modern China, where it has served, indeed, as a prime medium of self-expression and social commentary for the intelligentsia as a whole. Her interest in Shen Fu is not merely in the nature of his response to his historical situation, as representative of a dispossessed class. It is at least as much in the contribution his writing made to the evolution of the art of fiction in traditional China. Thrown back into the narrow sphere of personal life with his beloved Yun, Shen Fu engages in self-analysis with a delicacy to match the psychological subtleties of the *Red Chamber* itself. In so far as the art of autobiography has played a part in the enrichment of the Chinese fiction of today, Shen Fu must be assigned a great share of the credit. His *Six Chapters* are rich in innovation: the manipulation of time sequences, for example, to add poignancy to nostalgic comment, or the exquisite care with which he details the successive states of his emotions during his vigil for Yun's spirit. In the naturalness of his prose style, richly lyrical yet free from conventional formulae, he provides an important model for the portrayal of the sensitive thinker in the modern novel.

In selecting her representative intellectuals from the twentieth century Yue Daiyun covers three generations, from Mao Dun as a founding father of the modern literature of China to her own con-

temporary Wang Meng. As a critic she has studied narratology, following such scholars as Wayne Booth and Seymour Chatman¹⁴ (with whom she studied at Berkeley) in close observation of the ways in which the author of a text manipulates his own commentary on its progress. Mao Dun is not very visible as a personality within his text. He is rather the detached observer, the objective recorder of his society and its political tugs and stresses, whose fiction closely mirrors the events of the day. He is the disciple of naturalism, of Zola, of the doctrine of the scientific analysis of life in society. Yet he is, of course, a totally committed writer. In Yue Daiyun's understanding of his place in Chinese history, his fiction demonstrates how the clash between the new culture pouring in from the West and the intractable conservatism of Chinese society prepared the youth of China for Marxism.

Lu Ling, the middle generation in Yue Daiyun's schema, represents the strain of Nietzsche and Romain-Rolland in the world of modern Chinese thought. It is a heroic strain: one has the sense of titanic struggles against destiny, Beethoven thundering in the background. His central protagonist is the tycoon Jiang Jiesan, whose position is based on the crumbling foundations of land ownership and political maneuver. The time is a time of war, of national crisis, and Lu Ling's narrator, with his anti-Communist stance, has committed himself to a source of power, the Nationalist government, that can only bring his world crashing down in ruins. The history of the Communist intellectuals after 1949 has to be read against the story of failure that unfolds in Lu Ling's novel. Perhaps the attention Yue Daiyun pays here to Lu Ling will win greater recognition for his work, which for political reasons is accessible only to a handful of readers. Like the novels of Lao She, it illustrates the process by which the intellectual of present-day China was brought to despair of finding a place in which he could serve his society without submitting to the authority of political leadership. For so many, by 1949 the Communists constituted the only acceptable authority.

But then, after 1949, the very success of the revolution turned sour in the mouths of intellectuals, and a new set of questions arose that have had to wait until the last half-dozen years even to be aired, let alone answered. Wang Meng's *Bolshevik Greetings* shows how young intellectuals of the 1950s discovered that they had lost the

¹⁴ Representative works: Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago, 1961); Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse* (Cornell, 1978).

right to question the leadership only after they themselves had been declared Rightists. Such was the fervor of their dedication to Mao and his program for China that the simple accusation of deviance in itself threw them into self-doubt. In the effort to retain their faith they underwent intense self-interrogation above and beyond the questioning by their mentors. Sent down to the countryside, they found themselves, under pressure of sheer physical exhaustion and deprivation, virtually prevented from thinking and forced, despite their best efforts, to abdicate their position as intellectuals. Wang Meng, the intellectual in fiction, the intellectual who creates himself via fiction, conveys the mindset of the Chinese intelligentsia at this great crisis in their history by means of an imagery that verges on the surreal, the vision of a black frozen world in cataclysm. The literary methods of "socialist realism" as it was practiced in the 1950s and 1960s¹⁵ simply could not cope with a world in which, as Wang's protagonist Zhong Yicheng wryly reports, "this district was supposed to ferret out 31.5 rightists."

In this study of five literary works Yue Daiyun has opted against discussion of the more obvious images of the intellectual in Chinese fiction. She has chosen instead to demonstrate representative types of intellectuals, men or women, as they wrestled with the age-old problem of how to serve without becoming corrupted and how to retain self-respect when out of office or favor. Her analysis shows how fiction itself, as a favored medium of communication for the intellectual, has evolved as an art with the self-consciousness of its subjects, and how as an art it has broadened and deepened from the inflow of skills from philosophical anecdote, biographical exemplum, and autobiographical memoir. By bringing her story up to the present time of post-Mao writing, she places the study of her fellow intellectuals in the perspective of her own life and thought, and brings her five chapters from academic study to the world of flesh and blood, life and thought, belief—and survival.

¹⁵ See Nieh Hua-ling, *The Literature of the Hundred Flowers* (Columbia, 1981), for relevant documents on this subject.

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