

**THE LYRICAL AND THE CRISIS OF MODERN CHINESE SELFHOOD IN MODERN  
CHINESE LITERATURE, 1919 -1949**

By

XIN NING

A Dissertation submitted to the  
Graduate School-New Brunswick  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Graduate Program in Comparative Literature

written under the direction of

Professor Ban Wang

and approved by

---

---

---

---

New Brunswick, New Jersey

October, 2008

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

THE LYRICAL AND THE CRISIS OF MODERN CHINESE SELFHOOD IN MODERN  
CHINESE LITERATURE, 1919 -1949

by XIN NING

Dissertation Director: Professor Ban Wang

This work considers the fate of “self” in modern Chinese literature in the first half of the twentieth century. It aims to explore the various aesthetic approaches by which the image of selfhood has been constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed. It also examines the relationships, either explicit or implicit, between such aesthetic practices and their historical backgrounds. I want to answer the following questions: What is the implication of “self” in modern Chinese context? How do the changes of social milieu and ideological context affect the meaning of “self”? In what ways are the different understandings of selfhood reflected in literature and art, and how do these aesthetic practices contribute to the configuration of modern Chinese subjectivity? How do we interpret the interplay between the aesthetic and the political around the issue of selfhood in modern China? How does that interplay illuminate on the cultural dilemma and spiritual crisis that Chinese people are forced to be faced with in the process of China’s modernization, as well as the solutions they have experimented with? The dissertation mainly takes a thematic approach and the texts I examine cut cross a spectrum of conventional genres and established historical periods in literary history. Among others, the texts explored include Lu Xun’s stories and prose poems; lyrical poems of Ai Qing, Mu Dan and some other minor poets; novels and stories by Fei Ming and Shi Zhecun. It also involves western texts for comparison, such as poetry of Baudelaire and other French Symbolists, novels of Anglo-American modernists, and poetic as well as critical works of Whitman, T. S. Eliot, and Auden.

## Acknowledgement

I am grateful to Prof. Ban Wang, my dissertation advisor, for his indispensable guidance and constant encouragement; Prof. Janet Walker, Prof. M. J. Diamond, and Prof. Jiwei Xiao, for their critical reading of the draft of my dissertation and their helpful comments and advice; finally, my friends and colleagues in both the Graduate Program of Comparative Literature and the Asian Languages and Cultures Department of Rutgers University, who helped me and inspired me in different ways in my writing process.

A Chinese version of the section “Nature and ‘*zi ran*’: Re-examining Nature in the Cross-Cultural Context” in Chapter 1 appeared as “Ziran de liubian: jianlun bijiao shiye zhong de xiandaixing” 自然的流变：兼论比较视野中的现代性 (The Evolution of Nature: On Modernity in Comparative Context), in *Zhongguo wenxue: chuantong yu xiandai de duihua* 中国文学：传统与现代的对话 (Chinese Literature: Dialogues between Tradition and Modernity), ed. Zhang Hongsheng and Qian Nanxiu, Shanghai: Shanghai guji 上海古籍, 2007, 424-440.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgement .....	iii
Introduction .....	1
Chapter 1: The Crisis of Selfhood and the Efforts to Transcend It:	
Taking Refuge in Nature and through Nostalgia for the Past .....	37
Chapter 2: The Modern Self in the Urban Landscape:	
Interactions between the City and Its Dwellers .....	90
Chapter 3: Collective Aspiration, the Political Sublime, and the Literature of Action:	
Left-Wing Literature .....	137
Chapter 4: Apocalypse or Catastrophe?: National Trauma,	
Individual Crisis, and Historical Dilemma .....	173
Bibliography .....	209
Curriculum Vita .....	222

# **The Lyrical and the Crisis of Modern Chinese Selfhood in Modern Chinese Literature, 1919 -1949**

## **Introduction**

This work considers the fate of “self” in modern Chinese literature in the first half of the twentieth century. It aims to explore the various aesthetic approaches by which the image of selfhood has been constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed. It also examines the relationships, either explicit or implicit, between such aesthetic practices and their historical backgrounds. I want to answer the following questions: What is the implication of “self” in the modern Chinese context? How do the changes in social milieu and ideological context affect the meaning of “self”? In what ways are the different understandings of selfhood reflected in literature and art, and how do these aesthetic practices contribute to the configuration of modern Chinese subjectivity? How do we interpret the interplay between the aesthetic and the political around the issue of selfhood in modern China? How does that interplay illuminate the cultural dilemma and spiritual crisis that Chinese people are forced to face in the process of China’s modernization, as well as the solutions they have experimented with?

Before engaging in the discussion of these general theoretical questions that sound abstract and remote from common readers’ interest, however, we can start with a close reading of a short lyric poem which, I hope, may possibly provide us with some useful hints in our consequent study of the central topic.

A green flame swerves on the meadow,

He wants to embrace you, flower.  
 Revolting against the soil, the flower stretches out,  
 When a warm breeze brings sorrow, or joy.  
 If you have awakened, open the window,  
 Look: how beautiful are the desires that fill the garden.

Under the blue sky are our twenty-year-old bodies,  
 Tightly closed, enchanted by eternal riddles,  
 Just as the birdsongs made out of soil.  
 You are ignited, twisted again and again, yet have no home to go to.  
 O, light, shade, sound, hue, all are stripped naked,  
 Suffering, waiting to stretch into new constitutions.<sup>1</sup>  
 ----- “Spring,” Mu Dan (145)

In February 1942, when China was still engaged in the Anti-Japan War (1937-1945) for the nation's survival, Mu Dan, twenty-four years old yet already an accredited poet of talent, wrote the poem “Spring” in Southwest United University, Kunming, where he was teaching as a lecturer in English in the university's Foreign Languages Department. Though brief and seemingly simple, this lyrical song is indeed a rather complicated text that bears layers of meanings when interpreted from different angles. It is a song that is both personal and historical, both traditional and modern, whose complexity gives it a kind of strange beauty. To begin with, readers may easily take this poem for a romantic love song when reading the first two lines. The grass and flower images here might be conveniently interpreted as symbols of lovers, and the grass's desire to “embrace” the flower is a typical gesture of love. Yet this interpretation, though not totally wrong, quickly becomes insufficient when we read the next two lines. The “flower” is not a feminine Other to the masculine “grass,” as in traditional love poems (“traditional” in both the Chinese and western sense), but rather a being which is not only equal to, but in the same existential condition as the “grass.” Indeed, both of the two natural images are references to the unidentified “you” in line 5. The grass represents the fervent passion of

this figure. The flower, which struggles against the oppressive power of the earth and stretches itself into an unfamiliar world filled with both joy and sorrow, illustrates both the figure's vigorous desire for self-fulfillment, yet at the same time also its sense of uncertainty. Yet like it or not, the awakening cannot be stopped when the time of the "warm breeze" comes and the spell of spring asserts its power. The first four lines, instead of making an innocent song of love, succinctly sketch out the desire for self-realization of a youthful poetic figure.

This desire is not only spiritual or intellectual, but also sensual. If this is only indicated at the beginning of the poem, then in lines 5 and 6, the figure "you" is explicitly initiated into the garden of desire (*yu wang*), which is described as "beautiful." The original Chinese text must be much more striking to its readers than the English translation, for in traditional Chinese culture --- particularly in Neo-Confucianism, which has been the official ideology in traditional China since the thirteenth century --- desire, or *yu*, is not a topic that can be openly talked about. Rather, *yu* is always regarded as corrupting and dangerous. It is the utmost threat to one's moral integrity and humanity, and a colossal blockade on one's way toward perfect sagehood. Hence desire has to be eliminated or repressed. Among various forms of desire, sensual desire is regarded as the most destructive. As a result, though love poetry has a long tradition in Chinese literature and *qing*, which roughly means feeling or emotion, is always a popular topic in Chinese poems, any reference to *yu*, desire, has been resolutely ostracized from high-brow literature. In this poem, however, the awareness of the charm of sensual desire becomes the sign of the poetic figure's awakening; with the "opening of the window," a type of modern self-consciousness begins to take form.

The task of constructing modern selfhood is far from finished, however. The figure in the poem, exhilarated and encouraged by his new self-discovery, moves on to expand his exploration of the unknown territory of modern world in the second stanza. In this stanza, the complexity of modern subjectivity is further elaborated. If in the first part of the poem the highlighted themes are passion, virtuosity, and the awakening of the youthful desire, then in the second stanza we are forced to witness a young spirit tortured by anxiety, a sense of homelessness, and perpetual pain. The plural form of “our bodies” in the first line of this stanza indicates that the sense of bewilderment is not only a personal feeling, but the symptom of a disease of the times that haunts the whole younger generation. At the same time, the synecdochic use of body to portray a modern subject once again reflects the new understanding of the importance of sensuality, desire and materiality in the construction of modern Chinese selfhood. These young bodies, “enchanted by eternal riddles,” are “tightly closed.”

Nevertheless, the poet does not tell us what these riddles are. Undefined and vague, these riddles keep a mysterious aura aggravating the young figure’s sense of disorientation and frustration. Indeed, the figure’s probing of these riddles is the precondition of, and as important as, his search for their right answers. The sense of discomfort suggested by the “tightly closed” pose of the body further illustrates the difficulty of the subject’s self-realization, or, in his own words, his effort to stretch out “against the soil.” At the same time, this posture also reminds us of an infant in the womb waiting to be born; hence it suggests the anxiety surrounding the young man’s self-construction in a double sense. The simile in line 9, which seems paradoxical, leads readers to the root of the youth’s disturbance. Here the poet deliberately yokes two



seemingly incompatible images together: “the birdsongs made out of soil” is obviously something impossible in the world of everyday experience. If birdsongs, which are airy, formless, and belong to the sky, symbolize spiritual freedom and the world of the ideal, then “soil,” its opposite, in this poem always represents the clogs and fetters of the real world which ruthlessly restrain the subject and oppress his will to fly freely as “birdsongs.” However, in a paradoxical way this strange combination acutely discloses the existential dilemma of the subject: the conflict between his dream of absolute freedom and the limitations of the real world that make his sense of anguish inevitable.

This tension becomes more explicit if we take into consideration the cultural implication of “soil” (*ni tu*), which can also be alternatively translated as “earth” or “dust,” in Chinese as well as in western civilization. In both Chinese and western creation myths, human beings were first made out of “clay, dirt, soil, or bone” (Birrell 34). The substance from which humans were made is also a sign of their mortality, however. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, for example, we find numerous references in the Bible that connect the human being’s mortal life with dust. In *Genesis*, we are first taught that a human being is in fact a miraculous combination of a body of dust and a spirit from God: “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7).<sup>2</sup> This dichotomous body / soul understanding of human nature dominates the entire Holy Scripture and the image of “dust” is always used to stress the woeful fact that a human being’s life in this world is both ephemeral and grief-stricken. For instances, God’s condemnation of Adam includes the words that “[i]n the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return”

(Gen. 3:19). King Solomon also laments, “All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again” (Ecclesiastes 3:20). A similar dualistic view of human life can be also found in ancient Greek philosophy, especially in the works of Plato, whose idea that a human being is composed of a free soul descending from the world of Ideas and a mortal body that functions like the soul’s prison is well-known. Although Mu Dan is neither a Christian nor, in a strict sense, a philosopher, his educational background had allowed him to become familiar with western culture and in his poems we can find numerous biblical images and symbols as well as allusions to western literature and philosophy (also see chapter 4). More importantly, though a Chinese poet, Mu Dan nonetheless deliberately abandons the monistic tradition popular in ancient Chinese philosophy which emphasizes the harmony between self and universe and the tranquility of the individual mind. By employing the image “birdsongs made out of soil” to indicate the existential dilemma of modern youth, Mu Dan’s vision of modernity is obviously agonistic and devastating.

The poet’s realization of his existential dilemma is accompanied by his deep skepticism toward the idea of salvation based on any form of self-denial. This uneasy modern subject in the poem is neither simply a penitent soul who wants to reject his sinful body for eternal (spiritual) life (or after-life), nor a Platonic spirit imprisoned in a human body who is eager to escape back to the world of Ideas. He might hold a belief in the inevitability of catastrophes but not that in an eventful apocalypse which can bring a new world; he would accept the purgatorial and even infernal torment as an intrinsic part of modern experience, but not an exhilarating prospect of paradise regained. The poet also recognizes the limitations of artistic imagination and refuses to seek a spiritual

asylum through indulgence in delightful (private) daydreaming. For the poet, the liberation of the modern subject, if possible, cannot be based on the negation of the body and of the phenomenological world. As his references to the beauty of desire as well as the youth's enchanted bodies earlier in this poem have indicated, the poet's understanding of modern selfhood equally emphasizes its spirituality and materiality; hence the task that the poetic figure is faced with is to realize his ideal in the world of reality rather than in a transcendental sphere detached from human practice. The failure to do so would mean the demise of this young person --- both soul and body. Yet this task is hard to the young man (or woman). The denial of an escapist view of life and the skepticism toward different visions of salvation, either religious or aesthetic, have obviously intensified the figure's sense of anxiety. At the same time as his disillusionment, the figure's effort of seeking a possible way out in the world of reality comes to no result either. Being cornered in a dead-end, the poetic figure's youthful passion now becomes a form of unbearable torture. Line 4 in the second stanza ("You are ignited, twisted again and again, yet have no home to go") gives a vivid description of the subject in this moment of crisis: the "green flame" that once signified the vitality of youth, at the beginning of the poem, now becomes the tormenting fire in the purgatory that incessantly consumes the life of the subject. To the end of the poem, the poetic figure's search for a solid and coherent selfhood remains lamentably unfinished. Instead of holding a concrete identity, this figure is but a formless agglomeration of "naked" elements waiting to be molded into "new constitutions." This uncertain end makes a sharp contrast to the promising beginning of the poem and leaves the prospect of constructing a modern Chinese selfhood in bewildering ambiguity.

Giving the interpretation of a short lyric poem in such a minute way at the beginning of my dissertation may make thesis-seeking readers feel dizzy and indignant. I would argue, however, that the restless figure in this poem can be regarded as an epitome of modern Chinese in their painstaking struggle to reconstruct their selfhood during the overwhelming course of China's modernization. Firstly, the poem succinctly recapitulates, in its unique poetic language, the anxiety about self-identity that has haunted Chinese people during the entire modern era. This identity crisis of Chinese people can be traced back to the middle of the nineteenth century and understood as the result of the dramatic historical changes in Chinese society. Since the Opium War of the 1840s, the foreign invaders from the West have forced open the gate of China and drastically changed Chinese people's notion of the world as well as their concept of self. The subsequent changes in Chinese society propelled by this imposed process of modernization hastened the destruction of the traditional social structure, and the cultural identity of traditional Chinese also inevitably disintegrated in this process. The social as well as psychological pressure persistently compelled modern Chinese people to negotiate with these overwhelming changes and to seek an assured new selfhood.

Secondly, in a more specific way, Mu Dan's poem exemplifies modern Chinese intellectuals' reflection on the naive optimism around the reconstruction of modern selfhood that was popular in the May Fourth Era. This work particularly questions the image of a coherent individual self and simultaneously reveals the limitations, if not the falsehood, of transcendental approaches that promise an easy and absolute solutions to the crisis. The elevation of the individual self is a significant event in the cultural history of modern China. The traditional Chinese society was a supra-stable structure based on a

small-peasant economy, ruled by an authoritarian government of the emperor and dominated by the official ideology of Confucianism. The degree of social mobility was kept at a minimum and the development of individual consciousness was inchoate and unclear. In this traditional society, each member was assigned to a fixed position and consequently knew clearly his obligations. To him or her there was always a ready answer to the question of identity. The situation changed when China entered into the age of modernity. Terry Eagleton, when discussing the crisis of ethics during the modernization process in the west, has distinguished the differences between pre-bourgeois and bourgeois societies, which I think can also aid us to better understand the situation in China. As Eagleton argues,

In certain form of pre-bourgeois society, the question of how a subject ought to behave is closely bound up with its location within the social structure, so that a sociological description of the complex relations in which an individual stands would inescapably involve a normative discourse too... Once the bourgeois social order begins to reify fact, and to construct a kind of human subject transcendently prior to its social relations, this historically grounded ethics is bound to enter into crisis. (80-81).

In its moral profile traditional Chinese society parallels the pre-bourgeois society that Eagleton describes. And although there are significant differences between modern Chinese society and the typical bourgeois (read: modernized) society in the West, Eagleton's observation on the ethical crisis during the historical transformation still provides some useful clues to our study of the crisis of modern Chinese selfhood. Both in modern Chinese society and in the west, the awakening of individual consciousness and the elevation of the individual subject are regarded as conspicuous marks of modernity.

At the same time, however, according to Eagleton, the individual subject that emerges in bourgeois society and "reinterpret[s] the world with reference to itself" is

what “a ruling class requires for its ideological solidarity” (70, 75). In other words, this individual interpretation of modern subjectivity is conditioned by a specific historical context and inevitably has its own limitations. It cannot be the final and universal answer to modernity’s quest for a secured and satisfactory selfhood. In the context of early modern China, the concept of the individual self was first hailed as a powerful counter-balance to the oppressive power of traditional social structure and its ideology, and over a long period of time was regarded as the ideal form of modern selfhood for Chinese people. However, writers like Mu Dan started to question and “deconstruct” this unified individual selfhood in different ways. Among this group of intellectuals, Mu Dan is actually a latecomer, but his challenge to the individualist version of the modern self is one of the most powerful and absolute. In this poem, for example, the poet demonstrates the problematic position of youth in modern society and the utmost difficulty, if not the impossibility, of constituting a unified and satisfactory selfhood. It is disheartening to find that the youth, who for many early modern Chinese writers is doubtless a symbol of hope, here is sealed in endless frustration, and that the “new constitutions” are always beyond one’s reach.

Finally, though not evident in the poem “Spring,” I would argue that the poet’s quest for a secure and satisfactory selfhood inevitably extends beyond the world of private experience and aestheticism, and enters the public sphere and reality in the end. Mu Dan’s emphasis on “desire” and “body” does not confine his writing within the sphere of private libidinal economy, and although a poet, he does not seem to believe in the redemptive power of art *per se*. His irritation during the search for modern selfhood paradoxically drives him to look for more concrete and more dramatic ways to fulfill his

dream in the outside world. In the same year that he composed this poem, Mu Dan gave up his job and joined the Chinese Expedition Force for Burma in an effort to aid the British troops there to fight the Japanese. It is of course attempting to interpret his action as the result of the innocent patriotic passion of an ordinary citizen of China, yet I would suggest that the poet's decision also discloses his secret longing to get involved in the dynamic world of reality and to identify with a collective and sublime movement --- a sacred war for the nation's liberation. To put it in another way, the poet aims to dissolve his private body within the collective "body" of the nation, and through the renovation of the latter to fulfill the potentials of his self. Even a meaningful death is better than a listless life. As he says in one of the memorial poems composed after his return from the battlefield: "You died, for the survival of the living /.../ Nobody knows that history has once passed this site, /And left heroic souls in the trees, where they continue to grow" (Mu, 214). However, the actual impact of war on the poet and his poetic works is much more ambiguous than he expected at the beginning. We will make a more detailed analysis of this issue in Chapter 4, but it is necessary to point out here that even the sacred experience of war does not totally exorcize the poet's skepticism toward the possibility of constructing an ideal modern selfhood for Chinese people. Both Mu Dan's original zest for the war and his later entangled relationship with the nationalist/collectivist discourse are typical of contemporary intellectuals, and shed new light on the complexity of the crisis of modern Chinese selfhood.

The poem "Spring" at first seems to focus on the private feelings of a youthful figure and the crisis within his individual consciousness, but as we have seen, it also reveals the *Zeitgeist* of modern Chinese people at a critical moment in history. At the risk

of over-interpreting, I would push my reading of this poem one step further and take the image of the modern subject in “Spring” as a collective allegory of the Chinese nation as well as of modern Chinese literature. Behind this argument of mine is obviously Frederic Jameson’s famous --- or maybe notorious --- theory that all third-world texts are national allegories. As he maintains:

Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic --- necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: *the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society.* ( “Third-World Literature” 69)

Paradoxically, the Chinese nation and its literature are both “old” and “new” at the same time. Although China is one of the oldest civilizations in the world, the idea of the Chinese people as a homogeneous “nation” and China as a nation state is actually a modern phenomenon.<sup>3</sup> Hence the awakening of self-consciousness of a modern Chinese youth parallels the awakening of national consciousness of the entire nation, and the crisis in the private life of this poetic figure echoes the crisis of the collective. It is equally important, however, to point out that this allegorical reading does not necessarily suggest that the poet consciously composes the poem as a political work, nor does it suggest that he unconditionally endorses nationalist discourse. Yet it does remind us of the close relationship between individual talent and history in the context of modern China, something we often ignore when we read literary works, the so-called lyrical poetry in particular.

In the light of an allegorical reading, we can also interpret the poem as a reflection on modern Chinese literature itself, which in the 1940s was still in its “youthful” stage and anxiously looked for a distinctive voice of its own. Moreover, the anxiety of Chinese



writers is not simply a form of “anxiety of influence,” which is confined within the aesthetic field and based on the tension between older and younger generations of artists or between western “models” and Chinese imitators. Rather, their agony about their art, in the final analysis, is also part of the concern about the collective identity of the Chinese nation. Hence the uneasiness of an individual about his (or her) selfhood, an artist’s concern about the distinctive form of his art, and the collective anxiety about national identity are tightly interwoven in the poem “Spring.” This entanglement of the personal and the historical, the aesthetic and the political is not unique, however, but a general characteristic of modern Chinese literature and art. It partly explains why I chose to start this dissertation with a close reading of this poem of Mu Dan and gave it such a lengthy interpretation: Besides its own beauty, this poem can be used as a good index to the complexity of modern Chinese literature and art and help us “to see a world in a grain of sand.” Yet I do not mean to say that Mu Dan’s response to the crisis of modern Chinese selfhood is the only right one and necessarily superior to others. Indeed, an important aim of this work is to examine Chinese artists’ different responses to the general crisis, to decipher their connections with the historical context, and to judge both their contributions and limitations from a contemporary perspective.

Mu Dan’s poetry is widely praised as the paramount example of “modernist” literature in China, and the relationship between literary modernism and social modernization is always a focal point in the studies of modern literature. A definition of literary modernism and of Chinese modernism therefore seems necessary at the beginning of this work. However, although Mu Dan himself was a keen reader of western modernist literature and was directly influenced by T. S. Eliot, Auden, and William

Empson (his teacher when he was an undergraduate in the Foreign Languages Department of the Southwest United University), I would not regard his works as “modernist” simply because they are successful imitations of the canonized texts in the West. Neither would I interpret Chinese modernism from this simplistic and Eurocentric point of view. Instead, I would start with a definition provided by Marshall Berman, who defines modernism “as any attempt by modern men and women to become subjects as well as objects of modernization, to get a grip on the modern world and make themselves at home in it” (Berman, 5). As Berman notes pointedly, this is a “broad and open way” compared with most other conceptions of modernism, yet it “creates conditions for dialogue among the past, the present and the future, cuts across physical and social space, and reveals solidarities between great artists and ordinary people, and between residents of what we clumsily call the Old, the New and the third Worlds” (5-6). The positive part of Berman’s definition is its openness, especially its open acceptance of modernist trends and movements other than the Euro-American centered “High-Modernism,” which is explicitly or covertly a dominant western discourse (though by defining it in this way I do not mean to diminish its achievement and importance). In a multicultural age, thanks to the efforts of critics like Berman, it has become a common view in literary criticism that the ethical values and artistic standards set by the modernist masters in the West are not universally applicable, and that modernism in a global context cannot be interpreted simply as the spread of an artistic fashion from the European centers to non-western peripheries. From Berman’s perspective, to decipher the form and content of modern consciousness and its connection with its historical context is actually more important than to distinguish modernism from other artistic trends and schools as a unique literary

movement. This is why in this work I deliberately avoid using the term “modernism” unless absolutely necessary.

However, when employing Berman’s conception we must also avoid the error of over-emphasizing those “solidarities” (read: similarities), listed above. First, modernist trends should be explained in their particular local contexts as well as global perspectives. Globally it needs to be situated not only in the framework of artists’ mutual influence but also in the tangled global discursive/power network. Neither should we assume a generalized “modernity” as the condition for all modernist movements alike (what “modernity” means to a culture may differ from case to case), nor should we naively believe that these trends enjoy an equal privilege of birth. Second, within a particular modernist trend, the “solidarity” between “great artists and ordinary people” is also problematic. The common ground between modern artists and intellectuals and the mass, if possible, cannot be regarded as a historical given. Their initial reactions to historical changes may be drastically different, and such differences also leave their marks on the literary texts. In the Chinese case, for example, the lack of a strong urban middle class and the existence of a large peasant population --- normally illiterate or semi-illiterate, with no opportunities to get in touch with the new social discourse and little affected by the spread of the modern print industry--- significantly weakens the general influence of modern Chinese literature on the society in its early stage and leads to an alienation inside the presumably homogeneous “Chinese people,” dividing the intellectuals from the mass, and turning them into domestic Others toward each other.

### **Self, Figure, and Individual**

Two key terms frequently appear in this work: *self* and *the lyrical*. When interpreting the poem “Spring” in the last section, we have touched on these two concepts already. It would be helpful to make, though still unavoidably in a simplistic way, some further analyses of these terms before we move on to more specific studies of literary and artistic works in the following chapters. I would start with the concept of “self.” The common understanding of “self” links it closely to another two terms that have long become foci in the study of modern literary and cultural theories: “subject” and “individual.” For many common readers of literature, “self” and “the individual” or “individual subject” are synonyms and interchangeable. However, both historical review and theoretical analysis illustrate that such an identification of self with individual is crude and oversimplifying at best, and at worst a deliberate distortion of a much more complicated reality. The concept of “self” has been interpreted variously in modern Chinese intellectual history. It may be an individual and isolated self, a transcendental self, a collective self, or a “self” that is innately splintered and fragmentary. Instead of being a fixed entity, “self” diachronically exists as a process, and synchronically as a field where different discourses and practices conflict, compete, and sometimes unexpectedly converge with each other. Each specific interpretation of modern selfhood, on the one hand, meets certain psychological and historical exigencies, and on the other hand has its limits.

The concept of the subject is also a complicated story. As Robert M. Strozier illustrates, there are two distinctively different concepts of the subject in the history of philosophy. The first defines subject “as a foundation or as an origin of thought, action,

and change” and the second is “the notion that the subject is the result of some enculturating process.” In other words, “in the first case the subject is the given; this subject produces culture and knowledge; the other subject is produced by culture” (Strozier 10). While risking over-simplification, I would suggest that in the context of the modern age the notion of subject is first related to the exaltation of the individual self during the rise of bourgeois society, subsequently leading to the autonomy of the individual as the effect of modernization; and then in the post-modern age the critical rethinking leads to a different understanding of subject that regards it as a structure and a product of environment. In current studies of humanities and social sciences, the essentialist interpretation of the subject has been gradually replaced by the constructionist one. Yet the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive: the subject is neither the absolute master of knowledge and the world, nor simply a deceptive hallucination employed to cover the fragmentary and powerless condition of individuals under the control of various practical and discursive powers. In practice, the subject is both *subject to* some controlling social and historical structures, no matter what they are called --- the Marxist economic basis and its corresponding superstructure, the Freudian unconscious, Foucauldean discourses, or something else --- and at the same time also self-reflexive and self-constituting. It is in a contingent and shifting condition, yet also entitled to a certain freedom. Hence I feel free to make self / subject, selfhood / subjectivity mutually replaceable in this work. Critics may choose more flexible terms to refer to self and subject in their works. For example, Ban Wang uses “figure” in his book to substitute for “subject.” According to him, “figure” “points to the subject” but “is more sensuous, imagistic, and specular,” and “bears the traces of historical and cultural formations at

their most visible and palpable.” It can be “a plastic figure, a figure of speech, a figure for mirror identification, or a historical figure enveloped in a mysterious aura” (2). The elasticity and openness of Wang’s idea of “figure” ideally fits my interpretation of self and subject, so in some places in this work I also take “figure” to refer to the other two terms.

Although self, subject and figure are terms similar to each other and mutually replaceable, the concepts of “individual” and “individuality” cannot smoothly fit in with the group. As I have mentioned earlier in this section, in the context of modern China, the individualist conception of self, though having been cordially affirmed and propagated by a large number of intellectuals and writers, turns out to be just one among many different strategies employed by Chinese people to construct their selfhood in the torrent of dramatic historical changes. The popularity of the individualist understanding of selfhood makes it urgent for us to historicize it and to appreciate its contributions as well as its limitations. The influence of this version of modern selfhood was particularly strong in two historical periods: the beginning stage of modern Chinese literature, especially the May Fourth Era, and the Post-Mao Era of 1980s and early 1990s. Since in this work I concentrate on Chinese literature and art in the first half of the twentieth century, it is the concept of the individualist self and its influence on literature in the May Fourth Era that interests me in particular.

The May Fourth Era has been set by many critics as the “official” starting point of modern Chinese literature and, in the textbooks of Communist or Socialist China especially, as the beginning of the history of “modern China.” It is remembered as an “age of giants” and admired by latecomers. First in the collective memory of the younger

generations of intellectuals and then, largely thanks to the institutionalized ideological machine of the state, in the collective memory of the nation, May Fourth is remembered as a sacred time, illuminated by a glaring galaxy of writers and thinkers. More importantly, through constant interpretations and reinterpretations, in people's recollection it has been gradually made a pure origin, a source of power and authority, to which different political parties, artistic schools as well as individual writers continually go back for guidance, inspiration, and privilege of discourse.<sup>4</sup> In recent years the May Fourth Era's position as the sacred "beginning" of modern Chinese literature has been questioned and revised,<sup>5</sup> yet even now there is no doubt that the 1910s and early 1920s signifies a decisive moment in the history of modern Chinese culture.

Besides its other achievements, many scholars view the May Fourth Era first and foremost as a time for the awakening of the individual consciousness, for the liberation of the individual from the restraints of social conventions, and for the confrontation between the reformers who cherished individual's freedom and the conservatives who still embraced traditional ethical and aesthetic values. The scholars also suggest a strong bond between the rise of the individual and individualism and the birth of modern Chinese literature and culture. In this aspect the work of Jaroslav Průšek, the pioneer in the field of modern Chinese literature studies in the west, may serve as a paramount example. Průšek clearly points out that the modern Chinese revolution is, "in the sphere of ideas, a revolution of the individual and of individualism in opposition to traditional dogmas," which unavoidably results in the "subjectivistic and individualistic tendencies in modern Chinese thought and art" (2). The individualistic mood further leads to another two major characteristics of modern Chinese literature: the development of realism and the sense of

tragedy. For Průšek, the newly-discovered individual consciousness “must go hand in hand with realism, with the ability to look at oneself and at the facts of existence without the spectacles of tradition” (2). The knowledge of the true life conditions was, however, unpleasant most of the time. The awakened individual would immediately feel the threats to his freedom from the outside world and would realize the sharp contrast between ideal and reality. As Průšek laments, “[i]f we are confined to this life alone, and if it is full of hardship and suffering, then nothing can recompense us for this tragedy, it is a misfortune that cannot be repaired” (2-3). He then comes to the conclusion:

There can be no question that subjectivism and individualism, joined with pessimism and a feeling for the tragedy of life, along with an inclination to revolt and even the tendency to self-destruction, are the most characteristic qualities of Chinese literature from the May Fourth Movement of 1919 to the outbreak of war with Japan. (3)

Průšek’s observations on the May Fourth Era evidently take an individualist perspective, and he extends his observation to cover not only the particular era in question, but also modern Chinese literature in the next two decades or so. His keen awareness of the sense of tragedy that permeated the works by early Chinese writers is particularly important to my study of selfhood in modern Chinese literature, for, needless to say, this pessimistic view of life is an obvious symptom of the crisis of the modern Chinese self. Yet I hasten to add that the crisis of selfhood in modern China is not simply the result of the combat between the awakened individual and his environment. The challenges to a secure and integrated selfhood come from all quarters, and in some cases the negation of individuality is, paradoxically, the price that one has to pay for the successful construction of modern self.



Průšek's effort to establish a connection between individual consciousness and the rise of realism in Chinese literature is also worthy of attention. Realism is often regarded as an aesthetic practice that salutes objectivity and impartiality, that stresses the accurate description of a specific social reality, and that, particularly in the context of modern China, serves as a discursive tool diagnosing the illness of society, exploring possible solutions to social problems, and, in the final analysis, disclosing the grand narrative of history that lies beneath the surface of everyday triviality. This utilitarian view of realism reached its climax when Marxist critics distinguished "socialist realism" or "revolutionary realism" from classical realism (habitually referring to nineteenth-century European realism and sometimes including naturalism) and employed the former to legitimate and buttress socialist / Communist ideology. The concept of "socialist realism" first emerged in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In post-1949 China it was officially incorporated into the state ideology.<sup>6</sup> Realism, which was originally an artistic movement and a narrative mode, was then turned into a political dogma.<sup>7</sup> Průšek's indication of the "individual" aspect of realism, however, may help to lead to a much more flexible and multifarious understanding of this literary term. When being confronted with a radically changed world, each modern Chinese writer has to find his / her unique method to present and interpret the new reality from individual perspectives, and it is impossible to harness their various experiments with a single artistic or political yoke. Moreover, Průšek's emphasis on the writer's individuality and the subjective aspect of his or her experiments in literature highlights the fact that realist works are by no means simple replica of the factual life in the outside world; on the contrary, the "reality" in these works is already mediated, and realism is as fictional / illusive as it is referential.<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, though insightful and effective in its own right, Průšek's interpretation of the May Fourth Era and modern Chinese literature should not be taken as conclusive. Neither is it --- it may seem paradoxical --- unreservedly "individualist." Although Průšek is a great proponent of "subjectivism and individualism," he does not neglect other trends and possibilities in the development of modern Chinese literature. While emphasizing the importance of the individual's liberation, he also notices the fact that "personal confessions" can be proof of one's "anxiety for his nation" (57). While he is attracted by the "lyrical" quality of traditional Chinese literature and discovers a solid connection between traditional and modern Chinese literary works, he never denies that "epic" style, which aims to convey "massive, objective panoramas of life and society" (Lee, "Foreword" ix), is on the rise in modern Chinese literature and challenges the dominating position of the "lyrical" (41-42). And despite his stress on the subjective and potentially phantasmal side of realism, he also acknowledges realism's scientific and analytical side, regarding it as "an expression of an effort to make literature an instrument of knowledge" that aims to "become acquainted with it [reality], comprehend it, and understand its laws" (42). As Leo Ou-fan Lee points out, "it is this dialectical combination of the objective and the subjective, the 'epic' and the 'lyrical,' that gives the mainstream of modern Chinese literature its major hallmark. While Průšek might have been temperamentally attracted to the lyrical strain, he is intellectually committed to both" ("Foreword" x). Průšek's overall observations on modern Chinese literature are rather poised, and his efforts to uncover hidden connections between apparently dichotomous and incompatible elements in modern Chinese literature have opened up many possibilities for further research. Nevertheless, for Průšek, an awakened and

dynamic individual is always the precondition of any further diversification and development in modern Chinese literature.

While Průšek's endeavor to combine seemingly antagonistic forces augurs a promising dialectical synthesis, the immanent tension between his devotion to art and his obligation as a Marxist ideologue is almost insoluble. His perceptive analysis of modern Chinese literature can only belong to a serious literary historian and a passionate and experienced connoisseur of art; yet side by side with it we also find his rather clumsy attempt to mechanically apply Marxist theories of class difference and class struggle to the study of literature and label individuals authors with terms like "proletariat" and "bourgeois," "revolutionary" and "reactionary." The limitations of his ideological framework inevitably affect his literary criticism. For one thing, the writers who interest him and receive detailed discussion in his works are limited to those loosely categorized as "proletariat," "Left-Wing," or "progressive," among whom the most notable ones are, for instance, Lu Xun, Guo Moruo, Yu Dafu, Mao Dun, Ye Shaojun, Zheng Zhenduo and Ding Ling. Writers holding different political opinions and coming from other artistic schools are either ignored, or, even worse, only get derogatory comments. For our study of modern Chinese selfhood in particular, this prejudice of Průšek leads to a remarkable negligence in his discussion of the May Fourth Era: the humanistic view of the individual and individualism of Zhou Zuoren. Zhou Zuoren's humanism has been thoroughly studied elsewhere by modern scholars such as Qian Liqun and Susan Daruvala.<sup>9</sup> Here I just want to point out that both Zhou Zuoren's view of the individual in the late 1910s and his changed view in the early 1920s represent some significant alternatives to Průšek's interpretation of individualism in the same historical period. In the former, Zhou

Zuoren proposes a kind of cosmopolitanism based on liberated individuals, hence endowing individualism with a kind of collective aspiration while implicitly transcending the limits of national identity. In the latter, individualism is used to resist the dominance of the modern grand narrative about history and to defend the independence of art. Although Zhou Zuoren's ideas on modern Chinese selfhood are not directly analyzed in my dissertation, nonetheless they have had enormous influence on other writers and hence often lurk in the background of my study of modern Chinese selfhood.

In short, although the individualistic version of selfhood was once extraordinarily popular and influential in early modern China, it nonetheless neither exhausts all the possible imaginings of modern subjectivity nor is it a unified and homogeneous concept in itself. On the contrary, it is both confronted by different kinds of configurations of selfhood --- collective, transcendental, or segmented --- and, more importantly, is innately divided, conflicted, and unstable. This idea of individual selfhood, on the one hand, illustrates the complexity of modern Chinese subjectivity in general; on the other hand it particularly affects our understanding of the next key term in this work: the lyrical.

### **The “Lyrical” Mood in Modern Chinese Literature: A Cultural Analysis**

Besides “self” and “subject,” another key term in my present work is “lyrical.” In this work I use the term “lyrical” in a cross-genre manner that differs from traditional interpretations in certain ways. I argue that “lyrical” should not be understood simply as a style, a genre or an aesthetic category within the traditional “discipline of aesthetics,” and detached from social reality. Rather, it is a mode of imagination that intends to ease the anxiety of the modern Chinese figures and to bridge the gap between individual

consciousness, on the one hand, and transcendental aspiration or collective identity, on the other. When the reconciliation proves impossible under the pressure of harsh reality, the lyrical imagination may also metamorphose into a nightmare that exposes the existential dilemma of modern subjects in a deliberately eerie manner. In short, “the lyrical” is a general term which covers different responses to the crisis of selfhood as reflected in modern Chinese literature and aesthetics. Just as the concept of “self” is interpreted variously in modern Chinese intellectual history, the concept of “the lyrical” also becomes an open discursive field accordingly.

Despite my claim that in this work “the lyrical” is understood as a rather open field and covers a wide range of artistic practices, I have to confess that I was first inspired by literary theories on lyric poetry when I was trying to re-define the concept of the lyrical. A conventional understanding of lyric poetry, which may not be impeccably accurate but undoubtedly influential, defines a poem as lyric when it simultaneously fulfill the following requirements: First, it is “meant to be sung” and at least bases part of its beauty on its musical quality; second, instead of developing dramatic plot and full-fledged characters, it focuses on creating a certain mood and atmosphere through imagery, symbolism and other games of words, and appeals to the feelings and emotions of readers, either directly or indicatively; third, the poem is supposed to “directly express the poet’s own thoughts and sentiments” (Lindley 47) and reflects the individual consciousness of the poet. Among the three standards aforementioned, the first one has obviously become dated with the rise of free verse and can be left aside for our present discussion. The following two, however, are still popular among common readers of lyric poetry, and our

current reinterpretation of the “lyrical” may benefit from a close examination of each of these two standards.

The allusiveness and reliance on the metaphorical use of language and the emphasis on arousing mood and atmosphere rather than making a mimetic mirroring of the objective world are widely accepted as essential qualities of lyric poetry, both in the west and in China. Průšek’s observations on traditional Chinese poetry ideally summarizes this aesthetic characteristic of lyric in general:

The basic method of old poetry was to select a few phenomena from reality, which were rich in strong emotion and were usually of a general nature, so that we could practically speak of signs or symbols, and through them evoke a certain mood rather than give an exact description of a particular phenomenon or state (41-42).

When we discuss the “lyrical” as a mood, this strategy of writing is then no longer limited to lyric poetry but can be applied to other genres as well: fiction, drama, or film. In contrast to classical realism and naturalism, let alone “socialist realism,” the narrative of fiction can be set free from the restraints of the temporal and spatial limitation of empirical experience as well as the casual laws of the objective world.<sup>10</sup> A stage performance can be transformed into an expression of subjective feelings and the externalization of the characters’ inner landscape. And film, with its art of cinematography and its magic of montage, becomes an ideal vehicle for the lyrical imagination and visualizes various alternative narratives of reality. Moreover, the “lyrical” as a mood can tear down the boundaries between artistic genres and bridge the gap between the traditional and the modern, serving as the common denominator to modern literature in the west and in China. Here again, Průšek provides us with some useful hints. For example, in his analysis of modern Chinese short stories he maintains:

I would venture to say that the roots of the exquisite modern Chinese poetry, such as the short story of Lu Hsün, in so far as they have roots in old Chinese literature at all, are not to be found in old Chinese prose but in poetry. Probably that is where we have to search for the ability to render the environment, sketch a figure and, above all, create the atmosphere of the story with a few strokes. (56)

In short, the first important quality of lyrical poetry has been widely adopted in modern literature and art, helping to form a tie between tradition and modernity / modernist experiments.

We may now turn to the customary identification of speaking voice in lyrical poems with the individual consciousness of the poet. This identification conveniently turns lyric poetry into an authentic and unmediated reflection of the private voice of the individual author and creates a mysterious aura around the genre. In the western context, this idea, though present in ancient literary thoughts, only became predominant in the era of Romanticism. M. H. Abrams has accurately described this understanding of the relationship between lyric poetry and author:

The lyric form... had long been particularly connected by critics to the state of mind of its author. Unlike the narrative and dramatic forms, most critics do not include such elements as characters and plot, which can be readily explained (according to the common mirror-interpretation of mimesis) as imitations of external people and events. The majority of lyrics consist of thoughts and feelings uttered in the first person, and the one readily available character to whom these sentiments may be referred is the poet himself. (*The Mirror and the Lamp* 84-85)

The emphasis on lyric poetry's connection with the private psychology of the individual author further introduces a dichotomous and hierarchical pattern into the judgment of different literary genres, one that strongly favors lyric. Presumed to be derived from individual experiences and imaginations, lyric becomes a self-sufficient domain detached from history of actuality. Social and political elements, condemned for their banality and

vulgarity, are purged from the world of the lyric. Hence, compared with other literary genres, lyric becomes the “purest” form and the ideal bearer of eternal beauty and is raised to a superior position among different forms of writings.

In the history of western literature, this complimentary understanding of lyric poetry is actually a rather recent phenomenon and based on the consecration of the individualistic self. Self in this context is viewed as a subject unaffected by the vicissitude of history and is the absolute master of life --- at least of an independent and self-sufficient private domain, which is in opposition to the turmoil of the “outside” world. However, as we have discussed in the previous section, the consecration of the individualistic self is, in the final analysis, the product of modern bourgeois ideology, and the image of a consistent and omnipotent individual is phantasmal by nature. In the increasingly dehumanizing world of capitalist society, this seemingly potent individual serves as self-defense for the alienated and fragmented modern subject against the oppression of the outside world and functions as “psychic reality” for him, providing him with a momentary asylum and a false sense of security. However, as long as the struggle against alienating power is only confined to the subjective world or the world of personal imagination, the individual can never be authentically “free,” and lyrical poetry can never become a “pure” artistic form as it is asserted to be. As Theodor Adorno has pointed out, there is a dialectical relationship between the assertion of lyric poetry’s “purity” and the condition of being an individual in the modern era:

[T]he demand that the lyric word be virginal, is itself social in nature. It implies a protest against a social situation that every individual experiences as hostile, alien, cold, oppressive, and this situation is imprinted in reverse on the poetic work: the more heavily the situation weighs upon it, the more firmly the work resists it by refusing to submit to anything heteronomous and constituting itself solely in accordance with its



own laws... The lyric spirit's idiosyncratic opposition to the superior power of material things is a form of reaction to the reification of the world, to the domination of human beings by commodities that has developed since the beginning of the modern era, since the industrial revolution became the dominant force in life. (Adorno, 2:39-40)

Fredric Jameson, in his discussion of literature in general, has also firmly argued that the enshrinement of a “pure” and independent aesthetic domain in culture will only “reinforce the gap between the public and the private, between the social and the psychological, or the political and the poetic, between history or society and the ‘individual’, which...maims our existence as individual subjects and paralyzes our thinking about time and change just as surely it alienates us from our speech itself” (*The Political Unconscious* 20). The modern interpretation of lyric poetry requires the reconstruction of ties between literary works and social/historical conditions, as well as the reinterpretation of the concept of the individualistic self-consciousness that is supposed to be behind each lyrical text. While acknowledging the close connection between lyric poetry and the subjective thoughts and feelings of the author, we must remember: First, the “personal” voice in the poem is not simply the voice of the poet the real person but of an imaginary individual speaker, or the *persona*. This imaginary individual behind each poem is not necessarily a faithful replica of the mind of the author, nor is it always consistent in itself. Especially in modern lyrics, poets may purposely choose to distance themselves from the speaking voice in the poem and make the voice sound fragmentary in order to achieve an ironic effect and to urge readers to critically rethink a seemingly familiar reality. Second, in the larger socio-historical context, the personal voice in each lyric poem is not only decided by its author but represents the interiorized consciousness of its times, the *Zeitgeist*, which is historically specific and

serves as the medium between actual history and the personal imagination of the poet. As one critic maintains, “[the] projection of a peculiarly interiorized and articulated consciousness, which defines the genre, is a historical phenomenon...the precise nature of its structure will vary from period to period according to the ideological patterns on which it is based” (Miller, 2). In the light of this understanding, the “individualistic” side of lyric poetry is rather the epitome of the *Zeitgeist* of different ages. When we extend these observations to other genres, we find that they are of special importance in our studies of apparently subjective texts, where the narrator taints the entire world with a distinctively personal color. The texts may seem naïve and innocent, but we should be vigilant against either the easy identification between the narrator / character and the author or readers’ unsuspicious acceptance of the stories’ face value.

Besides the critical rethinking of western theory on lyrical poetry, another source for my expansion and redefinition of the concept of the “lyrical” is the rereading of traditional Chinese literary criticism. If in the western tradition the identification of speaking voice in the poem with the individual consciousness of the poet becomes the basic and definitive element of lyrical poetry, then in the poetics of ancient China, the standard of good lyrical poetry is just the opposite. A Chinese lyrical poet always tries his best to remove the trace of his personal thoughts and feelings from his poetic works and manages to achieve what is called by Wang Guowei as the “state without I”:

There is the “state with I” (you wo zhi jing, 有我之境) and there is the “state without I” (wu wo zhi jing, 无我之境) ... In the “state with I” the poet views objects in terms of himself and so everything takes his own colouring. In the “state without I” the poet views objects in terms of objects and so one cannot tell the difference between what is the poet himself and what is the object... The “state without I” can only be attained when one is in complete quietude. The “state without I” is attained in the quiet that follows actions. Therefore the one [“the state without I”] is

beautiful (you mei, 优美) and the other [“the state with I”] is sublime (hong zhuang, 宏壮). (Wang Guowei, 1-3)

Wang’s division between the “state with I” and “state without I” occurs at all different levels: psychological, aesthetic, and ontological. Psychologically, the “state with I” is based on the explicit demonstration of the emotional and intellectual movements of the poet, hence a dynamic process in nature, and often the reflection of strong, sometimes excessive, personal feelings. The “state without I,” by contrast, is based on the tranquility and transparency of the soul of the poet and is devoid of any form of emotional vicissitude. Aesthetically, the “state with I” is attached by Wang Guowei to the Kantian sublime and the “state without I” to the idea of the beautiful. Yet between the “State with I” and Kantian Sublime there are some subtle differences. For Kant the Sublime is an aesthetic notion to be found “in an object even devoid of form, so far as it immediately involves, or else by its presence provokes a representation of limitlessness, yet with a superadded thought of its totality” (495). The Sublime brings a kind of “negative pleasure” that may exhaust “our power of judgment” and “our faculty of presentation,” and result in “an outrage on the imagination” (495). Through this way of negation the Sublime may lead people out of their limitations to a realization of universal reason, of a harmonization between the individual being and the universal being, of the self and the transcendental law. In Kant’s words, the feeling of the sublime is

[A]t once a feeling of displeasure, arising from the inadequacy of imagination in the aesthetic estimation of magnitude to attain to its estimation by reason, and a simultaneously awakened pleasure, arising from this very judgment of the inadequacy of the greatest faculty of sense being in accord with ideas of reason, so far as the effort to attain to these is for us a law. It is, in other words, for us a law (of reason), which goes to make us what we are, that we should esteem as small in comparison with ideas of reason everything which for us is great in nature as an object of

sense; and that which makes us alive to the feeling of this supersensible side of our being harmonizes with that law. (501)

In the Chinese context, however, the “state with I” is most likely realized through the empathic projection of individual emotions onto the outside world. It is not necessarily based on the conflict between the infinite object and the awed individual consciousness, but rather it is more frequently achieved by the assertion and expansion of the poet’s individual self. The harmonization with the transcendental law in traditional Chinese poetry, paradoxically, is only accomplished through the “state without I,” in which the individual self is dissolved and removed from the scene; in its place appears an unmediated unison between the self and the world, the subject and the object. Through this seamless scene of synchronization, one can further perceive the mysterious *Dao*, the universal law and fundamental state of being that is beyond language and has no concrete forms. This whole process, however, is always carried out in the utmost peace and serenity, with no traces of anguish and frustration endemic to the Kantian sublime. Finally, at the ontological level, the “state with I” is obviously rooted in the dichotomy between the subject and the object, although the object can be finally conquered or mastered in the subject’s empathic projection of feelings and emotions. The “state without I,” on the hand, is based on the cancellation of this dichotomous division, and the unison between the subject and object is not fulfilled in the dialectical pattern of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, but in a mysterious oneness that can hardly be grasped by mechanical rationality.

The traditional Chinese view of lyrical poetry was rediscovered in the modern age and brought inspirations to Chinese writers of different genres, artistic schools, and literary tastes. Its influence is especially conspicuous in the literary works aiming at

aesthetic redemption, which is the topic of Chapter One in my present study. However, like the traditional, individualist understanding of lyric poetry in the west, the Chinese concept of lyric poetry is also a historical product and hence has its own limitations. It successfully bridges literature and philosophy, aesthetics and ontology, the concrete imagery in art and the unspeakable law of the universe; it endows every mundane detail of everyday life with a profound, universal meaning. Yet whether it is possible to always maintain the harmonious relationship between the individual, the objective world and the universal law behind the phenomenological world is a hard question that this theory of poetry fails to answer. In the final analysis, this harmony is still a subjective one confined within the world of art --- a world which seems to be enticingly independent and self-sufficient. It is a good strategy to counter-balance and compensate for the grief and desperation one may undergo during one's encounter with the real world, yet it is not a guarantee of absolute freedom and a final solution to one's existential crisis. In the era of modernity, the limitation of this old strategy becomes more conspicuous, because the drastically changed conditions of the society make the effort to maintain this beautiful dream of utmost harmony harder than ever.

\*\*\*

The dissertation mainly takes a thematic approach and the texts I examine cut cross a spectrum of conventional genres and established historical periods in literary history. Among others, the texts explored include Lu Xun's stories and prose poems; lyrical poems of Ai Qing, Mu Dan and some other minor poets; novels and stories by Fei Ming and Shi Zhecun. The dissertation also involves western texts for comparison, such

as the poetry of Baudelaire and other French Symbolists, novels of Anglo-American modernists, and poetic as well as critical works of Whitman, T. S. Eliot, and Auden.

There are four chapters in my dissertation plus Introduction. Chapter One, “The Crisis of Selfhood and the Efforts to Transcend It: Taking Refuge in Nature and Through Nostalgia for the Past,” analyzes the trend of aesthetic redemption in modern Chinese literature that aims to ease the tension between individual and social reality and to solve the spiritual crisis of the modern Chinese subject through aesthetic redemption. Briefly speaking, this trend tends to create an ideal world in art and literature, detached from and uncontaminated by social reality, and turn this wonderland into a spiritual haven for modern people. The modern individual may not only find rest and consolation in this aesthetic refuge but, as he is both the creator and the master of this world, maintain his self-image of freedom and integrity. This strategy can be further divided into three sub-categories: to turn literature and art into a mythical and self-sufficient realm; to turn nature into a spiritual refuge; to make a piece of memory a retreat and a source of consolation. In this chapter, I am particularly interested in the last two types of aesthetic imagination and their confluence in modern Chinese art and literature. I will also try to historicize the transcendental trend in modern Chinese literature and discuss its effects as well as limitations in the face of historical exigencies and reality in this chapter.

Chapter Two, “The Modern Self in the Urban Landscape: Interactions between the City and Its Dwellers,” focuses on modern Chinese urban literature and aims to analyze different representations of urban experience in modern Chinese literature and the modern individual’s ambivalent position in cities. For the convenience of analysis, I divide the image of modern city life into three types: the city as a sublime image, the city

as a decadent image, and the city as a familiar living environment. Each represents a different relationship between the modern individual and the modern world. However, it also seemed true that in the same artistic work the different images of urban experience appear at the same time and get mingled together. Indeed, it is exactly the hybridity of these texts that provides their richness and reveals the complexity of modern metropolitan life. This chapter also pays special attention to the role of fantasy in modern Chinese urban literature, especially its connection with the individual's lack of self-control as well as the fetishism of "private space."

Chapter Three, "Collective Aspiration, the Political Sublime, and the Literature of Action: Left-Wing Literature" discusses the influence of revolutionary ideology (both nationalist and proletariat/Marxist) on modern Chinese literature, especially its influence on the (re)construction of modern Chinese selfhood. Despite the differences between these revolutionary theories, nationalist and Marxist ideologies favored grand historical narratives and collective/action-oriented discourses. With a progressive outlook on history, they held the belief that individual's liberation can only be achieved through his participation in mass movements by merging into a collective, capitalized "Self." Besides other works, I choose to analyze some "urban" texts written by Left-Wing writers in this chapter to make a comparison with those covered in Chapter 3. At the same time, I also make some alternative readings of the canonized "revolutionary" texts to disclose the fissures and conflicts within this group of works.

Chapter Four, "Apocalypse or Catastrophe?: National Trauma, Individual Crisis, and Historical Dilemma," explores another type of understanding of modern selfhood. The writers discussed in the last three chapters still strive to maintain the integrity and

independence of self (either at the individual level or at the collective level, either in the sphere of art or in the sphere of action), and the failure to do so often drives them into melancholy and frustration. Other writers, however, seem to hold the belief that the fragmentation and disintegration of selfhood is inevitable in the process of China's modernization and social transformation. Though a tragic fact the fragmented self needs to be confronted rather than resolved, and any hasty solution, in the final analysis, may only turn out to be self-deceptive. These writers refuse to embrace either aesthetic transcendentalism or a grand historical narrative but concentrate on the time "now" in the individual's life and the absurdity of his fate. Also instead of taking history as a linear movement of time that points in a certain direction or, as in traditional Chinese historiography, as a great cycle, these writers tend to regard history as the mechanical agglomeration of countless "moments" that have no inner connection. A short conclusion for the whole dissertation follows this chapter.



## **Chapter 1**

### **The Crisis of Selfhood and the Efforts to Transcend It: Taking Refuge in Nature and Through Nostalgia for the Past**

#### **I. Experiments in Aesthetic Redemption: Types, Characteristics and Limits**

In this chapter, I will analyze the trend of aesthetic redemption in modern Chinese literature, which aims to ease the tension between the modern self and social reality and to solve the existential crisis of modern Chinese subject through various forms of aesthetic experiments in artistic creation. This trend tends to construct an idealistic world in art and literature that is detached from and uncontaminated by the world of reality, as the latter is always inimical to the individual's desire for liberation and self-realization. This wonderland then can be turned into a spiritual haven for the modern Chinese subject: the modern self not only finds temporary solace in this aesthetic refuge but also, as the creator and the master of this imaginary world, maintains a self-image that can claim unlimited freedom, strength, and integrity.

The rise of the trend of the aesthetic redemption in modern Chinese literature and art can only be satisfactorily explained in its historical context. As the result of the social turbulence in China in the 1920s, the New Culture Movement's optimistic belief in a quick and inclusive reform of the society began to decline, and the modern Chinese subject was faced with an even more agonizing spiritual crisis caused by the severe contradiction between the inchoate and rather weak modern consciousness, on the one hand, and the hostile social environment, on the other. The modern self, instead of expanding to conquer and assimilate the outside world, acutely felt the threat that the

objective world imposed on him and was forced to turn inward for inspiration. Some historical reasons for this keen and painful spiritual crisis may include: first, the sweeping effect of alienation in the process of China's hasty and unbalanced modernization; second, the impotence of the Chinese middle class and the frailty of Chinese civil society; third, the disillusionment caused by the decline of the New Culture Movement and the failure of nationalist revolution in the 1920s. The deepened spiritual crisis needed a kind of literary discourse that was more self-reflective and introspective, capable of reflecting the sense of powerlessness and wretchedness of a modern subject and providing it with momentary relief and consolation. The development of aesthetic redemption embodies sharply Chinese writers and artists' endeavor in their quest for this new discourse. By engaging in this alternative discourse of art, the modern subject endeavored to make a retreat from the malicious world of reality into the world of the imaginary. This retreat, whether deliberate or unconscious, was a form of the modern Chinese subject's self-protection against the shocks experienced during its forced encounter with China's wild, sometimes ruthless historical transformation and its depressing effects on social and spiritual life.

I would argue that in modern Chinese literature there were three major methods to realize this aesthetic redemption: to turn literature into a self-sufficient realm with a mythical aura; to turn nature into a spiritual refuge; and to make a selected piece of memory a momentary asylum and a source of consolation. In practice, the three methods can be found interwoven with each other in the works of the same author and in the same artistic work. The first type of aesthetic redemption is best embodied in some modern Chinese poets' pursuit of *poésie pure*. According to their interpretation of poetry, through

the aesthetic experiences of composing and reading poems --- in other words, through the production and consumption of poetry --- it is believed that the individual can be initiated into a mysterious state and then transcend his personal / historical limitedness. In its extreme form, poetry may be abstracted to pure forms. According to this belief, one realizes one's transcendence exclusively through the emotional responses aroused by the musical beauty and poetic images of a poem, and the world of poetry becomes "a universe of its own." The best representative of this group of artists is Liang Zongdai, the Chinese disciple of the French poet Paul Valéry. In one of his articles on poetry, Liang maintains:

The so-called *poésie pure* rejects every form of objective description, narration, reasoning, and even melancholic tone, and focuses on generating a power of enchantment solely based on the formal elements of poetry, i.e., music and color. With this spell-like power, *poésie pure* can call up the responses of our senses and imagination, and elevate our souls into a state of infinite spiritual freedom, enlightenment, and utmost pleasure. Like music, it becomes a universe of its own which is absolutely independent, absolutely free, much purer and much more indestructible than the world of reality. The inseparable fusion of its own musical quality and its colors is its innate *raison d'être*. (Liang, *Shi yu zhen* 95)

As Liang openly acknowledges, the Chinese *poésie pure* trend was heavily influenced by French symbolism and, at the same time, was also inspired by theories of traditional Chinese poetry (92-95). Yet it needs to be pointed out that the extreme formalist interpretation of *poésie pure*, as mentioned above, was never widely accepted in China. Nonetheless, the symbolists' sensitivity to the linguistic and formal aspect of poetic works made an important contribution to the development of modern Chinese poetry. In a more general way, it also affected neighboring genres and played a part in the development of what I call "the lyrical" side of modern Chinese art and literature. For one thing, the reflective and suggestive discourse of symbolism enriched Chinese poetic

language with the use of images and symbols, maintained a proper distance between the poet and the speaking subject in the poem, and reined in the excessive self-exclamations once popular during the New Culture Movement Era. All of these helped modern Chinese poetry to better reflect the complexity of modern subjectivity and simultaneously suggested an alternative writing strategy for narrative literature as well.

The second type of aesthetic redemption, namely, finding spiritual peace in a simple and hospitable natural environment, is an old theme in both Chinese and western traditions and therefore an ideal topic for comparative studies. These traditional literary and artistic works on nature do not only help to enrich modern Chinese artists' discourse of spiritual salvation, but also provide them with a good chance to make a dialogue between the East and the West. However, the relationship between the subject and nature in literature is a highly complicated question and modern writers' conception of nature can be drastically different from that of their ancestors. It needs to be pointed out that both in Chinese literature and in other cultural / ethnic traditions, "nature" is often used as a metaphor rather than as a simple signifier of the natural environment in the world of reality. In other words, "nature" as an idea is actually historically constructed. For a modern subject, this culturally coded "nature" may help to re-establish an ideally harmonious relationship between the individual and his living world and to resume an authentic inter-subjective relationship and communal spirit. Nature hence becomes a beautiful fantasy set in contrast to historical reality and functions as a psychological compensation for modern subjects. The "discovery" of nature in modern literature is to a large extent the ironic result of industrialization and modernization, which has damaged the physical environment of the living world and thrown individuals into an increasingly

inhuman society. The objectification and sanctification of nature thus go hand in hand with the rising anxiety of alienated modern subjects. Also, despite their good will, modern artists' effort to redeem the threatened modern selfhood through creating an ideal individual-nature relationship is not always successful. In many cases, the nature in modern Chinese literary texts, though friendly and beautiful, is described dolefully as a paradise lost --- it exists not in reality, but only in the writer's memory or imagination. From here we can logically move to the next strategy for transcending the crisis of selfhood: transcending reality through memory.

Finding consolation in past memory is a common strategy employed by both modern Chinese and western artists to achieve aesthetic redemption and to liberate modern subjects from the restraints of reality. Memory in this context is set up as a contrast to present and to historical reality. Obviously, memory cannot be simply taken as the factual record of earlier experiences but is the fusion of reality and imagination, of the factuality of past life and the writer's rewriting; it is more a form of the artist's subjective projection than a mirror of the objective world. The memory of an idealized past can take many forms. It can be the memory of a happy childhood, of old home / homeland, or of an uncertain happy moment that might have occurred in a previous period of the subject's life. Together with the theme of memory, we may often find a strong feeling of nostalgia and homesickness. By revisiting the idealized past kept or created in memory, the authors as well as their readers may temporarily forget the troubles in their lives and enjoy a momentary spiritual freedom. However, just as the redemption through nature, the cherishing of memory and the past also has its limits. In many cases works on memory

often end in the subject's painful disillusionment and his keener realization of the ugliness of the present reality.

Failures, lamentable failures --- as we have repeatedly seen in the discussions above, aesthetic redemption or retreat from present reality remain deficient in rescuing the modern subject from the inhuman world of reality. In modern Chinese literature, the motif of disillusionment is as conspicuous and important as the theme of aesthetic redemption itself. Some Chinese writers tenaciously defended their idealistic world of art, but many others would come to a moment in their career, sooner or later, when they began to realize the limitations of such aesthetic experiments and stopped their abortive pursuits of transcendence in an imaginary world. Their disillusionment might drive them into utter desperation and perpetual silence, sometimes even to self-destruction and suicide.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, it might also lead them to embrace different understandings of literature, either the idea of collective aspiration and engagement with reality, or a resigned or cynical acceptance of the absurdity and irrationality of real life. These two different types of literature will be discussed in detail later in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

For those writers who were painfully aware of the limitations of aesthetic redemption yet still longed to keep the aura of the world of art, the aesthetic effort to contain the shock of reality in modern Chinese literature may take an approach that seems totally opposite to the trend of idealization: to create an aesthetic world of darkness based on decadent and even macabre images. Compared with the three aforementioned aesthetic methods, this one better recognizes the social reality and the spiritual crisis of modern self, and admits more directly the limits of aesthetic redemption. In other words, the frequent use of macabre images of decadence and death signifies a return of the

unpleasant experience with reality that is deliberately repressed and “forgotten.” This interest in the grotesque and the morbid shows the influence of the western decadent art, yet it is not simply the result of Chinese artists’ apprenticeship. The wide use of decadent themes and images in modern Chinese literature reflects the intense psychological crisis of modern Chinese subjectivity and forms a conspicuous, if not always intentional, contrast to the “transcendental” works that try to abate the pain in the soul. Yet at the same time, this type of literary work also creates an aesthetic myth of its own: it attempts to distill certain positive aesthetic values from the ugly, totally negative reality, detaching aesthetic experience from social experience and maintaining an autonomous artistic world. Inflating the individual subject as the omnipotent master of the aesthetic world (although he often becomes the master of the self only in death), it blurs the fact that the individual in reality is always forced to submit to the alienating powers beyond his control instead of being the master of his self.<sup>12</sup>

Owing to the limit of scale, in this chapter I will concentrate on the analysis of the last two forms of aesthetic redemption in modern Chinese literature: seeking consolation in natural refuge and nostalgic memory. The works of decadent aestheticism dominated by death instinct will also be touched on, but I would not examine it as a separate category; rather, what draws my interest is how the psychological shadow reflected in these works entangles and interacts with the themes of nature and memory. The two writers I choose to discuss in detail are Lu Xun, the founding father of modern Chinese literature, and Fei Ming, a writer remembered for his “pastoral” theme and style who developed an alternative understanding of modernity in his works about life in the rural areas of modern China.

### **Nature and “*zi ran*”: Re-examining Nature in a Cross-Cultural Context**

Before engaging in the discussion of individual writers, I believe that it will be helpful to provide a more thorough analysis of the notion of “nature,” both historically and theoretically, in order to better understand modern writers’ diversified strategies of constructing a satisfactory selfhood through their invocation of this critical concept of culture. The foregrounding of the theme of nature is a remarkable phenomenon in modern literature and art both in the west and in China. However, different writers’ notions of nature can be far apart from one another, and the individual writer’s understanding of nature is always connected to his cultural tradition as well as his present social and historical conditions.

As we have briefly mentioned before, the rise of nature in modern literature and art is in inverse proportion to the importance of the natural world in reality. For one thing, urbanization has long been recognized as one of the major characteristics and essential components of the sweeping trend of global modernization. Along with the expansion of the city, we have witnessed the irretrievable decline of the countryside and the marginalization of the peasant class in the past few centuries. The depletion of the countryside has been regarded both as the necessary preconditions and inevitable results of modernization around the world. However, in spite of, or I should say precisely because of the decay of rural life in the modern age, in art and literature the elements of rural experience, landscape or “nature” as a whole have been “rediscovered” and endowed with a special significance. Nature has served both as the setting and the central theme in countless literary and artistic works. In this aspect, Raymond Williams’s observations on the rise of the theme of rural life in modern British literature is helpful:



Rural Britain was subsidiary, and knew that it was subsidiary, from the late nineteenth century. But so much of the past of the country, its feelings and its literature, was involved with rural experience, and so many of its ideas of how to live well, from the style of the country-house to the simplicity of the cottage, persisted and even were strengthened, that there is almost an inverse proportion, in the twentieth century, between the relative importance of the working rural economy and the cultural significance of rural ideas. (*The Country and the City* 248)

The “discovery” of nature in modern art and literature is a rather ironic result of the conquest and objectification of the natural world by capitalist production, of the destruction of the organic relationship between human beings and their living environment, of the disintegration of traditional communal life, and of the estrangement of the modern self. The process of discovering nature in art and literature is paralleled by the diminishing and disappearance of the natural world *per se* in reality. As the result, when writers’ consciousness of nature is completely awakened and when ‘nature’ is developed into its fullest and most alluring form in art and literature, it has already become a memory, an artistic dream, a fantasy.

A historical review of the development of the idea of nature in a cross-cultural context can help us to better grasp the complexity of this concept. We may start, quite randomly, from the western tradition. It should be acknowledged that even at the primeval stage of history, ancient people had begun to recognize the charm of the natural world. However, in this early stage of civilization, a unified and general concept of nature that corresponds to the entire natural environment in the real world had not yet come into being. As Jacob Burckhardt maintains in his colossal work *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*,

Among the ancients, for example, art and poetry has gone through the whole circle of human interests, before they turned to the representation of nature, and even then the latter filled always a limited and subordinate

place... The epic poetry, which describes armour and costumes so fully, does not attempt more than a sketch of outward nature... Even in the Latin poems of the wandering clerks, we find no traces of a distant view --- of landscape properly so called --- but what lies near is sometimes described with a glow and splendor which none of the knightly minstrels can surpass. (218-19)

The birth of landscape, which signifies the awakening of modern concept of nature, did not occur until the fifteenth century when “the great masters of the Flemish school, Hubert and Jan Van Eyck, suddenly lifted the veil from nature.” Their paintings, in Burckhardt’s words, “are not merely the fruit of an endeavour to reflect the real world in art, but have, even if expressed conventionally, a certain poetical meaning--- in short, a soul” (221). When the Van Eyck brothers for the first time created landscape in their works, however, history was already on the threshold of Renaissance, which in many scholars’ eyes was the beginning of the age of modernity, and the importance of nature in human life had already begun to dwindle. Hence the concept of nature, we can safely argue, was born together with the modern consciousness and as the direct result of modern conditions of being.

In spite of the fact that in the western world the modern concept of nature only came into being with the birth of landscape paintings in the fifteenth century, in another form of ancient literature the theme of the confrontation between city and country and the mood of nostalgia had already appeared, one which later became one of the defining characteristics of the modern literature about nature. The form I refer to is pastoral poetry. It is commonly believed that Theocritus (c. 316-c. 260 B.C.E.), an ancient Greek poet, was the founding father of pastoral poetry. He was “a native of Syracuse in Sicily,” a region whose inhabitants originally came from Arcadia in Southern Greece, and he chose to write in the Doric dialect of that region about “the world of pastoral simplicity”

(Heath-Stubbs, 1). Paradoxically, Theocritus did not begin to compose his pastoral songs until he has left his homeland and become a denizen of the city of Alexandria:

Theocritus's poetry, however, was written not for his countryman, but for the Greeks of the highly sophisticated and urbanized city of Alexandria. Alexandria, with its varied population of native Egyptians, Greeks, Jews, and many others, was a cosmopolitan urban centre more like the cities of the modern world than the little city republics of classical Greece had been. It was and still is a great trading port in which men's lives were not organically related to the life of the surrounding country-side as they had been in those earlier cities. Hence there grew up, as perhaps never before in history, a nostalgia for the life of the country and a tendency to idealize it. It was to the taste thus engendered that the pastoral poetry of Theocritus appealed. (Heath-Stubbs, 1-2)

The pastoral theme and style initiated by Theocritus was later inherited and further developed by the Roman poet Virgil and gradually became a literary genre, a leitmotif, and an archetype. Using simple but elegant language, it describes an idealized countryside in which people labor, play and love; a place which knows no upheaval and no conflict, and where human beings and their natural environment are in a harmonious and indivisible bond. Although the shepherds and shepherdesses have in fact already left their marks on the pastoral world and in this poetic world nature has already become, in Marx's words, a humanized one,<sup>13</sup> the dialectical interaction between humans and nature disappears in the pastoral poetry. On the contrary, in this literary sub-genre the self-conscious activities of human beings are overwhelmed and subdued by the spell of nature and humans become an integral part and an extension of the natural world. This idealized nature, which serves as a spiritual haven for human beings, is implicitly set up by the artists as a contrast to the estranging environment of the metropolis, and it is a good antidote to the sense of homelessness and anxiety of the city dwellers. The pastoral tradition survived the vicissitudes of time: although later writers may abandon the

pretentious language of the older works, renovating their style over the centuries, in the works of the romantics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and of modern writers in the twentieth century we can still find echoes of the ancient Alexandrian.

After this brief discussion of landscape painting and pastoral poetry, two sub-genres of art and nature, it is time for us to return to a socio-linguistic study of the word “nature” and examine how this concept was interpreted and used in the different historical periods of western civilization. Contrary to common understanding, the word “nature” was not used to refer to the objective world outside of and in contrast to the human world, especially the acculturated society, until the beginning of the modern age. Raymond Williams noted that the word “nature” in modern western languages originated from the Latin word *natura*, “from the root in the past participle of *nasci*, L[atin] --- to be born.” Its earliest sense was simply “the essential character and quality of something” (*Keywords* 219). The emergence of the concept of abstract, singular nature

is structurally and historically cognate with the emergence of *God* from *a god* or *the gods*. Abstract Nature, the essential inherent force, was thus formed by the assumption of a single primal cause, even when it was counterposed, in controversy, to the more explicitly abstract singular cause or force *God*.” (*Keywords* 220)

In the Middle Ages and Renaissance, nature was perceived either as the “minister and deputy” of God or as “an absolute monarch” in itself which, however, is employed to express “a sense of fatalism rather than of providence.” In Williams’ words, this second understanding of the nature lays emphasis “on the power of natural forces, and on the apparently arbitrary or capricious occasional exercise of these powers, with inevitable, often destructive effects on men” (*Keywords* 221).

In the coming age of enlightenment and romanticism, which roughly correspond to the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, the popularity of the fatalistic concept of nature declined until it was finally replaced by innovative interpretations of the mainstream ideology. (Yet the fatalistic idea of nature never died; it simply became indolent and patiently waited for its time to come again.) As Williams points out, for the first time, nature was regarded in the eighteenth century as a set of predicable laws which can be successfully interpreted, classified, and utilized by human beings. This was the decisive moment for the emergence of “nature as the material world” because the “emphasis on discoverable laws... led to a common identification of Nature with Reason: the object of observation with the mode of observation. This provided a basis for a significant variation, in which Nature was contrasted with what has been made of man, or what man had made of himself” (*Keywords* 223). The contrast was later also employed by the romantics in their criticism of the negative effects of industrialization and capitalism. Only at this moment of history, then, did “nature” become the signifier that refers to the “natural world’ in real life, and together with it there developed a fetishistic worship of nature / the natural state. This material world presumably untouched by human activities was soon idealized and idolized as a state superior to the acculturated world of human beings:

The ‘state of nature’, and the newly personified idea of Nature, then played critical roles in argument about, first, an obsolete or corrupt society, needing redemption and renewal, and, second, an ‘artificial’ or ‘mechanical’ society, which learning from Nature must cure. Broadly, these two phases were the Enlightenment and the Romantic movement ... The emphasis on law gave a philosophical basis for conceiving an ideal society. The emphasis on an inherent original power--- a new version of the much older idea--- gave a basis for actual regeneration, or, where regeneration seemed impossible or was too long delayed, an alternative

source for belief in the goodness of life and of humanity, as counterweight or as solace against a harsh 'world'. (*Keywords* 223)

After this trend of idealization of nature, either in an optimistic or nostalgic tone, the idea of nature went through another sea change in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was first reinterpreted, under the evolutionary view of Darwinism, as a world of ruthless competition based on the law of "natural selection" (*Keywords* 224). Although such a "scientific" notion seems deceptively close to the spirit of enlightenment, its impact on society is actually totally different: instead of regarding the natural world as a model for human society to imitate, this Darwinist view dispels the mythic aura around nature and justifies social competition and polarization in the capitalist age. Other thinkers and writers manage to maintain the mysticism of nature, to whom I tentatively give the name "modern mystics of nature." Nonetheless, to them nature is no longer an innocent symbol of "the goodness of life and of humanity," but rather a primitive and chaotic state that is beyond good and evil, a form of instinctive power that defies reason and morality and that blindly, yet resolutely, pursues its self-fulfillment --- an unpredictable and uncontrollable factor that is both curative and destructive.

From Nietzsche to Heidegger, from Freud to Erich Fromm, this ambivalent and awe-inspiring interpretation of nature is prevalent in modern philosophy and has remarkable influence on the art and literature of the twentieth century. In practice, the Darwinist and modern mystic views on nature can often co-exist in the same authors. For example, a group of English novelists in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, of whom Hardy and D. H. Lawrence are the most prestigious representatives, formed a loose "naturist" school of writers who combined the adoration of natural world, the Darwinist and Freudian interpretation of "human nature," and a utopian view of

society in their works (Alcorn, x). Stylistically and technically, they also developed what I call the “lyrical” style of writing in their fiction.

Despite their disillusionment with the idealistic conception of nature popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, both Darwinist and modern mystic views of nature, however, still regard nature as an awe-inspiring existence that is implicitly superior to the acculturated and secularized human world, that serves as either the exemplar of certain fundamental laws which reign over both the natural and the cultural worlds, or the origin of some mythic “life power” crucial to the maintenance and advancement of both worlds. Some other modern thinkers and artists, nonetheless, choose to completely dethrone nature from its privileged position and reverse the hierarchical order between nature and artificiality. Baudelaire is a good representative of this modern school. In his critical works, Baudelaire presents his radical reinterpretation of nature and its relationship with beauty. As Baudelaire maintains: “Most of the errors about beauty spring from the eighteenth century’s false conception of morality. At that time nature was considered as the basis, source, and type of every possible form of the good and the beautiful.” Yet in Baudelaire’s eyes “nature teaches nothing, or almost nothing; ... as soon as we turn from the category of needs and necessities to that of luxuries and pleasures, we see that nature can counsel only crime” (Baudelaire, *Baudelaire As a Literary Critic* 297). As Baudelaire claims, artificial art work is much more noble and elegant than the coarse and meaningless nature: “Evil is done without effort, *naturally*, inevitably; good is always the product of an art” (298). In his comments on fashion, he argues: “I am thus led to consider personal adornment as one of the signs of the primeval nobility of the human soul... fashion must be considered a symptom of the taste

for the ideal which surmounts everything coarse, earthly and foul accumulated by natural life in the human brain; as a sublime deformation of nature; or as a lasting and continuous effort to transform nature” (298). Baudelaire’s radical reevaluation of the relationship between nature and art forms a basic argument for French symbolism, which, as we have seen in the early section of this chapter, directly leads to the rise of *poésie pure* first in European and later in modern Chinese literature.

The examination of the theme of nature in western literature and art, which is inevitably sketchy and oversimplified, has to stop here. Next, let us turn to Chinese tradition for a similar historical review. This time, I choose to start with a philological study of the origin and development of the Chinese idea “*zi ran* (自然),” which roughly equals the concept of “nature” in the west but also differs from its western counterpart in many significant ways. Even in the earliest Chinese classics --- works of *zhuzi baijia* (Different Philosophers and Hundred Schools of Thought) in the Spring and Autumn Era (770 BCE to 453 BCE) and Warring States Era (452 BCE to 221 BCE) --- the word *zi ran* has already appeared. But it was first and foremost an idea of the Daoist (Taoist) School, and it was not widely accepted and used by other philosophical schools until the end of the Warring States Period. For instance, this word appears in the three major texts of the Daoist School --- *Lao Zi* (老子), *Zhuang Zi* (庄子), and *Li Zi* (列子) five times, eight times and six times, respectively. In other classics of the Spring and Autumn Era, however, it only appears for once in *Guan Zi* (管子) and *Mo Zi* (墨子) each. Moreover, among the last two works, *Guan Zi* (管子) can also be loosely regarded as a Daoist text, though it belongs to a branch of Daoism different from the Lao Zi – Zhuang Zi tradition --- the so-called Huang Lao *dao jia* (黄老道家, the Daoist School of the Yellow Emperor



and Lao Zi). On the other hand, in *Xun Zi* (荀子), *Han Feizi* (韩非子) and *Lüshi Chunqiu* (吕氏春秋, The Annals of Lu Buwei) --- the masterpieces of Confucianism, Legalism and the Eclectics School in the late Warring States Era respectively --- the concept of *zi ran* was not only adopted but widely used in different chapters and contexts. The fact indicates that by that time *zi ran* had been integrated into the common discourse of philosophers and had become a crucial concept of ancient Chinese philosophy. In order to fully grasp the connotations of *zi ran* in ancient Chinese thought, in the following part I list all the important quotations that contain *zi ran* in *Lao Zi* and *Zhuang Zi*, as well as some exemplary quotations from *Xun Zi* and *Han Fei Zi*, for readers' reference:

*Lao Zi:*

Chapter 17: "Hesitant, he [the ideal ruler] does not utter words lightly. When his task is accomplished and his work done, the people all say, 'It happened to us naturally.'" (悠兮其贵言, 功成事遂, 百姓皆谓: 我自然。)(Lau, 25)

Chapter 23: "To use words but rarely is to be natural." (希言自然。)(35)

Chapter 25: "Man models himself on earth, earth on heaven, heaven on the way, and the way on that which is naturally so." (人法地 地法天 天法道 道法自然。)(39)

Chapter 51: "...yet the way is revered and virtue honoured not because this is decreed by any authority but because it is natural for them to be treated so." (道之尊 德之贵, 夫莫之命而常自然。)(73)

Chapter 64: "Therefore the sage desires no to desire and does not value goods that are hard to come by; learns to be without learning and makes good the mistakes of the multitude in order to help the myriad creatures to be natural and to refrain from daring to act." (是以圣人欲不欲, 不贵难得之货。学不学, 复众人之所过, 以辅万物之自然而不敢为。)(95)

*Zhuang Zi:*

You are misunderstanding what I mean by passions and desires. What I mean when I say that he is without these is, that this man does not by his likings and dislikings do any inward harm to his body --- he always pursues his course without effort and does not (try to) increase his store of life. (庄子曰: 是非吾所谓情也。吾所谓无情者, 言人之不以好恶内伤其身, 常因自然而不益生也。)(Legge, 283)

Let your mind find its enjoyment in simplicity; blend yourself with (the primary) ether in idle indifference; allow all things to take their natural

course; and admit no personal or selfish consideration: --- do this and the world will be governed. (游心于淡，合气于漠，顺物自然而无容私焉，而天下治矣。)(309)

The Perfect Music first had its response in the affairs of men, and was conformed to the principles of Heaven; it indicated the action of the five virtues, and corresponded to the spontaneity (apparent in nature). After this it showed the blended distinctions of the four seasons, and the grand harmony of all things. (夫至乐者，先应之以人事，顺之以天理，行之以五德，应之以自然，然后调理四时，太和万物。)(397)

In the last part (of the performance), I employed notes which did not have that wearying effect. I blended them together as at the command of spontaneity. Hence they came as if following one another in confusion, like a clump of plants springing from one root, or like the music of a forest produced by no visible form. They spread themselves all around without leaving a trace (of their cause); and seemed to issue from deep obscurity where there was no sound. (吾又奏之以无怠之声，调之以自然之命，故若混逐丛生，林乐而无形；布挥而不曳，幽昏而无声。)(398)

The men of old, while the chaotic condition was yet undeveloped, shared the placid tranquility which belonged to the whole world... At this time, there was no action on the part of any one, but a constant manifestation of spontaneity. (古之人，在混芒之中，与一世而得澹漠焉……当是时也，莫之为而常自然。)(417-18)

Looking at them with respect to their tendencies, if we approve of what they approve, then there is no one who may not be approved of; and, if we condemn what they condemn, there is no one who may not be condemned. There are the cases of Yao and Kieh, each of them approved of his own course, and condemned the other; --- such is the view arising from the consideration of tendency and aim. (以趣观之，因其所然而然之，则万物莫不然；因其所非而非之，则万物莫不非；知尧、桀之自然而相非，则趣操睹矣。)(428)

Lao Tan replied...Look at the spring, the water of which rises and overflows; --- it does nothing, but it naturally acts so. So with the perfect man and his virtue; --- he does not cultivate it, and nothing evades its influence. He is like heaven which is high of itself, like earth which is solid of itself, like the sun and moon which shine of themselves; --- what need is there to cultivate it? (老聃曰：……夫水之于沟也，无为而才自然矣。至人之于德也，不修而物不能离焉，若天之自高，地之自厚，日月之自明，夫何修焉！)(489)

Rites are prescribed for the practice of the common people; man's proper Truth is what he received from Heaven, operating spontaneously, and unchangeable. (礼者，世俗之所为也；真者，所以受于天也，自然不可易也。)(639)

*Xun Zi:*

That which is as it is from the time of birth is called the nature of man. That which is harmonious from birth, which is capable of perceiving through the senses and responding to stimulus spontaneously and without effort, is also called the nature. (生之所以然者谓之性；性之和所生，精合感应，不事而自然谓之性。) (Watson, *Hsün Tzu* 138)

Phenomena such as the eye's fondness for beautiful forms, the ear's fondness for beautiful sounds, the mouth's fondness for delicious flavors, the mind's fondness for profit, or the body's fondness for pleasure and ease --- these are all products of the emotional nature of man. They are instinctive and spontaneous; man does not have to do anything to produce them. (若夫目好色、耳好声、口好味、心好利、骨体肤理好愉佚，是皆生于人之情性者也；感而自然，不待事而后生之者也。) (Watson, *Hsün Tzu* 161-62)

### *Han Fei Zi*

...farming in winter, even the Master of Grains would not be able to turn out good crops; but rich harvests in years of abundance even bondman and bondmaids could not spoil. Thus, if you depend on the power of one man, even the Master of Grains would not be sufficient; but if you follow the course of nature, then bondmen and bondmaids would be plenty. Hence the saying: 'He assists the myriad things in their natural development, but he does not venture to interfere. (故冬耕之稼，后稷不能羨也；丰年大禾，臧获不能恶也。以一人力，则后稷不足；随自然，则臧获有余。故曰：恃万物之自然而不敢为也。) (Liao, 220-221)

From the quotations above, we can come to following conclusions: First, *zi ran*, when it appeared for the first time in these Pre-Qin classical texts, did not function as a noun but a verbal structure, which roughly means "to spontaneously change to this status" or "to automatically achieve such an effect." It only became a noun and an adjective later. Second, what the word *zi ran* tries to describe is not the "natural world" in reality but the metaphysical laws of *Dao* and the mysterious unity between human beings and the law of transcendence. However, both the quintessence and the function of *Dao* and the status of harmonious unity between human beings and the transcendental being are actually inexpressible; they are beyond both reason and language. In the end, despite their constant wrangling with language, the ancient philosophers could only find such a clumsy and insufficient expression to refer to the mystery of *Dao* --- *zi ran*, "to

automatically change into this status” --- a phrase as inexpressible, or as meaningful, as silence. Third, ancient philosophers of China began --- in a truly spontaneous way --- to use concrete examples and images from either the “natural” or the human worlds to represent the way of “*zi ran*.” These examples could be the wise way of governing, perfect music, the instincts of human beings, or the cycle of planting and harvest. However, the concept of an independent and cohesive “natural world” had not come into being in the Pre-Qin period.

The breakthrough did not occur until the Wei-Jin-North-and-South Dynasties Era (265-589). As Wolfgang Kubin points out:

With the break-down of Han society the ever-latent religious aspect lying at the bottom of nature perception was brought out into the open as a visible standard. During the Jian'an, Wei, and Jin periods (196-420), nature as being at ease with itself (“*Beisichsein / ziran*”) was equated with the Dao. At the time of the Southern Dynasties (420-588) nature was the manifestation of the epiphany of Buddha. Thus, nature as a whole was placed above the individual who, as a result of the ever-present renewal of landscapes, believed himself to be mortal (history as decline), and who was striving to eliminate the contradiction between spirit and society. (332)

During the same period, the word *zi ran*, which originally served as a description of the mysterious Dao, was conveniently employed as the signifier of this newly-born concept of the coherent “natural” world. The new *zi ran* discourse finally reached its perfection in the Tang Dynasty with the rise of Zen Buddhism and the appearance of new poetic forms, *jue ju* and *lü shi*:

Nature, as seen in the traditional style of the Six Dynasties, poses as the counter-world to the historical process, a symbol of decline and morality; it is the realm in which the spirit --- in Chanbuddhistic enlightenment --- emerges into a new union with the material being. Nature no longer is a means of reflecting the dichotomy of substance and accident, of concept

and reality, both [sic] rather [sic] of dissolving this dichotomy by an inner perception of time and the outside world. (Kubin, 335)

From the Tang Dynasty onward, Chinese people's understanding of *zi ran* or nature did not go through any fundamental change until history entered the age of modernity. Once the traditional society began to disintegrate, however, nature's mesmerizing power, which used to help individuals to fulfill the harmony between spirit and world, inevitably began to wane. Hence, instead of continuing to indulge in the spiritual equilibrium brought about by the idealized vision of nature, modern Chinese writers' attitudes toward nature began to change. Some of them made efforts to free themselves from nature's enchantment, although they might secretly, even unconsciously, hold a nostalgic love for its charming beauty. Others tried desperately to maintain nature's last ray of afterglow, yet their efforts were often haunted by various forms of shadows that traditional literature had never witnessed before. At the same time, their endeavors were often directly or indirectly affected by the theory and practice of modern western literature, and art on nature and became implicit cultural dialogues.

### **History versus Memory: The Dilemma of Modern Chinese Intellectuals**

As we have mentioned before, the theme of nature in modern literature is inseparable from the theme of memory. Side by side with the cultural logic of historiography, the law of memory also had a powerful impact on modern Chinese intellectuals. To put it in a simplistic way, the logic of historiography takes a linear and progressive view of time and history. It claims a universal pattern of historical development and encourages the incessant negation of the past as the precondition of progress. The law of memory, by contrast, especially memory based on individual

experiences, asks for the retention of the past as a concrete component of the Self instead of breaking down the connection between the past and present and turning the former into a negative and passive Other. Early modern Chinese intellectuals of the New Culture Movement Era were usually zealous proponents of the historiographic view. For them, embracing this linear and universal pattern of time and history was the only way to help China get modernized and to construct a new national identity for the Chinese people. Despite their efforts in the New Culture Movement Era to reform the Chinese nation, however, modern Chinese intellectuals never succeeded in completely silencing their past, for it had already become an integral part of the collective memory of the nation as well as of their personal lives. While modern Chinese intellectuals managed to provide the Chinese people with a new national identity based on their understanding of modernity, the repressed past kept returning to disrupt this grand narrative and to expose its artificial nature. It also needs to be pointed out that the quest for a new national identity is paradoxically the result of global modernization; hence the conflict between history, which means the linear, progressive view of Enlightenment, and memory, which is marked by the constant recurrence of a repressed past that undermines the homogeneous and topographical narrative of history, becomes inevitable for Chinese intellectuals. This paradox complicated and challenged the new national identity and the idea of modernity that the intellectuals tried to introduce to the Chinese people. Indeed, the sense of conflict and the consequent anxiety can always be felt in the texts that purport to represent the new identity and the idea of modernization. In the next session on Lu Xun, I plan to illustrate the history-versus-memory dilemma through the reading of several his famous

stories and prose poems, as well as analyze the role of nature and nostalgia in his works from a social-psychological angle.

### **Homeland, Childhood Memory, and Psychological Shadow: Reading Lu Xun**

Lu Xun, as the one of the major spokesmen of the May Fourth Movement and the founding father of modern Chinese literature, was, in his whole writing career, a relentless critic of traditional Chinese culture and an outspoken supporter of the radical transformation / modernization of the “Chinese character.” He was a keen reader of social Darwinism and Nietzsche’s philosophy of Superman. Through his creative re-reading of western philosophy and literature, he gradually developed his own concepts of the ideal society and the ideal human being. It will not surprise us that in his writings he openly embraces the Enlightenment discourse of history, which is best characterized by his belief in social progress: he thinks that traditional China is entrapped in a primitive, barbarian stage of historical development. In order to renew the nation and to establish an ideal society, China must abandon its past and turn to follow the modern foreign models.<sup>14</sup> Yet not only was his effort to renovate Chinese society and Chinese people blocked by the predominant presence of Chinese convention, but he was also haunted incessantly by self-doubt: caught in between the past and present, it was difficult for him to sever his ties with the old China and turn himself successfully into a “new man.” The psychological crisis caused by the uncertainty of identity was reflected in many of his stories and in his collection of prose poems, *Wild Grass*.

A reading of his first vernacular story, “A Madman’s Diary” --- which made him famous overnight --- may help to illustrate the historiographical side of Lu Xun. The

story is highly allegorical: it is composed of thirteen fragments from the diary of a “Madman,” a symbolic figure of rebellion against traditional ethical codes and social conventions. Through his eccentric, iconoclastic eyes the disguise of “Confucian Virtue and morality” is removed to expose its cannibalistic nature: “The whole book [of Chinese history] was filled with the two words--- ‘Eat people’” (*The Complete Stories* 4). The protagonist faithfully put the idea of enlightenment into practice, preying on his fellowmen, urging them to change. His prayer is an interesting combination of social Darwinism and Nietzsche’s philosophy of Superman. At the beginning he tries to convert his elder brother by an evolutionary reading of human history:

Probably all primitive people ate a little human flesh to begin with. Later, because their views altered some of them stopped and tried so hard to do what was right that they changed into men, into real men...When those who eat men compare themselves with those who don’t, how ashamed they must be. Probably much more ashamed than the reptiles are before monkeys (*The Complete Stories* 9).

The comparison establishes a self-evidently linear, progressive pattern of history. It places the “cannibalism” in a primitive stage of historical development --- a stage in which Chinese people were still trapped --- and urges a negation of the old self in favor of a successful evolution into a real “man.”

Yet the hero’s prayer falls on deaf ears, and his elder brother wants to silence him by calling what he says expressions of “madness.” The “madman” is not stopped, however; he begins to directly address the people in a passionate tone, which reminds us of the prophets in the Old Testament and Nietzsche’s Zarathustra:

You should change, change from the bottom of your hearts. You must realize that there will be no place for man-eaters in the world in future. If you don’t change, you may all be eaten by each other. However many of you there are, you will be wiped out by the real men, just as wolves are killed by hunters --- just like reptiles!... You must change at once, from



the bottom of your hearts! You must know that there'll be no place for man-eaters in future....(*The Complete Stories* 11)

Besides the belief in the progress of history, a new image appears: that of the “real men.” The “real men” not only represent the higher stage of historical development but are also “hunters” who will kill the cannibalistic people like they kill “wolves”; they represent a radical power of purification which stimulates the transformation of the old society in an uncompromising way. This is a combination of Nietzsche’s Superman and the iconoclasm of May-Fourth Period China.

It should be made clear that the “Madman” does not take himself, or those like him, as possible candidates for the “real man.” On the contrary, he is painfully aware that he, too, has been contaminated by conventional society and might even be a cannibal, though an unconscious one, himself. He is obsessed by his own sense of guilt; all he hopes is to serve as the harbinger of the coming “real men” and pave the way toward a better future. This is also what he expects from his fellowmen; however, he does not get the reactions he desires. The “Madman” becomes a loner faced by an indifferent mass, the very people he wants to enlighten, reform, and save from the fate of becoming cannibals, eating others or being eaten. Moreover, they conspire together to oust and silence him, even--- in the illusions of the “Madman”--- to kill him and eat his meat. The protagonist’s effort to teach people a lesson only becomes his sign of madness. The madness and the clairvoyance, of course, are often two sides of the same reflective subject, yet the madness of our protagonist is never positively accepted in this story. On the contrary, the tag “madness” becomes a convenient excuse for the persecution of the reformers. The final, desperate cry of the madman is drowned in a sea of dark silence; we find no answer, no echo, to his cry, and the next thing we know about the “madman” is

that he “has gone elsewhere to take up an official post” (*The Complete Stories* 1). He has now been properly normalized and initiated into the upper social class. His class background may partly explain his loneliness among the mass: the class difference between the two is manifested not only in their economic and political status, but also in the differences of mind and language. The communication between the two sides seems impossible.

The protagonist’s tragedy is a good example of modern Chinese intellectuals’ failure in their efforts to “enlighten” the ordinary Chinese people. However, the theme of loneliness caused by class difference is only slightly touched upon in this story. All the characters around the “Madman,” despite their different social backgrounds, are equally dumb and cruel. They form a homogeneous body and represent a pervasive Chinese “national character.” In this story Lu Xun still held an essentialist view of Chinese people; it is only in his later works, such as “My Old Home,” “The New-Year Sacrifice,” and “The True Story of A Q,” for example, that he began to address the problem of class difference and its potential effect of estrangement. However, the failure of “Madman” and his like, though likely to dampen contemporary readers’ optimism about social reform and the renovation of national identity, did not fatally destroy the historiographical infrastructure. In this story the threat of traditional China is externalized and, although this sounds paradoxical, rationalized. We can always clearly see what the negative qualities of the traditional society are, and, once we pin them down, exorcise them. Despite the fact that the protagonist sees himself as a flawed man, contaminated by convention and incapable of fulfilling his own dreams, he does not give up the hope of a new man. Even if he ends in desperation, his downfall, then, may be regarded as an

inevitable defeat at the beginning of a long war against the evil of the past. Though tragic in itself, it does not annihilate a possible victory in the future, with the progress of history. Judging by its impact on the contemporary social and literary reform movement, we can say that readers did not miss its historiographical, progressive message.

In “A madman’s Diary,” Lu Xun’s vision of the past is totally negative, and the private memory of the protagonist is employed only to strengthen this negative image and to support the historiographic discourse. In some other stories, however, Lu Xun’s depiction of the past may take a surprisingly pleasant and poetic tone. This is especially true in his stories about his childhood. Many cheerful figures and bright moments jump out of his memory, forming a sharp contrast to the grim landscape of the adult world. Although autobiographical writing about childhood is common in literature, Lu Xun’s case is extraordinary. First, the biographical studies of Lu Xun tell us that he experienced the hardships of life from quite an early age: “It is my belief that those who come down in the world will probably learn in the process what society is really like,” he later succinctly comments on this experience in the “Preface” to *Call to Arms* (*The Complete Stories* v). The pleasant childhood was in his life only one sparkling moment that quickly faded away. Second, his emotional attachment to the memories of childhood makes an apparent conflict with his radical renunciation of the past in general. His belief in social progress should make him lay more emphasis on the hope of a bright future, as he does in “A Madman’s Diary,” instead of on the nostalgic return to the past. What makes him repeatedly return to childhood memories, then? The meaning and function of the childhood episodes in his works are worth our close attention.

A good example of a pleasant childhood memory may be found in “Village Opera,” a story written four years after “A Madman’s Diary.” It describes the protagonist’s (in this story the author uses a first-person narrative voice and explicitly identifies himself with the protagonist) childhood experience of seeing a performance of village opera during his visit to his maternal grandparents’ house at the time of the Chinese New Year. Yet what fascinates the young protagonist--- and the readers--- is not the performance itself, but his boat voyage together with his friends to and from the theater. Here I will take his description of the returning voyage as the example:

Soon the pine-wood was behind us. Our boat was moving fairly fast, but there is such thick darkness all around you could tell it was very late. As they discussed the players, laughing and swearing, the rowers pulled harder on the oars. Now the plash of water against our bow was even more distinct. The ferry-boat seemed like a great white fish carrying a freight of children through the foam. (*The Complete Stories* 146)

What a wonderful picture of pastoral life, and what poetic language! The passage is filled with the children’s excitement and innocent expectations. In the “thick darkness” of night, the passions and desires of the protagonists are set free from the repression represented by the daytime. The eagerly chatting boys on this small ferry-boat ideally embody comradeship and communal spirit, and we can also find a conspicuous tie between the happiness of human beings and their close contact with nature. It is a moment of ecstasy set in everyday experience, and by itself it is a good example of what we call “aesthetic redemption.”

Reading the text more closely, we may find that the seemingly straightforward narrative is not so simple, however. The sensitivity to the natural beauty and the poetic language can hardly belong to a child “eleven or twelve” years old (*The Complete Stories*, 142). What we have is a version of memory trimmed and decorated by the consciousness

of an adult, or at the very least, a mixture of the childhood experiences with the adult writer's rethinking of them. I would argue that Lu Xun's attitude toward this return to a happy childhood memory is two-folded. For one thing, this return functions as a psychological compensation to Lu Xun's disillusionment with the social reality. Lu Xun wrote the story "Village Opera" four years after the high tide of the May Fourth Movement and the publication of "A Madman's Diary." It was the time when the zealous optimism of the early 1910s had dwindled and self-skepticism, if not yet nihilism, began to rise and gradually permeated in the intellectual world; the threat of darkness, which had seemed to be defeated in the high tide of the New Culture Movement, began to haunt people again. In this time of difficulty and disappointment, the author / adult narrator of "Village Opera," who is seeking spiritual peace, even only momentarily, almost intuitively turns to his childhood memory for help. In this moment, Lu Xun seems to forget the task of constructing a new selfhood that is based on the progressive discourse of meta-history and that regards the reformation / negation of the *status quo* as its primary mission. The social critic turns into a traditional poet of nature, fascinated by the lyrical beauty of his own past --- or of the imaginary world of art that he creates for himself. The occasional return to the delightful childhood memory in Lu Xun's works serves for the author as a psychological compensation and defense that serves to ease his anxiety. Remembering is at the same time forgetting, and the conscious return to a chosen moment of the past prohibits the return of the darkness repressed in the unconscious sphere of his memory.

Yet the historiographical Lu Xun cannot accept such a compromise as the final answer to his pursuit of modernity in China. As a result, some form of conflict becomes

inevitable in his mind. As Lu Xun says in his “Preface” to *Zhaohua xishi* (Dawn Dew-light Collected at Dusk):

I once often thought of the vegetables and fruits I ate in my hometown when I was a kid... All of them were extremely juicy and tasty and lured me into homesickness. After many years of separation I had the opportunity to taste them again, yet they were just so-so; the old tastes linger only in my memory. They might deceive me in my whole life and make me cast a retrospective glance from time to time. (*Lu Xun quanji* 2:229-30)

Lu Xun is keenly aware of the phantasmal nature of his memory and but he is still enticed by its temptation. For Lu Xun, writing about the peaceful and harmonious childhood memory both covers and illuminates his spiritual crisis as a modern intellectual. He is incessantly caught between his construction and deconstruction of memory, shifting between being enchanted and then disillusioned by his imaginary, or selectively remembered, past.

Moreover, he can never feel at home no matter which side he is taking. Following Jameson’s argument about third-world literature, we may further argue that Lu Xun’s paradoxical attitude toward his personal memory can be interpreted as the reflection of his hesitancy when he is forced to face the national past of China. As one critic points out,

Lu Hsün [Lu Xun] both rejected Chinese tradition in toto and found some elements in traditional Chinese culture and morals meaningful. His positive attitude toward some traditional elements did not, however, lead him to look for the possibility of a creative transformation of Chinese tradition. Rather, it caused him great agony--- indeed, a sense of guilt--- in the face of an iconoclastic totalism in which he also deeply believed. (Lin, 105)

Thus, Lu Xun’s self-defense is never completely successful, and the repressed side of the past keeps returning. When Freud talks about the uncanny, he makes it clear that the uncanny is caused by the recurrence of the repressed in a different form:

If psycho-analytic theory is correct in maintaining that every affect belonging to an emotional impulse, whatever its kind, is transformed, if it is repressed, into anxiety, then among instances of frightening things there must be one class in which the frightening element can be shown to be something repressed which *recurs*... this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression. (Freud, 241)

The repressed side of the past emerges in Lu Xun's stories of childhood memory, just as Freud describes. In this aspect, the image of *wu chang*, the harbinger of hell, which appears in one of Lu Xun's childhood stories that bears that title, may serve as a good symbol of the returning darkness. The memory of the past can easily slip from the ideal side to the uncanny side, and, in the final analysis, the two sides are intermingled and inseparable. Owing to the limitation of space, I will not talk about this story in detail, but it should be pointed out that this ghost figure is the source of both fear and fascination for the young protagonist --- just as the Chinese tradition for the adult author.

The shadow of the past becomes the origin of Lu Xun's life-long self-doubt and anxiety; it is the darkness hidden at heart of Lu Xun's optimism about social progress. Soon after the writing of "Village Opera," the spiritual crisis of Lu Xun finally broke out. His prose poems in *Wild Grass* faithfully record his psychological condition during the crisis. These prose poems were written during the period from September 1924 to April 1926. In these poems we may encounter the repressed past returning in the form of the uncanny all the time: the dark night, nightmares, shadows, death --- all these become the common themes of the poems in this collection. I will take just two pieces to illustrate two uncanny motifs in this book: shadows and death.

Freud, when talking about the motif of the uncanny in literature, discusses the theme of the "double." In literary texts it may take the form of two characters looking

alike to each other and being considered identical, or it may be “marked by the fact that the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own.” Freud then explains the origin of the double’s uncanny effect. He maintains:

The ‘double’ was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego, an ‘energetic denial of the power of death,’ as Rank says; and probably the ‘immortal’ soul was the first ‘double’ of the body... Such ideas, however, have sprung from the soil of unbounded self-love, from the primary narcissism which dominates the mind of the child and of primitive man. But when this stage has been surmounted, the ‘double’ reverses its aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death. (Freud, 234-235)

We may reasonably argue that a person’s shadow is the negative, “uncanny” form of his double. In one piece from the *Wild Grass*, “The Shadow’s Leave-Taking,” the shadow of the poet becomes alive and comes to bid him farewell--- in a dream:

If you sleep to a time when you lose track of time, your shadow may come to take his leave with these words:

...

“Friend, the time is at hand.

“I am going to enter darkness to wander in nothingness.

“You are still expecting some gift from me. What is there for me to give?

If you insist, you shall have the same darkness and nothingness. (*Wild Grass* 8-9)

The shadow represents the repressed darkness in the hero’s heart that returns in the dream world. It results from the hero’s uncertainty and anxiety, and the shadow’s wish represents the author’s deepest hidden desire. It is both terrifying and fascinating: to return to darkness and nothingness, to have the self completely melted and disappear, to hold a world wholly belonging to him---with the precondition that the self must first be swallowed and must disintegrate. This is a return journey to the origin, the infinity, yet at the same time to death.



Death is another theme frequently appearing in *Wild Grass*. At least five pieces are centered on death (“Revenge”, “Revenge II”, “The Passer-by”, “The Epitaph”, “After Death”) while almost all others touch on the issue indirectly. Among them “The Epitaph,” an astoundingly macabre text, is to me the most illuminating piece. It describes another dream of the author. In this dream he stands before a solitary tomb, reading the epitaph. The top of the tomb has been crushed to pieces and the corpse is exposed. At the end of the dream,

I was eager to be gone. But the corpse has sat up in the grave. Without moving its lips, it said:  
 “When I turn to ashes, you will see me smile!”  
 I hurried away, not daring to look back, for fear I see it coming after me.  
 (Lu, *Wild Grass* 44-45)

The corpse in the tomb is a complicated image. As the first part of the inscription suggests, the person lying in the tomb is a self-contradictory figure, wavering between passion and doubt, hope and desperation; all these polarized qualities exist simultaneously in him, yet no synthesis, no harmonious end comes from the constant war between these opposites. We may argue that the corpse represents the tormented soul of the author himself, who is suffering from an inner conflict between historiographical optimism and the obsession with memory. This impression is further strengthened by the second paragraph of the epitaph, in which the soul is depicted as a serpent with “poisonous fangs” that only bite itself. The iconoclastic criticism of Lu Xun of traditional China is his “poisonous fangs,” but his attacks on the old China and his struggles for a new Chinese identity, as we have seen, are accompanied by his self-doubt and often return to himself in the end. He feels that the only thing his criticism has achieved, ironically, is self-destruction, for the author has painfully realized that as a child from the

past, he has no hope of becoming the “real man” of the future. It is the same feeling of the “Madman,” yet here the expectation of the “Madman” for a better future has disappeared and is replaced by anguish and total nihilism. The corpse hence becomes the double image of the author; it symbolizes the dilemma, agony and desperation that the author struggles to suppress. The corpse comes back to life--- the repressed returns--- at the end of the poem. The hero/author tries to escape from it but at the end of the poem we find no indication as to whether he wakes up from his nightmare. Being trapped in his dream world, he will be chased by the corpse forever; no matter how far he runs away, once he turns around, he will find the corpse right behind him.

T. A. Hsia is one of the earliest literary critics to point out the dark side in Lu Xun’s psyche and his writing. He makes the following observation:

So death, like old China, an object of revulsion, has also its fascination. Lu Hsün never made up his mind about the attitude he should adopt towards these two objects of revulsion. His extreme position on the issues of the day, his militant advocacy of progress, of science and enlightenment, is well known. But this does not make up the whole of his personality, nor does it account for his genius unless we take into consideration his curiosity, his secret longing and love for what he hated. (154)

What I want to add to Hsia’s argument is that death and old China, the two sources of Lu Xun’s anxiety, are not separate issues but intrinsically connected. Hsia, despite his penetrating observations on Lu Xun’s complexity, is inclined to make Lu Xun a Chinese modernist hero in accordance with contemporary western models. Hence he divides “death” from “old China,” abstracting the former from the particular Chinese local context and endowing it with a universal, existentialist connotation, and then tries to create an image of Lu Xun closer to western high modernists by emphasizing his fascination with this generalized “death” apart from his entanglement with Chinese

tradition. Hsia makes his intention clearer by claiming that “the gate of darkness for Lu Hsün owes its weight to two forces: one is traditional Chinese literature and culture, the other the writer’s troubled psyche” (200). In my opinion to this view, I tend to regard the theme of death in Lu Xun’s works as the symbolic expression of the repressed past returning from the unconscious, which endows the image of uncanny with a particular historical significance.

The anxiety caused by the dilemma between historiography and memory can in fact be traced to the very beginning of Lu Xun’s writing career. In his “Preface” to *Call to Arms*, Lu Xun uses the famous “iron house” metaphor to answer his friend’s request for his participation in the New Literature Movement:

Imagine an iron house having not a single window and virtually indestructible, with all its inmates sound asleep and about to die of suffocation. Dying in their sleep, they won’t feel the pain of death. Now if you raise a shout to wake a few of the lighter sleepers, making these unfortunate few suffer the agony of irrevocable death, do you really think you are doing them a good turn? (*The Complete Stories* ix)

In Leo Ou-fan Lee’s interpretation, “The iron house is, after all, a literary metaphor which signifies a kind of interiority—the dark, shadowy abode of a disturbed inner psyche. The ‘light sleepers’ seem closer to Lu Xun’s heart because they embody certain strains from his private experience and emotion” (*Voices* 87). What I want to emphasize is that this “private experience and emotion” is part of the collective experience of the modern Chinese intellectual class, of which Lu Xun is an exemplar. To Lu Xun, this contradiction and consequent uncertainty is both a painfully unheeded scar in his heart and, paradoxically, the source of inspiration for his literary career. However, is this scar not healable? Is it possible to find a solid basis for a new Chinese subjectivity without building into it painful self-contradiction? And if this is possible, what are the roles of

nature, memory, and traditional aesthetics in the process of self-construction? I will try to touch on these questions in the next section about Fei Ming, a modern Chinese novelist remembered for his stories' "pastoral" themes and poetic beauty.

### **Fei Ming, a Modern Hermit: Transcendental Aesthetics and an Alternative Modernity**

Fei Ming, which literally means "abolishing name," is the pen name of Feng Wenbing (1901-1967). Some biographical information about this writer may prove to be helpful, since compared with the canonized Lu Xun, Fei Ming has not yet received the same rigorous attention in the west. Fei Ming was born on November 9, 1901, in Huangmei County, Hubei Province. Historically, his hometown was once a center of Chinese Chan (Zen) Buddhism. Not coincidentally, Chan philosophy later played a very important role in Fei Ming's art. Fei Ming received a traditional education in his early childhood and later studied in modern middle and high schools in Wuhan, the provincial capital of Hubei Province. In 1922 he was admitted to the Preparatory School of Peking University and became a student in the English Department of Peking University two years later. After his graduation in 1929 he became a lecturer in the Chinese Department of Peking University, a position he kept until the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war in 1937. During the whole war period (1937-1945) he stayed in his hometown and supported himself by teaching in various local elementary and middle schools. He returned to Peking University in 1946 and resumed his old teaching position. After the Communist takeover in 1949, he was sent to Changchun, Jilin province in Northeast

China to work in the Northeast People's University (later Called Jilin University) in 1952, where he stayed until his death in 1967.<sup>15</sup>

Fei Ming started his literary career quite early: he began to write short stories in 1922 when he was still a student in the Preparatory School of Peking University. Although not especially known for his prolificness, Fei Ming nonetheless finished three collections of short stories and two novels one after another during the period between the mid-1920s and the mid-1930s<sup>16</sup> plus various poetic and critic writings. He was also actively involved in the founding and editing of several literary journals, two of which, *Yu si* (Gossamer of Words) and *Luotuo cao* (Straws for Camels), were indisputably among the leading journals in mid-1920s and early 1930s Beijing. Fei Ming was an active contributor to the former and the founding editor of the latter. By the middle of the 1930s Fei Ming had already become a well-established writer and his writings had been treated by some younger artists as a kind of model or a source of inspiration. His literary career was hampered by the Sino-Japanese War but he still kept writing sporadically during that period; his last novel, *Mo Xuyou xiansheng zuo feiji yihou* (After Mr. No Such Man Took a Plane), was published in 1946 in the prestigious journal *Wenxue zazhi* (Literary Journal) and a large part of it was based on his wartime experience. Besides some poetic and critical works, this is his last major achievement as a creative writer. After 1949 he fell into permanent silence, which might have resulted from the radical changes in China's political and ideological environment, the disappearance of Fei Ming's familiar countryside milieu, as well as his exceeding fascination with Buddhist philosophy that started at an early age but became drastically intensified from the mid-1940s onward.

Fei Ming was short story writer, novelist, poet, literary critic and scholar all at once. Yet, unlike Lu Xun and Zhou Zuoren, Fei Ming's influence is mostly limited within the circle of literati and never reached general Chinese readers. However, among his contemporary writers as well as writers of the younger generation, many openly acknowledge having been influenced by him in one way or another. Among these are at least Shen Congwen, among the novelists, and Bian Zhilin, among the poets.<sup>17</sup>

Like many of the young Chinese intellectuals of his generation, when he began writing short stories in the early 1920s Fei Ming was deeply influenced by the New Culture Movement, and he proudly regarded himself as a follower of the Zhou brothers: Lu Xun and Zhou Zuoren. Some of his early stories, like the stories in Lu Xun's *Call to Arms* and *Wandering*, compassionately depicted the impoverished and miserable lives of the peasants, the prejudice against women in traditional society, the meanness and petty-mindedness in the Chinese national character, and the disorientation and frustration of modern youth.<sup>18</sup> However, with the decline of the radical iconoclasm of the May Fourth Era and the growing disharmony between the Zhou brothers,<sup>19</sup> Fei Ming day by day felt more sympathetic to Zhou Zuoren's idea of the autonomy of art as well as his detached attitude toward immediate political and social conflicts. He finally distanced himself from Lu Xun's militant social criticism and the Left-Wing art movement in the late 1920s and 1930s of which Lu Xun became a leading figure.

The two major novels of Fei Ming are *The Bridge* (1932)<sup>20</sup> and *The Biography of Mr. No Such Man* (1932). In this section, I will mainly use *The Bridge* to analyze Fei Ming's use of nature and memory in his writings. According to the common understanding of the novel as a genre, it must tell a story and hence have a carefully

designed plot. We can, if we insist, talk about the plot of *The Bridge*: it is about the lives of three major characters in rural China: a boy named Xiaolin and two girls, Qinzi and Xizhu. They have been friends from early childhood and they still keep up their friendship, though later, when they all grow up, it has become subtly mingled with a feeling of love. However, in this novel the importance of the story-line is deliberately kept to a minimum. The novel is divided into forty-three chapters, yet there seems to be hardly any explicit connection, apart from the chronological order, that binds them together to make a coherent narrative. Chapter 19 of this novel, “The Place Where He Cried for the First Time,” divides this work into two halves: the chapters before it are about the childhood experience of the protagonists, and those coming after it are about their adult lives. Within each half, however, we cannot pinpoint even a chronological order, and readers are free to find associations between these chapters through a creative reading of their own. The chapters appear to be only forty-three clips randomly taken from the everyday life the protagonists, and each of them can be read as a piece of self-sufficient prose writing. When we read the novel, we may have the feeling that it is a classical Chinese scroll painting gradually unfolding in front of us. Instead of having a central focus, the painting /writing is “decentered,” and the viewers / readers can enjoy this piece of art from any place they like. Indeed, Fei Ming himself openly acknowledged that when he wrote *The Bridge*, he was heavily influenced by ancient Chinese literature and managed to reinstall the effect of classical Chinese poetry in his modern fiction-writing. As he said, “I write fiction in the same way as the poets of Tang Dynasty wrote *jue ju*. A successful *jue ju* poem only needs twenty or twenty-eight characters. My fiction is of course much longer. But still I write in the *jue ju* fashion and do not waste my

words” (Fei Ming, *Fei Ming xuan ji* 749-750). We can feel the influence of classical Chinese poetics on all different levels in this novel: from its language to its narrative structure and theme, as well as its presentation of and attitude toward nature and rural life.

Fei Ming forges his language in a particularly economical way. He often deliberately omits the conjunctions, prepositions, and sometimes even verbs in his sentences and leaves meaningful “fissures” for the readers to fill up. What he really cares about is to provide accurate and impressive images so that his readers are able to make various forms of free association and to discover the “unspoken” meanings beyond the text *per se*. This may immediately remind us of the Daoist philosophers and Chan Buddhists’ understanding of the limitations of everyday language as well as their pursuit of metaphorical expressions which may kindle inspiration through their suggestiveness. It is also the common writing strategy employed by ancient Chinese lyrical poets --- especially, as Fei Ming himself points out, of poets of *jue ju* in the Tang Dynasty. In ancient Chinese literary criticism, this particular style is often labeled as a “zi ran” way of writing and hence an ideal medium of the unspeakable Dao. For example, in *Ershisi shipin* (The Twenty-four Categories of Poetry), the exemplary work of impressionistic literary criticism of ancient China by the Late Tang poet and critic Sikong Tu (837-908), there is one category entitled “zi ran.” Sikong Tu describes this style as follows:

It’s what you can bend down and pick up---  
 It’s not to be taken from any of your neighbors.  
 Go off, together with the Way,  
 And with a touch of the hand, springtime forms.  
 It is as if coming upon the flowers blossoming,  
 As if looking upon the renewal of the year.  
 One does not take by force what the genuine provides,  
 What is attained willfully easily becomes bankrupt.  
 A recluse in the deserted mountains  
 Stops by a stream and picks waterplants.



As it may, his heart will be enlightened ---  
 The Potter's Wheel of Heaven goes on and on forever. (Owen, 323-24)

Stephen Owen, in his comments, points out that Sikong Tu's demand here is that "the poem actually come naturally... Like the Sage, the poet moves 'with' the Way, and takes what is given as it is given" (325). The ostensible simplicity and effortlessness of this style require the removal of the signs of artifice, and the literary writing in this style often intentionally ignores and challenges the logical order and grammatical rules of language that are based on rational thinking. The denial of mechanical reason, in these philosophers' and writers' minds, is the necessary precondition of the recognition of the Dao. On the other hand, the "zi ran" way is different from the "grotesque" because it should not appear strange and disturbing to readers but rather achieve the effect of defamiliarization in the form of deceptive plainness. Fei Ming's language in *The Bridge* in many ways exemplifies this "zi ran," or "natural" style of ancient Chinese lyrical poetry.

We can take one example to illustrate Fei Ming's unique style. It occurs in chapter 2, "The Honeysuckle," where Xiaolin, still a young boy, is suddenly attracted by the charming beauty of a blossoming honeysuckle tree on his way back home from the school. He climbs the tree to pick flowers, and while he sits on the bough, he sees Qinzi, the female protagonist of the story, for the first time:

A tree, not attached to the grove, independent, just on the roadside, completely buried in honeysuckle flowers. He does not know how to express his pleasure. He loves honeysuckle flowers most... The flowers on the tree do not appear scanty at all, still yellow ones, white ones, among green leaves, around the ancient trunk, yet on Xiaolin's hands the honeysuckle flowers are too many to handle, hanging around his neck. All of a sudden he sits still ---  
 At the foot of the tree is that little cowherd girl.

The two pairs of black eyes stare at each other instantly, like those of cats.  
(*Fei Ming xuan ji* 216-17)

The first line in the paragraph is, strictly speaking, not a complete sentence. It is a pile of adjectives and descriptive words put together haphazardly to form an image of the honeysuckle tree. Yet in this context this broken sentence perfectly expresses the ecstatic happiness in the innocent heart of our young protagonist. The pleasure is so overwhelming that for a moment Xiaolin cannot calm down to compose a coherent sentence to describe the tree's beauty. These unhinged words and phrases ideally reflect his spontaneous impression. Only a child can find utmost pleasure in such a plain object, and Xiaolin's momentary speechlessness is also a good example of his simplicity.

Skipping the next two sentences, we find the same pattern again when the paragraph turns to describe Xiaolin's picking of flowers. And then, in a very "natural" way, the two protagonists meet each other for the first time. The writer "bends down and picks up" the detail of this encounter without over-dramatization, but we as readers can clearly feel that it is one of the pivotal moments in the novel, and Qinzi's appearance at the moment of Xiaolin's innocent bliss is not accidental. Indeed, here the meaningful "fissure" of language already exceeds the sentence level. By subtly paralleling two ostensibly unconnected incidents, Fei Ming successfully builds his "*jue ju*" style into the narrative structure of the novel. Besides the blanks within sentences and paragraphs, we have already discussed the seemingly lack of connection between the chapters and the "decentered" structure of the whole novel. As a result, we can argue that the poetic style of ancient Chinese lyrical poetry has served as the guiding principle in this novel at both the microcosmic and the macrocosmic level. Hence, the whole novel can be, in a certain sense, regarded as a long lyrical poem. By introducing this poetic style into the novel

form, Fei Ming actually blurs the boundary between two major literary genres and manages to invent a new narrative strategy for modern fiction. On the other hand, this invention is also a creative reinterpretation of traditional literary ideas.

Fei Ming's experiments in language and narrative structure in his fiction are not only efforts to revive classical Chinese poetics but they also echo western modernism of the twentieth century. This is not the place to provide an overall introduction to the aesthetics of modernist fiction. I only want to point out two important features that might connect Fei Ming with his western fellow travelers: the inclination of introspection and the use of stream of consciousness. Virginia Woolf, in her famous essay "Modern Fiction," poignantly criticizes the "materialist" school that only aims to provide a superficial mirror-reflection of life, and then emphasizes the importance of studying and portraying "the mind" in modern fiction through the stream-of-consciousness style. This essay is pivotal to the development of modernist fiction in the west and it is worth quoting at some length:

Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being "like this." Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there; so that, if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible?

We are not pleading merely for courage and sincerity; we are suggesting that the proper stuff of fiction is a little other than custom would have us believe it. (106)

Although Fei Ming denied that he had been directly influenced by Mrs. Woolf or any other novelist in the high modernist tradition,<sup>21</sup> many of his contemporaries have noticed interesting similarities between his fiction and the western modernist works of the same period. *The Bridge* is neither a realist novel that sets as its goal to offer a reliable and detailed representation of rural experience in modern China, nor is it a study of different aspects of human nature as embodied by the protagonists in the work. Rather, it is a highly subjective novel that projects the internal landscape of the writer onto his own imaginary world, and all the major characters are personified externalizations of the writer's mind and heart rather than human beings from real life. To achieve its goal, this highly introspective work intuitively takes up a narrative pattern similar to the stream of consciousness and concentrates on the exploration of the psychology of the protagonists.

Apart from the few examples we have given, another good example of *The Bridge*'s introspective inclination and the stream-of-consciousness style is its treatment of time. I mentioned earlier that Chapter 19, "The Place Where He Cried for the First Time," divides the novel into two halves. The chapter 19 is only about one-page long and the shortest chapter in the novel. However, as the first line of this chapter makes clear: "In front of the readers' eyes, there is only one blank page between this and previous writings. This single blank page represents ten years' time" (*Fei Ming xun qi* 266). Obviously, the writer distinguishes two different types of time: the objective, mechanical time that is indifferent to human activity and the psychological time that is connected with the intensity of human feelings. Although Chapter 19 covers ten years' time in the

life of the protagonist Xiaolin, they are insignificant in Xiaolin's life and leave no mark in his heart. Hence, a brief mentioning is sufficient to help the readers to skip this period. This division of the novel might remind us of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, in which the first and third parts are much longer than the middle one, yet objectively, the middle part covers the entire period of the First World War and the other two parts are only centered on the activities in Ramsay's family within a single day.

Despite the similarities between Fei Ming and western modernist novelists, however, there are also subtle differences between the two. Zhu Guangqian, the famous Chinese aesthetician and literary critic, has discussed these similarities and differences in a review of *The Bridge*:

Like the works of Proust and Mrs. Woolf, *The Bridge* abandons the straightforward narration of the actions on the surface and focuses on the exposure of the inner life. However, spiritually it also differs from modern western fiction in a significant way... Proust and Mrs. Woolf tend to disclose the inner life of the characters through the characters' reactions to human activities, yet the writer of *The Bridge* pays more attention to the characters' reactions to natural scenes. The former cannot do without dramatic actions and psychoanalysis from the third-person point of view, yet what Fei Ming offers us are many still life paintings... Of course, there are also some [descriptions] of human activities in *The Bridge*, but most of these human activities are so serene that they finally become parts of the natural landscape. These activities are not those belonging to the stage but to paintings. (Zhu Guangqian, 68-69)

Zhu Guangqian's penetrating observation highlights the importance of nature in *The Bridge* and broadens our understanding of the "naturalness" of this work. This "naturalness" lies both in the form and the content of the novel. The "natural" and lyrical language style and narrative structure and the predominant role of the natural landscape are closely intertwined and constantly strengthen each other in this work. The close cooperation of the two sides successfully creates an idealized world of harmony and

innocence, a modern Eden or Eleusis in the guise of the modern Chinese countryside. As Zhu Guangqian claims, the world of *The Bridge* is based on “the state of poetry, the state of flowers, and the wit of Zen Buddhism” (69). In the next section, I will shift the focus from the aesthetic characteristics of the form of the novel to the author’s treatment of the theme of the natural landscape and rural experience, though in the final analysis the two sides are inseparable in this work.

The idyllic world in *The Bridge* is characterized by the innocence of childhood experience, the tender affection (but not necessarily melodramatic) between the characters, the tranquility of rural life, and finally, the merging of all these elements that endows the everyday life in the rural area with a unique aesthetic quality and eliminates the division between natural landscape and human activity as well as the boundary between life and art. We can take one example to illustrate this harmonious unity in the novel. Xizhu, the younger cousin of Qinzi and the second female protagonist in the novel, plays with several children who hold long willow branches as toys in their hands. Xiaolin, who is a young man now, looks on from the side:

They are separated by a few willow trees, and both of them are in the trees’ shadow. The threads of willow branches spread on Xizhu’s body --- covering her here, embedded in her body there, which Xiaolin can also see. The children put one branch after another in older sister Xizhu’s arms, there are some on her shoes, also a few on her shoulders... “You’d better not speak.” Xiaolin, focusing on his painting, fears that there might be sounds that cannot be included in his work of art. He wants Xizhu to raise her head. He cannot see her eyes... (*Fei Ming xuan ji* 282)

Xiaolin does not really paint, however. Actually, he does nothing but stand aside and stare at Xizhu playing with the children. Yet the naïve game becomes in his eyes a piece of wonderful art. He is attracted not only by the simplicity of the game, the naiveté of the children and, of course, the charm of Xizhu, but more importantly, by the harmony of the

whole “picture” in which all the individual elements mentioned above have become integral parts of the natural landscape. His seeing / “painting” is an act of both appreciation and creation, through which a plain scene that can be found in the countryside everyday suddenly gains an aesthetic quality that makes it the greatest work of art. Moreover, Xiaolin’s discovery is not only an aesthetic experience but also a moment of epiphany that may lead to a mysterious understanding of the Way. Two chapters before the part quoted above, Xiaolin has composed a haiku-like poem about the willow: “One leaf of the willow is the spring of the world / Avalokiteshvara’s vase of purity” (*Fei Ming xuan ji* 273). Just as the spring of the world is hidden in one willow leaf, the realization of the poetic beauty of one scene in the rural life embodies the wisdom of the ultimate truth about this world.

The “naturalness” of *The Bridge*, which lies both in its form and its theme and content, successfully marginalizes the possible tension between the characters and their living environment as well as the potential conflicts between the characters themselves. It seems that in this work we can hear only one voice --- that of the author --- and the novel becomes a monologue instead of a polyphony through which, in Bakhtin’s words, “dialogue penetrates within, into every word of the novel, making it double-voiced, into every gesture, every mimic movement on the hero’s face, making it convulsive and anguished” (qtd. Vice, 112). It is obvious that through his “natural” writing about the “natural landscape” of the modern Chinese countryside, Fei Ming manages to achieve a form of aesthetic redemption to defend the integrity of his selfhood as well as that of modern Chinese subjectivity in general. Although he intuitively chooses writing strategies similar to those employed by western modernists, yet unlike his western fellow

writers, Fei Ming is unwilling to expose the anxiety of the modern subject and to explore the controversy between self and society. Instead, he wants to repress these unpleasant experiences, burying them, throwing them into oblivion. However, the pressure of reality on the modern Chinese subject is so overwhelming that even in the paradisiacal world of *The Bridge*, we can still find signs of the shadows that remind us of the return of the Freudian uncanny; in these parts of the novel, the writing style also inevitably slips from the “natural” to the grotesque and sometimes becomes grimly dark. The shadows, which are both psychological and historical, can take various forms: night, ghosts, funerals, and death. They frequently interrupt the serene lives of the protagonists and leave disturbing impressions in their hearts. The most striking example is Chapter 18, “Stele.” In this chapter, Xiaolin wants to find a temple but gets lost in the wilderness. The beginning of the chapter is abrupt and perplexing:

The sun is in the distant west, Xiaolin walks alone in the wild.  
“Where am I?”

The eyeballs are turning, these few syllables are uttered.

He remembered Qinzi’s words of the night before and snuck out to look for the Village Temple. He did not find it, but came to such a place. (*Fei Ming xuan ji* 261)

He comes to the foot of a hill but is hesitant to climb it:

He does not want to climb the hill instantly --- why? We can only guess that he gets a hint that the sun is on the other side of the hill because it wants to get close to night, that before he can climb up to the top of the hill, or when he just gets there, darkness will attack him. ...

Being by himself, once he turns his head, he has the feeling of falling into a bottomless hole. The hill on the other side makes the empty land on his side even emptier. There is one path on the hill, and above the emptiness is the sun.

Hesitantly taking a step again, he looks forward, and the road is still so long. He almost bursts into tears, he is so embarrassed ---

“Where am I indeed?”

Suddenly he stops. Far away, on the side of the road, there seems to be one --- no, it is a stele.



What a pleasant discovery, he runs. (262-63)

At this moment Xiaolin is finally rescued by a Buddhist monk passing by. But the monk knows a secret about the stela, which he chooses not to tell the boy: it is “used to exorcise ghosts. It is said that here ghosts appear even in daylight” (264). In this chapter the natural environment all of a sudden becomes ominous and full of hostility to the protagonist; Xiaolin, deprived of his close companions who frequently appear in other chapters, is lost in the infinite wilderness, a disoriented and helpless subject troubled by his ever deepening sense of uncertainty and anxiety. The scene is in sharp contrast to the familiar natural landscape that dominates the rest of the novel. Rather, it reminds us of the nightmarish episodes in Lu Xun’s *The Wild Grass* and, to some extent, the wasteland of T. S. Eliot. The traditional poetic theory and aesthetic experience of “zi ran” is no longer able to contain the shocks and challenges that the modern Chinese subject is forced to face, and the historical Real finally finds its way to penetrate into the idyllic world of art in the form of the uncanny.

We have so far discussed the “naturalness” of *The Bridge* as well as the occasional, yet meaningful, appearance of grotesque features in this novel that question and deconstruct the former. In the next section, I will concentrate on the role of memory in this work. Indeed, the whole novel can be regarded as an effort to rewrite the memory of childhood in order to provide the author as well as his readers with an idealized past as a spiritual haven. In other words, *The Bridge* is an elongated version of Lu Xun’s “Village Opera” and the two are similar in their treatment of the theme of memory and past experience. However, the role of memory in *The Bridge*, though not fundamentally different, is much more complicated than that in Lu Xun’s short stories about childhood.

As we have noted, the novel is divided into two halves separated by a time span of ten years. The protagonists are still little children in the first half, yet in the second they have grown up to be adults. This unique narrative structure enables us to see the differences in the psyches of the characters and especially their different attitudes toward memory. As a result, in the first part of the novel, the protagonists only keep in their memory some most impressive incidents from the immediate past and do not consciously employ memory to construct their self-identity. In the second half, however, recollecting their childhood experiences has become a frequent and self-conscious action of the protagonists. To them memory has become a source of relief and inspiration, yet it also leads to the mood of melancholy. Kierkegaard's distinction between two types of memory may help us better grasp the different roles of memory in the two halves of the novel:

Kierkegaard contrasted two conceptions of memory, viewing from opposite ends of a lifetime: the child's memory and the old man's recollection. The former concerns the child's apprehension. It is imaginative in the sense of Vico's primordial poets: quick, spontaneous, unreflective, and happy. The latter concerns the old man's reminiscences. It is reflective in the sense of Wordsworth's autobiographical musings: slower, more deliberate, meditative, and sad... The child's vision is short-sighted; its outlines are blurred in the abundance of its interests. But the old man's recollections are more far-sighted, sharply etched in their focus on a few salient images out of the distant past, now perceived as in a distorted mirror. (Hutton, 154-55)

Obviously, the role of memory is more conspicuous and predominant in the second half of the novel. The temporal return to the past in memory is also paralleled and buttressed by the spatial return of Xiaolin to his old home. In Chapter 19, which divides the novel, it is made clear that Xiaolin's return is an abrupt decision and that he has abandoned his studies to "travel a few thousand *li* to go back to 'the place where he cried for the first time.'" His ten years away are only encapsulated into "one blank page" on

which the narrator says nothing (*Fei Ming xuan ji* 266). Xiaolin's return symbolizes his denunciation of modern urban culture (represented by his "studies") and his desire for a sense of belonging, which can only be found in his home town. To Xiaolin, as well as to the narrator, these wandering years are totally meaningless, signifying nothing but the flow of empty, mechanical time. Xiaolin can only find himself, or construct a satisfactory selfhood, when he resumes the organic connection to his homeland. We will immediately notice the similarity as well as the difference between Fei Ming's and Lu Xun's attitude towards their homeland and their memory of the past. Whereas Lu Xun is caught in the painful dilemma between the temptation of the homeland and the past, on the one hand, and the grand narrative of history based on Enlightenment discourse, on the other, Fei Ming embraces the former without reservation. Xiaolin the protagonist in the second half also fully recognizes the importance of memory to his self-discovery / construction and makes the following comments:

Today's flowers are really glorious, --- there are two lines in Li Yishan's<sup>22</sup> poem on peony flowers, which I dearly love: "I handle my colorful pen in my dream / and want to paint flowers and leaves to send to the clouds of dawn." You see, red flowers and green leaves, all have been made ready at night, --- all of a sudden the clouds of dawn appear..... It once occurred to me that memory is an unthinkable thing. Everything is there, but they do not show their colors, --- I mean that they do not appear. Everything in the past is still relevant. I was once confused by a blind man. Hence in my own radiant blossoms there lies a glance of that blind man. (*Fei Ming xuan ji* 326-27)

In his poetic language, Fei Ming conveys the following ideas. First, the memory maintains the experiences of the past, which can be temporarily repressed but can never be erased. Second, the rediscovery of the past experiences hidden in the memory, in its purest form, is not a voluntary action decided by our free will and controlled by our reason. Rather, it is an experience of epiphany which will suddenly occur when the right

time comes and “the clouds of dawn appear.” The awakening of the past in this sense becomes a means of spiritual salvation that enables us to “see” the truth more clearly and, consequently, to liberate ourselves from the restraints of practical life. This understanding is close to Proust’s idea of *mémoire involontaire*. However, as Walter Benjamin points out, “Man’s inner concerns do not have their issueless private character by nature. They do so only when he is increasingly unable to assimilate the data of the world around him by way of experience” (*Illumination* 158). In the modern age, the individual becomes isolated and the experience fragmentary, and the concept *mémoire involontaire* “bears the marks of the situation which gave rise to it; it is part of the inventory of the individual who is isolated in many ways” (Benjamin, *Illumination* 159). The liberating power of the poetic memory in *The Bridge* paradoxically reflects the isolation and frustration of the modern Chinese subject that Fei Ming wants to suppress.

### **Conclusion:**

In this chapter, we have first discussed the different strategies of aesthetic redemption employed by modern Chinese writers in their struggle to defend the integrity of modern Chinese selfhood and analyzed the limitations of all these attempts at salvation. Then we focused on an historical analysis of the two most popular themes in the aesthetic redemption campaign: nature and memory. The close reading of the works of Lu Xun and Fei Ming illustrates modern Chinese writers’ dilemma between the temptation of nature and memory, on the one hand, and the pressures of dark social reality and of the Enlightenment discourse of universal historical progress, on the other. When the redemptive power of nature and memory is exhausted and when the central stage of

literature is moved to modern cities, however, what opportunities and challenges will modern Chinese face? This will be the subject matter of the next chapter.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Modern Self in the Urban Landscape: Interactions between the City and Its Dwellers**

#### **I. Metropolitan Experience, Urban Culture, and Modern Chinese Selfhood**

In the last chapter, we analyzed how the transcendental strategy based on aestheticism, idealized nature and nostalgic memory managed to create a fantastic world detached from harsh social reality. If not completely an escapist attempt, this strategy offered an alternative spiritual homeland to those discontented with the real world. However, as we have also seen in the last chapter, this imaginary world was not secure. Modern Chinese writers and artists had to find other strategies to establish a more direct contact with historical reality and to contain the shocks brought about by modern experience in a less idealistic and totalistic manner. In this chapter I will turn my attention to other strategies employed by modern Chinese writers to recognize and to reflect modern experience. Instead of denying the influence of modernity, many Chinese artists managed to seek ways to introduce modern experience into the sphere of art, though their attitudes toward modernity were at variance, and consequently modern life in their works takes on very different images. All these differences can be traced back to the writers' different understandings of the relationship between the modern individual and the modern world. Indeed, when studying modern society and modern culture, it is essential to study the problem of the individual's integration into the impersonal modern world. In the artistic field, some authors emphasize the tension between the two and depict modern society as a constant threat to the integrity of modern individuality. On the

other hand, there are also authors who recognize the overwhelming power of modernity as a positive, even revolutionary element in the life of individuals. As they see it, the liberation of the individual owes a great deal to this immense power of modernity. However, even for these writers the liberating power is more a kind of potentiality rather than a historical fact. Indeed, many authors held positive and negative attitudes toward the modern world at the same time; as a result, the images of modern life in their works become quite ambiguous and complex.

In this chapter I will concentrate on one particular type of image of modern experience: the image of the modern urban landscape. Urbanization is one of the basic components and most remarkable characteristics of modernization. Urban space, with its accelerated pace of social modernization, its cosmopolitanism, and its cultural and political institutions, has become the ideal laboratory for the forces which have perpetually changed and are changing the world. Here we can most vividly witness the harsh competition that characterizes the market economy, the social stratification and class conflict, the combats between different ideologies and discourses, and the standardization and alienation effect of modernization in the life of ordinary people. When we discuss the impact of modernization on selfhood, either from sociological or psychological perspectives, we also quite naturally turn to the modern metropolis, which, itself the product of modernization and the paramount example of modernity, is the central stage for modern men and women. In contrast to the marginalized and subjugated countryside, the city has become the center of human activities in the modern age. Psychologically, city life can prompt many different feelings in the heart of a modern individual at the same time. Ecstasy and agony, expectation and desperation, a sense of

belonging and a sense of estrangement --- these contradictory responses to urban experience can strangely co-exist in the same person and in the same literary work. These polarized emotions reflect the complexity and ambiguity of modern individual's position in metropolitan life.

The first modern effort in urban studies did not appear until the beginning of the twentieth century, of which the best examples are Max Weber's *The City* (1905) and Georg Simmel's "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903). Of the two thinkers, Weber obviously takes a more optimistic view of urban life's influence on individuals. For him, the city "is the social form which permits the greatest degree of individuality and uniqueness in each of its actual occurrences in the world." It is "the set of social structures that encourage social individuality and innovation, and is thus the instrument of historical change" (Sennett "Introduction," 6). However, I hasten to add that Weber's concept of city is normative rather than descriptive. This productive and individual-friendly city is a model yet to be realized. The actual modern city, on the other hand, fails to articulate the real possibility of "the city" and needs to be reconstructed and revitalized in order to breed diverse urban styles of life.<sup>23</sup>

Compared with Weber's notion, Simmel's concept of the city is much less encouraging. As Simmel points out in his essay, "[t]he psychological basis of the metropolitan type of individuality consists in the *intensification of nervous stimulation*," which in turn leads to "a heightened awareness and a predominance of intelligence in metropolitan man" (Simmel 175-76). This predominance of intellectuality, however, causes an indifferent attitude toward individuality and the dwindling of emotional life. In the end, a blasé attitude that signifies "[a]n incapacity...to react to new sensations with



the appropriate energy” dominates modern metropolitan people’s mental life (Simmel 178). His observation discloses the fundamental contradiction in modern metropolitan life and the root of modern people’s mental / spiritual crisis, and best exemplifies the skeptical view of urbanization’s effect on individuality. Yet Simmel was not a lonely prophet of the grim effects of urbanization. Compared with philosophers and social scientists, artists were much more sensitive to the significant changes around them. What Simmel said in philosophical language had been stated by Baudelaire in his verses almost fifty years earlier. Baudelaire might be the first person to have pointed out that “[m]odernity is the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art” (Baudelaire, *Baudelaire as A Literary Critic* 297). Also he intuitively grasped the spiritual disease of his time, *ennui*, which is but another name for the “blasé attitude” of modern metropolitan people observed by Simmel. For instance, in his poem “Spleen (II),” the poet laments:

Rien n'égale en longueur les boiteuses journées,  
Quand sous les lourds flocons des neigeuses années  
L'ennui, fruit de la morose incuriosité,  
Prend les proportions de l'immortalité.

Nothing is longer than the limping days  
When under heavy snowflakes of the years,  
Ennui, the fruit of dulling lassitude,  
Takes on the size of immortality. (Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil* 146-47)

Baudelaire’s observation on the spiritual disease of the modern age was inherited and developed by the early twentieth-century modernist writers, of whom T. S. Eliot may be the most remarkable example. From the flaccid, diffident and love-weary, world-weary protagonist in *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* to the horrendous scene in *The Waste Land* where the “Unreal City” has “undone so many” (Eliot 65), Eliot calmly, sometimes

even ruthlessly, portrays and dissects modern city-dwellers' emotions of isolation, disintegration, disillusionment and, finally, despair. The modern metropolis under his pen becomes an abrasive and dehumanizing milieu. In the poetic works of Baudelaire and Eliot, the urban landscape turns out to be an estranging environment that relentlessly threatens and grinds down modern selfhood. The alienated and disintegrated individual trapped in the urban milieu has become an epitome of the crisis of modernity in general. In the process of Chinese modernization and urbanization in the first half of the twentieth century, similar social and spiritual diseases emerged, and the poetic discourse developed by Baudelaire, T. S. Eliot and other western modernists was well accepted by Chinese writers in their efforts to find proper ways to express the overwhelming nature of city life.

Besides Weber's optimistic vision of the modern city's potential liberating power and Simmel's criticism of the alienating and dehumanizing effects of the metropolis on the individual, it is also possible to think of the effects of urban experience on the modern individual subject in a less totalistic manner. This alternative perspective is best represented by Michel de Certeau's theory of the practice of everyday life. De Certeau distinguishes two kinds of visions of the city. One is the totalizing view: "seeing the whole." As he explains, this view "transforms the bewitching world by which one was 'possessed' into a text that lies before one's eyes" and "allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god" (92). By lifting the modern subject above the earth this view actually breaks the connection of modern subjects with the practice of everyday life and turns them into abstract and completely "rationalized" beings; this condition, as we recall, echoes Simmel's observation of the "predominance of intelligence" and the disintegration of individual selfhood caused by urban living.<sup>24</sup> Then, according to de

Certeau, the city becomes “a *universal* and anonymous *subject* which...provides a way of conceiving and constructing space on the basis of a finite number of stable, isolatable, and interconnected properties” (94) whose condition of possibility is “an oblivion and a misunderstanding of practices” (93). Such a vision of the city inevitably takes the regulation, containment and repression of individuals as its foundation.

The other vision of the city is that of “the ordinary practitioners of the city.”

According to de Certeau,

These practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen... It is as though the practices organizing a bustling city were characterized by their blindness. The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces; in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other. Escaping the imaginary totalizations produced by the eye, the everyday has a certain strangeness that does not surface, or whose surface is only its upper limit, outlining itself against the visible. (93)

This vision of the city confronts the totalistic urban image and endows the individual subject with the power of self-ruling action. However, the practitioner’s resistance to the controlling power of “the city” does not take the form of overall revolution and will not result in a radical change of the individual’s status. Rather, he / she is engaged in a constant game with the dominance of totalistic urbanity, eroding and revising the rigid rule of the latter through fragmentary, microcosmic, low-keyed practices in everyday life. In this silent war against subjugation and alienation, the individual subject successfully disrupts the abstract and “rationally” regulated space of the “panorama-city” and changes it into a humane and hospitable “place.”<sup>25</sup> This microcosmic understanding of modernity and urbanity in everyday life may help us to get free of the dualistic and dogmatic

interpretation of the relationship between the modern individual and his world and conceive a new approach to the individual's liberation in the modern age.

The complexity of the individual subject's relationship with the modern metropolis is reflected in the diverse images of the city in modern literature and art, and the Chinese case is no exception. However, when we engage in the study of Chinese materials, we need to keep in mind that, although the study of Chinese urbanization can benefit from the urban theories developed in the West and western artistic works about city life have been influential on Chinese urban literature, Chinese urban literature and art is not simply an imitation of the western model. They are marked by creativity and originality, and in many ways they have re-defined the relationship between modern urban individuals and their environment, and in turn changed the connotation of "city" itself. The relationship between western and Chinese discourses of urbanization and metropolitan experiences can be interpreted as an interesting case of cultural transplantation and translation. During this process, both the cultural implications of the modern urban landscape and the literary language developed around this subject matter have been subtly expanded and revised to fit in with Chinese experience. These differences reflect Chinese writers' alternative understanding of modernization and urbanization, and, in the final analysis, are the results of the unbalanced development of modernity in China as well as the underprivileged, semi-colonial status of China in the global context.

The image of the city in modern Chinese literature and art can be briefly divided into the following types:

1) The city as a sublime image. The sublime, according to Ban Wang, can be seen as “a process of cultural edification and elevation [,] ... a grand image of the body, or a crushing and uplifting experience ranging from the lowest depression to the highest rapture” by which “the all-too-human is sublimated into the superhuman or even inhuman realm” (2). The privileged position of the city, nevertheless, is based on the incompleteness of the modern self and the tension between the self and his environment. In other words, the sublimity of the city is possible only when the individual is predetermined as a limited and manipulated subject. The sublime image can be further divided into a “noble” type and a “monstrous” type. The former tends to emphasize the modern city’s enormous power of production, creation, and spiritual renovation; the city, in this light, becomes a promising land that is filled with opportunities and brings the individual the hope of freedom and self-fulfillment. Yet a precondition of the individual’s successful transformation is his identification with “the city as the *universal Subject*” (de Certeau, 94) and the renunciation of his independent selfhood; his success depends on his total subjugation to the rules and rhythms of city life. This dilemma of modern urban people is ignored by the noble sublime but stressed in the monstrous sublime, which emphasizes the alienating power of the modern city and the tension between the individual and the impersonal environment. According to this version of urban life, the individual in the modern city is manipulated by a nameless and inhuman power and tortured by psychological crises that result from this conflict --- horror, anxiety, melancholy, and ennui. In many cases, however, the noble and the monstrous sides of the city are inseparable, and both acknowledge, implicitly in one case and explicitly in the other, a gap between the individual self and metropolitan life.

2) The city as a decadent image. The idea of decadence is rather complicated and ambiguous. Here I will take the argument of Matei Calinescu as a starting point. Calinescu observes that in the era of modernity “the idea of decadence is quite often related either directly to the notion of progress or indirectly to the effects of the ‘hysteria’ of modern development on human consciousness” that result from “the unbearable strain put on the mind by the demands of a society in a rage for ‘production’ in all senses” (167). Itself the product of modernization, decadence becomes a critical response to the negative effects of this historical process and contains a revolutionary potential. As Theodor Adorno emphasizes, “[i]n the world of violence and oppressive life, this decadence is the refuge of a better potentiality by virtue of the fact that it refuses obedience to this life, its culture, its rawness and sublimity” (qtd. in Calinescu 209). The decadent image of the city hence serves as a protest against the alienating factor in metropolitan life and is closely connected with the “monstrous sublime” image of the modern city. In the context of Chinese urban literature, however, we must carefully distinguish several different varieties of the concept of decadence. There are writers who quite faithfully follow the western pattern and take decadence as a form of aesthetic individualism that criticizes the totalizing power of the modern city. Yet there are also some who understand the idea of “decay” in the light of a linear pattern of time and connect decadence with the time of the past, the pre-modern, and tradition. For these writers the best symbol of cultural and spiritual decadence is not the modern metropolis but the old and deteriorating cities and small towns. Yet the literary language they employ to reflect on the decadent status of these ancient cities often shows the influence of western modernism --- T. S. Eliot’s *The Wasteland* may be the most remarkable example. In their works the modernist lament for

the degradation of modern civilization is mingled with an anti-traditionalist spirit based on the Enlightenment historiography that hails social progress. The mixture of these two seemingly incompatible discourses, in the final analysis, reflects the inchoate status of social modernization in China and the dominance of the strong belief in historical progress that was initiated in the May Fourth Era. This hybrid decadence endows the city in the Chinese context with a cultural implication subtly different from that in western modern literature and illustrates the Chinese writers' creativity in the process of intellectual and cultural transplantation.

3) The city as a hospitable environment and humanized "place." In contrast to the grandiose and manipulative image of the city as embodied in the "sublime" works, the city can also be experienced microcosmically, through the everyday life of ordinary people. In this light, the effect of modernity is not necessarily an overwhelming and threatening element but appears familiar and friendly. The modern individual, instead of being alienated from and dominated by his environment, can also become the master of himself and of his world, though only in a modest way. The modern individual can now find himself at home in the modern metropolis and engage in a dialectical interplay with the city instead of being forced to make a choice between self-denial, which is the inevitable result of the subject's submission to the totalistic power, and self-destruction, which is the doomed conclusion of the individual's insistence on his individuation against the sweeping power of metropolitan life. This "familiar" image of the city can be traced back to Benjamin's famous analysis of the *flâneur*, which later was reinforced and expanded by de Certeau's philosophy of everyday life.

It should be made clear that the three different images of the city --- the sublime, the decadent, and the familiar --- should not be understood as mutually exclusive categories but rather different aspects of one object. The boundaries between them are never distinct; each one of them contaminates the others perpetually and it is easy for them to be transformed into other forms once the perspective of observation changes.

## **II. Fantasy and the Metropolitan Experience**

Before initiating a discussion of individual authors and texts, I feel that it is still necessary to engage in a more detailed discussion of the element of fantasy in modern urban life. In the last chapter we explored the role of fantasy in several important literary works that dealt with nature, country life, or childhood experience and the nostalgic memory of it. This discussion may give the impression that fantasy is a residue of romanticism, and that is extinct in modern urban literature. Such interpretations of fantasy, however, are at the crudest level of understanding. As we will immediately see, the role of fantasy in Chinese urban literature is as prominent as it is in the works on nature and rural life, if not more so.

One seemingly paradoxical phenomenon that we have observed in the modern metropolis is that, in this densely populated space, the traditional communal spirit has irretrievably disintegrated, and that, side by side with the emergence of the urban mass, the modern subject is faced with an unprecedented identity crisis: lost among millions of other subjects who are, in fact, only doubles to each other, the modern subject has nobody to identify with, no ideal ego to hold as his model, no fixed moral values and behavior codes to serve as the cornerstones of his selfhood. He becomes uncertain about his



position and role in society, and the question “who am I” tortures him. On the one hand he is nauseated by the existentialist anxiety, feeling that he has been thrown into a vast and bottomless void, and on the other hand, he vaguely feels the menacing power of the modernizing process that mocks and denies his concrete individuality and ruthlessly turns him into a faceless, nameless atom in the mass, or, in other words, an alienated and completely subjected being.

Most of time the subject is unable to see his historical limitations in such a clairvoyant manner, however, precisely because he is contained within this historical process of modernization. The root of his identity crisis is usually only kept in the unconscious of the subject, latent and repressed, instead of emerging into his conscious self-knowledge. This repression work, however, is not simply the feat of the individual psyche’s defense mechanism but in the final analysis the work of the social system. Indeed, the alienation power of modern society, at the same time when it turns the members of society into its subjects, also tactically covers its inscription on the subjects by providing the latter with “an imaginary relationship” to “their real condition of existence,” which for Althusser is nothing but the ideology of the ruling class (Althusser 162). By naming ideology as an imaginary relationship between the subject and his environment, Althusser clearly urges his readers to come to an awareness of the distance between the ideological representation of reality and the historical Real *per se*, and he constantly proposes a denaturalizing, disillusioning reinterpretation of the daily experiences which we tend to regard as a natural and organic part of our lives and to take for granted. By providing an easy and fixed answer to one’s question on identity, ideology hides the contradictions within social reality, keeps the subjects contented with

their conditions of existence and prevents them from questioning and challenging the *status quo*. Hence ideology is “imaginary,” a piece of fantasy by nature. Yet this is only one side of ideology’s function in social life. At the same time, ideology, as a fantasy, is not simply a distorted representation that can be easily removed from the social structure. Althusser’s analysis of ideology, in fact, echoes Lacan’s concept of the Imaginary, as both the Althusserian ideology and the Lacanian Imaginary provide the subject with a concrete and coherent self-image. Although such a self-image always “prefigures its alienating destination”<sup>26</sup> and causes the flaws within the subject, it nonetheless also becomes indispensable to the subject’s construction of his social identity and functions as a guarantee of his mental integrity, without which the subject cannot find his position in the society or insert himself into the flow of social life. In other words, ideology is limited yet not blatantly false; that it is an incomplete picture of reality is itself the result and reflection of the real historical limitation of the subject. On the one hand, the ideology of a particular historical era and social class—in other words, the particular content of ideology--- can be deconstructed and negated. On the other hand, this negation can only happen within the historical process and be realized in the moment when the historical conditions have made this consciousness possible. Structurally, however, ideology--- in the form of fantasy---is always an intrinsic and indispensable part of the construction of subjectivity.

Althusser’s Marxist critique on ideology and its relationship to subjectivity can be buttressed by psychoanalysis from another angle. Freud, when discussing the psyche’s self-defense system, has pointed out that consciousness “is characterized by the peculiarity that in it... excitatory processes do not leave behind any permanent change in

its elements but expire, as it were, in the phenomenon of becoming conscious” (28). According to Freud, consciousness serves as a protection shield that keeps all the shocks, or stimuli, outside, and manages to keep the equanimity of the mind, decreasing the consummation of psychological energy. Althusser’s idea of ideology can be conveniently connected to the theory of Freudian psychoanalysis and used to extend the social/historical horizon of the latter. Reinterpreted from a socio-historical perspective, Freud’s observation in fact illustrates the mechanism of ideology as it works on the psyche of each subject in the society. The consciousness of the modern subject has been initiated and regulated by ideology so that it “automatically” leaves any threats to the ideology “outside,” repressing the possible suspicions and uncertainties into the unconscious.

However, I hasten to add that fantasy is by no means simply a denial of social reality. Instead, it functions as a bridge that connects the individual’s consciousness and the threats from reality while taming the shocking power of the latter. Hence it reflects and at the same time modifies the shocks from the outside world. We may also add that the idea that ideology is by nature fantastic can be understood on two different levels: in general, it is fantastic because it is an “imaginary” relationship of the individual to his social environment and covers the real social conflicts. We have already discussed this aspect so far. In a specific sense, we may argue that ideology in modern society relies less on the facility of “reasoning”---- systematical theories, rational arguments, abstraction and generalization---- and more through “pseudo-concrete images” that are supposed to be private, spontaneous, and distanced from the influence of ideology (Žižek 1). According to Slavoj Žižek, fantasy does not simply realize a desire in a hallucinatory way, but first of all constitutes and regulates our desire, “teaches us how to desire,” like

Kantian transcendental schematism that help us to understand (Žižek 7). In the final analysis, fantasy has become a frontier where the imagination and the historical Real meet and intermingle with each other.

While trying to modify and contain the historical Real, fantasy also provides us a precious glimpse into the hidden reality of History. As to the individual subject, fantasy offers him an assuaging self-image, eases his tension with the environment, and temporarily releases him from his identity crisis. Yet it also deepens the split in his ego and, paradoxically, highlights the very crisis it tries to cover. Benjamin's analysis of the *flâneur* best illustrates the paradoxical role of fantasy and the necessity of its dialectical negation for a clairvoyant understanding of historical reality:

For the *flâneur* there is a veil over this picture [of social reality]. This veil is the mass; it billows in 'the twisting folds of the old metropolises'. Because of it, horrors have an enchanting effect upon him. Only when this veil tears and reveals to the *flâneur* 'one of the populous squares... which are empty during street fighting' does he, too, get an unobstructed view of the big city. (*Charles Baudelaire* 60)

The complicated and often paradoxical relation between fantasy, historical reality and modern subjectivity is a common theme in modern Chinese metropolitan literature — though each individual text seems to provide a different answer. We can find the phantasmal element, for instances, in the rainy valley where the “I” encounters his imaginary clove-like girl;<sup>27</sup> in a rainy evening when the male protagonist suddenly finds a strange girl who miraculously looks like his first girlfriend;<sup>28</sup> in a tramcar where two strangers suddenly fall in love with each other in the sealed city;<sup>29</sup> in the café at the street corner where the female protagonist ponders on her dream of creating the “most perfectly serene cadaver;”<sup>30</sup> or in a Taipei apartment where the heroine is drowned in her memory

of different smells.<sup>31</sup> In all these cases the figures in the texts are enchanted, at least momentarily, by their self-constructed fantasies that screen the pitiable conditions of their existence and fulfill desires insatiable in the real world.

On the other hand, these texts also indicate the limitations of fantasy for the modern individual and disclose the peril of over-indulgence in the phantasmal world. The protagonist in the end falls into melancholy as the result of disillusionment or, perturbed by his / her desires, quickly draws back into the banality of everyday life. If he / she insists on the daydream and refuses to recognize its illusory nature, then the protagonist may be trapped in a dangerous self-enclosure and lose his / her sense of reality, which, in its extreme form, will drive him / her into psychosis. Lastly, a dynamic negotiation between reality and fantasy can turn the construction of fantasy into a self-conscious game of performativity where the self is no longer divided into essence and surface but constituted through a set of acts, which both ‘flatten’ and diversify the selfhood in the post-modern style.<sup>32</sup> However, though the particular roles of fantasy change in different texts --- and social contexts --- the lure of fantasy is nonetheless sustained in the modern tradition of urban literature in China. Either in the Shanghai of the 1920s, 30s and 40s or in the Hong Kong and Taipei of the 1980s and 90s, fantasy has become an intrinsic part of modern urban subjects’ psychic life and everyday experience.

### **III. The Forlorn Wanderer and the Phantasmal Encounter: Dai Wangshu in His Rainy Alley**

Our discussion of individual texts will start with the poem “The Alley in the Rain” (“Yu xiang”) by Dai Wangshu (1905-1950), which is one of the most popular

modern poems, if not the most popular one, among Chinese readers. This poem was composed and published in the year 1928 when the poet was twenty-three years old. It was an immediate success and soon won Dai Wangshu the title “Rainy Alley Poet.”

### 雨巷

撑着油纸伞，独自  
彷徨在悠长，悠长  
又寂寥的雨巷，  
我希望逢着  
一个丁香一样地  
结着愁怨的姑娘。

她是有  
丁香一样的颜色，  
丁香一样的芬芳，  
丁香一样的忧愁，  
在雨中哀怨，  
哀怨又彷徨；

她彷徨在这寂寥的雨巷，  
撑着油纸伞  
像我一样，  
像我一样地  
默默彳亍着，  
冷漠，凄清，又惆怅。

她静默地走近  
走近，又投出  
太息一般的眼光，  
她飘过  
像梦一般地，  
像梦一般地凄婉迷茫。

像梦中飘过  
一枝丁香地，  
我身旁飘过这个女郎；  
她静默地远了，远了，  
到了颓圮的篱墙，  
走尽这雨巷。

在雨的哀曲里，  
消了她的颜色，  
散了她的芬芳，

消散了，甚至她的  
太息般的眼光，  
丁香般的惆怅。

撑着油纸伞，独自  
彷徨在悠长，悠长  
又寂寥的雨巷，  
我希望飘过  
一个丁香一样地  
结着愁怨的姑娘。 [1928]  
(Dai 25-27)

The following English translation was provided by Hsu Kai-yu, which in my view  
successfully reproduces the effect of the original:

**The Alley in the Rain**

Carrying an oilpaper umbrella, I alone  
Paced the long, long  
Lonely alley in the rain,  
Hoping to encounter  
The lady who carried her melancholy  
Like a clove flower.

She had  
The color of clove blossoms  
And the melancholy of clove blossoms  
She carried her sorrow in the rain,  
And in the rain she sauntered.

She seemed to be, in this rainy alley,  
Carrying an oilpaper umbrella  
Like me,

And like me she silently  
Paced, her steps moving slowly  
In loneliness and quiet sorrow.

Silently she came close;  
She walked close to me and cast  
A glance, like a sigh,  
She drifted away---  
A dream,  
Such a soft and blurred dream.

Like a spray of clove flowers

Drifting by in a dream,  
 The lady passed by me,  
 Receding into a distance,  
 To the toppled hedges and walls,  
 To the end of the alley under rain.

Her colors  
 And her fragrance  
 Vanished in the sorrowful time of the rain,  
 And vanished also  
 Her sighing glance,  
 And her clove-like melancholy.

Carrying an oilpaper umbrella, I alone  
 Paced the long, long  
 Lonely alley in the rain,  
 Hoping to see drifting by  
 The lady who carried her melancholy  
 Like a clove flower.  
 (Hsu 180-81)

Critics have noticed the similarity between this poem and Paul Verlaine's "Chanson d'automne." For example, Shi Zhecun, an old friend of Dai Wangshu and a fellow artist, once makes a comment:

Dai Wangshu began to translate foreign poems almost at the same time as he began to compose new poems of his own.... The process of Wangshu's translation paralleled exactly the process of his poetic creation. He wrote "The Alley in the Rain" when he was translating Dowson and Verlaine; he abandoned fixed rhyme and rhythm patterns and turned to *vers libre* at the same time as he translated Gourmont and Jammes. Later, when he translated *Les Fleurs du Mal* in the 1940s, he adopted rhymes in his own poems as well. (qtd. Chen Bingying, 238)

Another important poet-critic, Ai Qing, further pinpoints the connection between "The Alley in the Rain" and "Chanson d'automne" in his essay "The Sixty Years of New Poetry in China." According to Ai Qing, Dai Wangshu's "The Alley in the Rain" is "similar to Verlaine's 'Chanson d'automne' in its musical quality. Both poets tried to call



up the sense of languor and melancholy by repeating certain sounds in their poems” (481).

Let us quote Verlaine’s poem to make a comparison:

**Chanson d’automne**

Les sanglots longs  
Des violons  
De l'automne  
Blessent mon coeur  
D'une langueur  
Monotone.

Tout suffocant  
Et blême, quand  
Sonne l'heure,  
Je me souviens  
Des jours anciens  
Et je pleure;

Et je m'en vais  
Au vent mauvais  
Qui m'emporte  
De-cà, de-là,  
Pareil à la  
Feuille morte. (Verlaine 39)

**The Song of Autumn**

The long sobs  
of autumn’s  
violins  
wound my heart  
with a monotonous  
languor.

Suffocating  
and pallid, when  
the clock strikes,  
I remember  
the days long past  
and shed tears.

And I set off  
in the ill wind  
that carries me

hither and thither  
like a dead  
leaf.<sup>33</sup>

On the one hand, we have to admit that Ai Qing's observation is accurate. The feelings of loneliness, sorrow, melancholy, and despair in Dai's poem clearly echo the languor of the pining and rootless "I" in Verlaine. Also both poems repetitively employ a series of vowels to create an effect of monotony and dreariness. However, it is the differences rather than the similarities between the two texts that arouse my interest.

Both "The Alley in the Rain" and "Chanson d'automne" are habitually categorized as lyric poems. A conventional concept of lyric sets it as the direct expression of the poet's own thoughts and sentiments, and the lyric "I," that is, the first-person speaker in the lyric poems, is usually identified with the poet him/herself. Although one can argue that in reality lyric poetry, either as a genre or as a discourse, is much more complex and controversial, Verlaine's poem seems to fit this definition, at least as there is only one individual voice in it. However, when we turn to "The Alley in the Rain," we find this conventional definition insufficient. It is true that we do find a speaking "I" in this poem and can conveniently attribute the feelings of this subject to the poet himself. Yet one central element in this poem is totally absent in Verlaine's "Chanson d'automne" --- the encounter between the speaker and the "clove-like" girl.

This difference is not a trivial one. The appearance of the second character in the poem makes the situation much more complicated. This clove-like girl seems to be a figure who lingers on the boundary between fantasy and reality. We cannot even decide whether this encounter really happens or simply occurs in the imagination of the lyric "I." The phrase "[h]oping to encounter" in the first stanza may suggest that the encounter only

reflects the speaker's expectation and the clove-like girl is an imaginary figure. However, if the clove-like girl is a phantasmal image, then we have to ask why in this world of poetic imagination, which should be under the complete control of the speaking "I," the encounter finally ends as a doleful failure: the lady "vanishes," and leaves the "I" pace lonely in the alley. Something seems to set a restraint on the imagination of the speaking "I"--- but what is it? Second, the relationship between the clove-like girl and the speaker is also perplexing. The girl is simultaneously the speaker's *semblable* and a stranger to him. On the one hand, they are troubled by the same negative feelings --- loneliness, sorrow, melancholy --- and are almost doubles to each other. On the other hand, the girl is described as nameless, mysterious, dream-like. The encounter is transitory and unreal, and during this imaginary encounter, the two personae do not exchange even a single word. The only communication happens between their eyes: the girl "walked close to me and cast / A glance, like a sigh," and "drifted away." How can we explain this apparent paradox?

In order to find satisfactory answers to these questions, we need to shift our attention to another scene of chance encountering, this time in western urban poetry: the accidental meeting between the speaking "I" and a woman passer-by in Baudelaire's "A une passante."

### **A une passante**

La rue assourdissante autour de moi hurlait.  
Longue, mince, en grand deuil, douleur majestueuse,  
Une femme passa, d'une main fastueuse  
Soulevant, balançant le feston et l'ourlet ;

Agile et noble, avec sa jambe de statue.  
Moi, je buvais, crispé comme un extravagant,  
Dans son œil, ciel livide où germe l'ouragan,  
La douceur qui fascine et le plaisir qui tue.

Un éclair... puis la nuit ! --- Fugitive beauté  
 Dont le regard m'a fait soudainement renaître,  
 Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l'éternité ?

Ailleurs, bien loin d'ici ! trop tard ! jamais peut-être !  
 Car j'ignore où tu fuis, tu ne sais où je vais,  
 Ô toi que j'eusse aimée, ô toi qui je savais !

**To a Woman Passing By**

Around me roared the nearly deafening street.  
 Tall, slim, in mourning, in majestic grief,  
 A woman passed me, with a splendid hand  
 Lifting and swinging her festoon and hem;

Nimble and stately, statuesque of leg.  
 I, shaking like an addict, from her eye,  
 Black sky, spawner of hurricanes, drank in  
 Sweetness that fascinates, pleasure that kills.

One lightening flash... then night! Sweet fugitive  
 Whose glance had made me suddenly reborn,  
 Will we not meet again this side of death?

Far from this place! too late! *never* perhaps!  
 Neither one knowing where the other goes,  
 O you I might have loved, as well you know!  
 (Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil* 188-89)

This poem represents Baudelaire's penetrating observation of the desire and desperation of modern metropolitan subjects. According to Benjamin, for example, in "A une passante" "[t]he delight of the city-dweller is not so much love at first sight as love at last sight. The *never* makes the high point of the encounter...What makes his body twitch spasmodically is not the excitement of a man in whom an image has taken possession of every fibre of being...[but] the shock with which an imperious desire suddenly overcomes a lonely man" (*Charles Baudelaire* 45-46). As Benjamin argues, the strange love of the speaking "I" for the passing woman in this poem is stigmatized by the big city

--- in other words, a product of the particular historical and cultural milieu of modernization and urbanization.

There are striking similarities between “The Alley in the Rain” and “A une passante.” Both are centered on a chance meeting between the lyric speaker and a nameless woman; both women figures are obsessed with “sorrow” or “grief,” hence ideal figures of melancholy; in both poems the lyric speakers show a strong desire for the (re)union with the lady; in both cases the communications between the two sides are based on a (female) glance as the return of the (male) gaze; and finally, in the end their pursuits both end in vain. Compared with Verlaine’s “Chanson d’automne,” Baudelaire’s poem is even closer to “The Alley in the Rain,” both thematically and formally. Although we cannot prove that “A une passante” has direct influence on “The Alley in the Rain” (neither can we prove that Verlaine’s poem has), we do have evidence to show that in Dai’s writing career, Baudelaire was always his model and source of inspiration. Though Dai Wangshu did not begin translating *Les Fleurs du Mal* until 1940s, he had started reading Baudelaire in a much earlier age. According to the memoir of Shi Zhecun, Dai began to read French symbolist poetry when he was still a student in the preparatory school of French in Aurora University (in Chinese, Zhendan University). Dai attended this preparatory school in 1925 when he was twenty and graduated one year later. During this time he was so fascinated by French symbolists that he “buried Verlaine and Baudelaire under his pillow” all the time (qtd. in Chen 8-9). We can reasonably deduce that by the time when he wrote “The Alley in the Rain,” Dai Wangshu had been quite familiar with Baudelaire’s works.

We need now point out another similarity between “A une passante” and “The Alley in the Rain” which we have not mentioned before. In both poems the woman figure becomes a simulacrum. She is neither real nor simply a fictional figure in the lyrical speaker’s imagination. Rather, she becomes the projection and embodiment of the existential dilemma of modern people in metropolis. In a sense, *she is the city*<sup>34</sup>. I would argue that the life of modern metropolitan people is dominated by fantasy. In the daily life of modern individuals, modern metropolis has been playing a growingly formidable role, constantly encroaching the private space that is still under the control of the subject’s (limited) free will, and endangering the integrity and authenticity of the subject’s selfhood. These conditions lead to the rise of private fantasy, which is the result of the increasing tension between modern individual and urban environment. Fantasy signifies modern people’s inability to seize objective world and their retreat into the imaginary, private sphere when being challenged by the crowding of ever-changing impressions. However, paradoxically fantasy also becomes a defense strategy of modern people against the approaching threat of the alienating power. Hence on the one hand, we may regard the futile encountering in these poems as a symptom of modern people’s mental crisis (the incapability to construct an authentic inter-subjective relationship). On the other hand, we may treat it as a strategy to negotiate with the social reality in order to create a private space (though only imaginary) and guarantee individual ego’s coherence. Whether this strategy is successful, however, is another question.

The fantasy of the (male) speaking “I” is not only an imaginary displacement of unfulfilled erotic desire, but more profoundly, it is a compensation to the troubled and fragmented psyche of the lonely individual lost in the metropolis. Instead of repressing

the erotic desire, the modern metropolis produces it. The encountering in these two poems ends in vain not because the lyric “I” is not bold enough to realize his desire, but because this desire is by nature unfulfillable. As the result, the speaking “I” in these two poems is a broken self. He is divided between his will to indulge in the private fantasy, which is symbolized by his pursuit of the clove-like girl /woman passer-by, and his self-knowledge that such pursuit can never be successful. Once the speaking “I” in the poem gets split into two contradictory sides, the poem cannot be described as “lyric” in the conventional sense any longer. Instead of one voice, we hear a clash of different voices in the same poem. This is “dramatic” rather than “lyric,” and when further developed, would lead to T. S. Eliot’s poetics of impersonality. In the poems of Baudelaire and Dai Wangshu, however, the speaking “I” can at least still keep its nominal integrity. In their poems, there is still a thin veil over the picture of social reality. The *flâneur* could still leisurely saunters around Baudelaire’s Paris and in Dai’s rainy alley; the world of fantasy, although already instable, did not collapse yet. According to Benjamin, part of the reason for it is that the development of late capitalism has not come to the critical moment when the petit-bourgeois class is forced to recognize its true historical condition (*Charles Baudelaire* 59, 60). While I am not sure whether the complete awakening suggested by Benjamin is ever possible,<sup>35</sup> I do agree that Dai Wangshu’s China, which was “half-feudal, half-colonial” and has not crossed the threshold of social modernization yet, did leave much space for the phantasmic imagination. Hence the specific “Chinese color” in Dai’s poem<sup>36</sup>.

Despite the underlying similarities between “The Alley in the Rain” and “A une passante,” Dai Wangshu also successfully demonstrates a unique understanding of

modern urban life in his poem. The “local” color in his poem is not skin-deep and limited to the use of a few traditional Chinese poetic images, such as oilpaper umbrella and clove or lilac flowers in the rain. Moreover, Dai in this poem implicitly blurs the boundary between city and countryside, and provides this urban poem with a cover of traditional sentimentalism. Unlike Baudelaire’s poem, the setting of “The Alley in the Rain” is quite ambivalent. Dai never clearly states that the dramatic encountering in the poem happens in a modern city. On the contrary, the only distinct landmark in the poem, “the toppled hedges and walls,” gives readers the impression that the poem is set either in a village, an old town, or a dilapidated ancient city. Together with the image “clove flower,” they create an aura of pastoral poetry and suggest an emotional connection with nature and country life. This pre-modern life style has been irrevocably lost to modern city dwellers, but it does not stop them to take a nostalgic retrospect to this idealized past in their memory. From last chapter, we know that the cherishment of old country life in memory is a usual theme in modern literature, yet in most cases this memory is accompanied by a sharp contrast to the ugly reality of urban life. Dai, instead, skillfully hides the urban content under the disguise of the conventional pastoral beauty. If we are not careful enough we may totally miss the theme of urbanism in this work. Dai’s enthusiasm about pastoral beauty and the harmony and tranquility of traditional life style is typical for Chinese poets of his generation. This interest may due to both the predominant role of nature in classical Chinese culture, and, more importantly, to the under-developed condition of contemporary Chinese society.



#### **IV. Urban Experience, Fantasy and Modern Chinese Selfhood: Shi Zhecun's "One Evening in the Rainy Season"**

The story of "One Evening in the Rainy Season" is set in Shanghai of the 1920s. In the context of modern Chinese culture Shanghai occupies a unique symbolic position: still an obscure small seaport in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century whose name most of Chinese people were not familiar with, with an astounding speed it grew into the biggest city in China in a few decades and successfully became a modern metropolis, exemplifying a completely new kind of life experience which the conventional Chinese society never witnessed before. The direct product of the first Opium War in 1840s and China's consequent enforced opening to the western world, Shanghai as a modern city was constantly mapped and remapped in its history by multifarious political, economic and cultural powers that clashed against each other. It is a grotesque mixture of vitality and decadence, chance and desperation; it has both bred China's inchoate civil society and modern class consciousness---of both the bourgeois and the proletariat ----, and at the same time produced millions of isolated, alienated modern subjects. Hence it becomes an ideal test field to observe the emergence of modern Chinese subjectivity, and it is no wonder that many writers choose it as the stage of their stories.

"One Evening in the Rainy Season" is centered on a chance encounter between the male protagonist, who is also the first person narrator in the story, and a beautiful girl, who is a total stranger to him, in one rainy evening on the streets of Shanghai. The male protagonist began to fabricate his fantasy from the moment when he saw the girl get off a trolleybus--- in his eyes "this woman in the rain...would meet" all the criteria of beauty "completely," including "a pretty face...a graceful bearing...a well-proportioned

figure...and a pleasant way of expressing oneself.”<sup>37</sup> We can easily find that this impression of the young woman is the result of the male protagonist’s projection of his hidden desire, which changes a real person into an idealized image in the eyes of the observer. As the story develops, the male protagonist, after some hesitation, finally found courage to approach to the young woman and offer his help--- seeing she did not take an umbrella with her, the male protagonist suggested that she let him accompany her on her way home. The offer was accepted, and our hero is both delighted and at the same time slightly surprised. Walking beside the girl under the same umbrella on the street, he felt-- - and readers may feel too--- that he was step by step entering an unreal world, a world full of beautiful memories and fantasies. The male protagonist suddenly “recognized” a similarity between this girl and his “very first girl friend,” whom he had not seen for seven years. We may accept this recognition as a combination of reality and fantasy. The similarity might be real, and this similarity, together with the male protagonist’s longing for the lost love, may reside in his preconscious at the beginning of the encounter and lead to his idealization of the girl as well as his desire of intimacy. However, the psychological movement of our protagonist may be even more complicated and beyond this linear cause-effect explanation. We would rather interpret his idealization of the girl and the striking similarity between her and his first love as the result of his subjective projection. In other words, this similarity has no real basis but only signifies the development of the protagonist’s fantasy. Superficially, memory is the record of real experiences in the past and consequently a treasure box that contains various materials for the imagination. Yet here it is the fantasy fabricated in present time that revises and controls memory.

The male protagonist, after “recognizing” the similarity, was more acutely involved in his own fantasy world and insisted that this strange girl was definitely his first love herself. This highly improbable coincidence for him becomes unquestionable certainty, and he refused to think otherwise. Even when he learnt that the girl’s family name was different from that of his first girl friend, he still stubbornly thought, “It must be false. She’d already recognized me, she surely knew everything about me, she was kidding me” (133). He secretly lauded this unbelievable chance in his heart, yet at the same time felt being caught in a dilemma--- already a married man, he wavered between the desire to resume his old emotional tie with the girl and his moral/ social duty for his wife and family. This hidden sense of guilt was immediately reflected in his fantasy; at the very moment when he thought he recognized the girl, he all of a sudden found a woman leaning on a shop counter, looking at him “with melancholy eyes,” and the male protagonist, with a shock, recognized that this woman was his wife (132).

Hesitantly, he did not take any action to develop his relationship with the girl, but his fantasy worked enthusiastically at the same time as if it wanted to compensate the protagonist’s regret. As we have seen, he had blended the idealized image of the girl with the image of his first love in the memory, and at this moment he added a third dimension to the composite image of the girl, this time an artistic and poetic one: the girl’s pose made the protagonist recall “a Japanese painting by Harunobu Suzuki entitled ‘Visiting a Beautiful Lady at the Palace in Evening Rain’” (133), and he also thought of an “old line of poetry, ‘Holding a bamboo umbrella I accompany an elegant beauty,’ and found it fitted today’s chance encounter quite nicely” (134). However, this aesthetic turn is also a turning point in the story; from this moment the power of fantasy began to decline. The

fact that the aesthetic aspect of the fantasy was only developed after the protagonist has realized his moral dilemma is noteworthy. Through this sublimation effort, the protagonist managed to transform his hidden desire into a transcending and impersonal experience, hence kept a distance away from the object of his desire. It is not a mere coincidence that the protagonist awakened from his daydream almost immediately after this aesthetic turn, all of sudden finding the young woman walking beside him “definitely was not the childhood girlfriend that just now I’d mistaken for” (134). As if signifying his awakening, the rain stopped, and the two departed in the middle of nowhere. However, the residue of this fantastic experience still accompanied the male protagonist back home. When he knocked on the door, he heard a voice within, which “was the voice of the young woman I’d accompanied under the umbrella! I was bemused...” (135). Yet this voice comes from his wife, whose presence under the lamplight finally dispelled the phantasm from the mind of the protagonist. He offered a trite excuse for his lateness--- stopping off for tea and cakes on the way home—and this story was ended in a remarkably, maybe deliberately prosaic way: “In an effort to lend credence to this lie, I ate very little for supper” (135).

Shi Zhecun is one of the earliest modern Chinese writers who consciously employed Freudian psychoanalysis to guide their own writing, especially their description of the psychological movement of the characters. As Shi admitted later, in this period he was heavily influenced by Freud, Havelock Ellis (author of *The Psychology of Sex*), and Austrian novelist Arthur Schnitzler, who became a model for Shi exactly because he “employed the method of psychoanalysis in his novels”<sup>38</sup>. From the perspective of psychoanalysis, we may regard the whole story of “One Evening in the

Rainy Season” as a case study of daydream. The author has cleverly provided all the necessary clues for the reader and then hid behind the screen of narrative, leaving the male protagonist to make his confession as the analysand; his inner monologue thus in fact addresses an implied listener---the reader, who, in his reading process, takes the position of an analyst. This may be one reason why the author chooses the first-person narrative for his story. Working through the confessional narration of the protagonist, the reader manages to decipher his unconscious drives, unfulfilled desires, and the mechanism of condensation and displacement in the formation of his fantasy. In the light of classical Freudian theory, we can easily interpret the fantasy of the protagonist as an imaginary fulfillment of his repressed/ unfulfilled sexual desire. However, the meaning of this daydream may be more profound than it first looks like. Readers will notice, without much difficulty, that there is a subtle emotional tie between the author and his protagonist. Not only did the author fully understand the motives of the protagonist’s fantasy (otherwise it is impossible for him to create this character), but he also seemed to have sympathy for this character. In this story there is no dramatic moment of cruel disillusionment: the daydream, though gradually fading into a fruitless end and being replaced by the sense of reality, nonetheless does not lose its lyrical charm. It fascinates the protagonist without bringing him any danger, and the pleasure of daydreaming accompanies the protagonist long after the end of the actual encounter. We may argue that the author does not only try to “objectively” describe the psychological movement of an urban male but--- consciously or unconsciously--- identifies with his character to some degree. In other words, writing this story also becomes the author’s own emotional investment. To fully disclose the motives behind the fantasy of the male protagonist, and

to satisfactorily explain the identification between the author and the character in his story, we have to move beyond the field of individual psyche and try to analyze the psychic movement of the character in his particular socio-historical background; also this particular socio-historical background, which is common to both the author and his character, is the factor that leads to the former's sympathetic attitude to the latter.

I would argue that this common ground between Shi, the author, and his nameless male protagonist is exactly their similar experience of the modern metropolitan life. The fantasy of the male protagonist is not only an imaginary displacement of an unfulfilled love affair in his past, but more profoundly, it is the compensation to the troubled and fragmented psyche of a lonely individual lost in the metropolis. Furthermore, the psychological crisis of the protagonist is the direct result of the alienating power of modernization and urbanization. Fantasy is his strategy to negotiate with the disturbing environment, his self-defense system that tries to guarantee the equanimity and coherence of his ego. The author, as a modern subject himself, keenly feels the same psychological crisis and also seeks a resolution for himself. Although he knows better than his protagonist and realizes the imaginary nature of fantasy, he nonetheless is still attracted by its poetic beauty and alleviating power, hence reluctant to denounce it completely. Using the example from the story, we may say that the writer has composed the story as a daydream of his own, though to the end of his work he managed to develop an aesthetic distance to his fantasy and finally awoke in time to avert a crisis.

We may take a closer look at the different factors that have influenced the protagonist's daydreaming. At the very beginning of the story, the protagonist has implicitly expressed his dismay of modern metropolitan experience: "It was the rainy

season, and once again the rain was pouring down. I wasn't at all bothered by the rain, what really bothered me were the passing cars whose wheels as they sped by splattered muddy water over my trousers, and sometimes even left me savoring a mouthful of the wonderful stuff" (126). We should be aware of the fact that the "rainy season" in the spring is a popular motif in traditional Chinese literature. It is the ideal time for romantic love, the season to nurture all the subtle feelings of a lover: pleasure, unsettling yet exciting longing, even melancholy caused by an unfulfilled love; yet as a rule in the traditional literature, all these feelings, no matter whether positive or negative in reality, will be mediated through the language of poetry and endowed with fascinating charm. Also it is the time to celebrate the fresh beauty of nature, the burgeoning of life, and an ideal union between the human beings and natural environment. The protagonist in this story obviously inherited this conventional poetic feeling toward the rainy season: the constant rain does not bother him at all. It is remarkable that the influence of the conventional culture, which was sharply declining at the time when the story happened, still partly resided in this character. What troubled him was the "passing cars," obviously an icon of the modern industrial culture and metropolitan life. They violently broke the romantic aura of the rainy season and pushed the protagonist into an awkward position. We may argue that our protagonist is a typical transitory figure in this period of drastic social transformation: on the one hand, his life in reality was besieged and dominated by modern metropolitan experience from all directions, on the other hand, he still held a nostalgia for an alternative way of life, one that belonged to the pre-modern, pre-industrial society where the ego was supposed to be able to enjoy a more harmonious relationship with nature and to avoid the danger of self-split. However, this idealistic

moment, if there has ever been one, was irretrievably lost. Unable to realize his desired harmonious union with nature, the protagonist could only internalize this desire and turned it into a fantasy. Hence the root of his fantasy is not simply a repressed sexual desire, as a Freudian analyst might argue, but the thirst for an undivided self, an organic, “natural” connection, which has not been contaminated by the alienating power of modernity, with his living environment.

In the second paragraph of the story, the protagonist’s discomfort with the city life is mentioned once again: “[w]hen things weren’t too busy at the office, I’d often stare out of the window at the rain falling against the pale sky, and tell my colleagues how I loathed the wheels of those cars” (126). This sentence also tells the reader the social background of the protagonist: a junior clerk working for an anonymous, average company. It makes him a representative of the *petit bourgeois*, or lower middle class. This is not a random arrangement but a significant clue, for the fantasy of the protagonist is not only decided by historical background of modernization and urbanization in general, but by his class belonging in particular. In short, on the stage of Shanghai, with the same background of modernization, urbanization and quick development of capitalism, different social classes would develop different strategies to deal with the changed historical reality. Fantasy in metropolitan literature neither fits the great-bourgeoisie class, who were masters of the society and did not need to realize their desires in this imaginary manner, nor does it belong to the proletariats, who, as the oppressed class in this modern social structure, have gradually come to a class consciousness of social revolution, and made their voice heard in the Left-Wing literature, which developed almost at the same time when Shi composed this story. With the danger



of oversimplification, I still want to argue that in the context of urban culture in modern China, fantasy is basically a petit-bourgeois phenomenon; it reflects the dilemma common to the members of this class, who are troubled by and unsatisfied with the *status quo*, yet at the same time hesitant to embrace the idea of radical social change. The fact that both our protagonist and the author came from this class may help to explain the emotional tie between the two and the author's ambivalent attitude toward the fantasy of the protagonist.

In the same paragraph there appears an interesting symbol: the protagonist's umbrella. The protagonist made it clear that instead of taking a trolley bus, he always "liked putting up my umbrella and returning home midst the pitter-patter of the rain" (126). He also made it clear that he never had a raincoat. The umbrella hence became an icon for his alternative way of life in contrast to the modern metropolitan life symbolized by raincoat and trolley bus. It gave the protagonist a momentary reunion with nature, and also it empowered the protagonist to control his own life at his free will, though only for a moment and in a trivial way, instead of passively pushed forward by the standardization of modernity. Walking with an umbrella in the rain, the protagonist enjoyed the pleasure to control the rhythm of his own life. As he claims, "walking along the sidewalk with a momentarily free and easy mind observing the city in the rain might be muddy and messy but could after all be taken as a personal pleasure" (126). This walking experience also provided the protagonist with a rare chance to meditate on the true conditions of life and endowed him with exceptional clairvoyance that most of modern subjects lacked: "Looking down on the confusion of the pedestrians scurrying for shelter...I even felt a slight anxiety in my own mind. What were they so worried about? Surely they knew this

was simply rain, and presented no danger to their lives. So why were they so urgently trying to hide?... I felt that at the very least this was some sort of unwitting chaos” (127).

We should also pay attention to the scene of urban experience in the eyes of the protagonist during his walking in the rain. As he says,

The precise contours of people and traffic, coming and going in this misty drizzle, would all vanish, the broad avenues would reflect the numerous yellow lights, and now and again green and red traffic lights would glisten in the pedestrians’ eyes. When it rained hard, the sound of people talking nearby, even when it was loud, seemed to hang in the air. (126)

Here the concrete objects are dissolved into shifting images, which cannot be grasped by the senses of the observer anymore; through the translucent screen of rain, the familiar landscape of the modern city is destabilized and defamiliarized. This sea change of the familiar panorama of city experience has a double meaning in this context. On the one hand, it signifies the fantastic nature of the protagonist’s experience in the rain and paves the way for the chance encounter and consequent daydream of the protagonist. On the other hand, however, this paragraph offers the reader an accurate description of the modern metropolis’s image in the mind of a modern subject, which is characterized by instability, elusiveness, and fragmentation. This image in turn reflects the impact of the metropolitan experience on each individual: under the pressure of constant change, the subject has lost his authentic contact with reality. His daily experience in the city is indeed but a phantasm, though he can seldom realize its fantastic nature. In this particular moment in the story, however, the rain, paradoxically through its defamiliarizing effect, triumphantly disclosed the true nature of metropolitan experience to the protagonist, as well as to readers. The romantic fantasy of the protagonist in the latter part of the story hence is both an extension of this overall phantasm of metropolitan experience, and at the

same time is a reaction to it, a struggle to combat the alienating power of the overwhelming metropolitan phantasm in the imaginary sphere. With all these preparations, the personal fantasy of the male protagonist in his chance encounter with the girl inevitably expands beyond the boundary of individual psychology and takes a deeper cultural significance.

We still need to say a few more words about the symbol of umbrella. During the encounter, it was the umbrella that brought the two characters together. Some critic then regards the umbrella as “an obvious phallic metaphor” which affords the male protagonist “a temporary flight of erotic fantasy in masculine terms even while the ennui and bondage of marriage block his need for masculine heroism” (Shih 354). Without denying the effectiveness of this observation, I intend to interpret this symbol less from a strictly Freudian way; the umbrella is primarily a tool for the protagonist’s recovery of full individuality rather than a masculine image of phallus. The umbrella at the beginning of the story provides the male protagonist with a self-sufficient world, yet it is also a world of loneliness, since it is dwelled by him alone. During the encounter, however, he successfully included another human being in his fantastic world. It may signify a promising tendency toward a kind of constructive intersubjectivity, an authentic human relationship based on mutual understanding. However, this optimistic possibility was turned down in this story. The male protagonist dared not expose his thoughts and feelings to the girl, and was totally absorbed in his private world. When the rain finally stopped, everything returned to its “normal” condition; this little ripple left no trace on the surface of life. Yet it is also a truly realistic treatment of the subject matter: the historical reality could not fulfill the condition of a full-fledged development of

intersubjectivity at that time. If the story forcefully had the male protagonist's fantasy "realized" in actual life, it would only turn itself into a cheap melodrama and completely lose the compelling power it has now.

In conclusion, the protagonist in "One Evening in the Rainy Season" is a figure who still kept some traces of pre-modern culture, and the alienating power of modern metropolis has not completely controlled him. Dwelling in Shanghai, he was nostalgic for a lost harmonious relationship with nature, an authentic contact with reality, a poetic manner of existence. This alternative way of living, though already impossible in reality, still stubbornly survived in the internal world of the protagonist. The internalization of this different way of life finally led to the particular fantasy the protagonist underwent in his encounter with the girl. He awakened from this particular daydream--- but it was highly improbable that he would completely give up his desire for the ideal life. Fantasy, understood in this general sense, always played an important role in the protagonist's life. Though it failed to bring any change to the real world, it nonetheless supported the protagonist to endure the harsh and ugly conditions of reality. Hence we may even take the fantasy of the protagonist as a heroic deed--- though he was not a typical hero of actions.

#### **V. Whiteman's Universal Self vs. Eliot's Fragmented Subject: Sun Dayu's *The Portrait of Myself***

Dai Wangshu's "The Alley in the Rain" is a poem *of* the city rather than one *in* the city. Although we realize that the poem actually reflects on the psychological and spiritual dilemma of modern urban subjects, urban landscape never appears in the poem

directly. The next poetic work I am going to examine, the poem *The Portrait of Myself* (*Ziji de xiezhao*) by Sun Dayu (1905-1997), is just the opposite. It is a long poem that is divided into three sections and runs for 380 lines, yet according to the author it is still unfinished. The poem represents the author's effort to explore the complex modern urban experiences and is set in the modern metropolis *par excellence*: New York City<sup>39</sup>. Sun Dayu studied at Dartmouth College and Yale University in the United States from 1926 to 1930. This experience provided him with the opportunity to observe modern American city firsthand. Sun began to compose this poem in 1930 when he was still a student in the United States. The first two sections of *The Portrait of Myself* were published in 1931 and the third section in 1935.

Before we come down to the close reading of selected parts of the poem, I would make some general observations on this work at first. One big challenge this poem may bring to literary critics is: among the three traditional poetic genres, epic, lyric and dramatic poetry, to which one does this work belong? Indeed, it is not only a question for *The Portrait of Myself* but a question we frequently meet in our studies of modern poetry. In these modern texts, the conventional boundaries between the poetic genres are often obscured. Our analysis of "The Alley in the Rain," for example, has shown that the apparently "pure" lyric of Dai Wangshu is in fact a combination of both lyrical and dramatic elements. The case of *The Portrait of Myself* is even more complicated and challenging. Here I would follow William Elford Rogers to suggest that we adopt a more flexible genre theory and take the epical, lyrical and dramatic as three modes of representation and interpretation instead of mutually exclusive categories. As Rogers says,

*[T]he genres are modes of relation between the mind of the work and the world of the work... They arise and can themselves be interpreted only in*

the process of explicitly interpreting the work. Any given work can, theoretically at least, be interpreted “as” lyrical, “as” epical, and “as” dramatic. Perhaps, indeed, all three kinds of interpretation will be mixed in any given reading of the work. (Rogers 57-58)

Inspired by Rogers’s theory, I would argue that *The Portrait of Myself* is a modern lyric on epical scale with certain dramatic passages. It is a lyric because in this poem, there is still a distinctive speaking “I,” and the conventional identification between the “I” figure and the poet is still concretely maintained. Yet it is at the same time a modern epic because the “I” is not simply an individual subject; rather, this is a universal “I” that keeps expanding to include every single man and woman in the metropolis. Readers may have noticed that the title of this poem is an allusion to Whitman’s *Song of Myself*, which has long been canonized as the paramount example of modern epic in American literature.

In *Song of Myself*,

[T]he voice that emerges from Walter Whitman declares itself a manifestation of the universal soul in which all single identities participate...By making his transfigured self the voice of transcendental spirit, and to the extent that his reader accepts this representation, Whitman gives himself a warrant to persuasively claim that he utters “the thoughts of all men in all ages and lands” and that he is the channel of “many long dumb voices.” (Walker 23-24)

In *The Portrait of Myself*, Sun Dayu demonstrates a similar ambition. The “I” figure in his poem is also a collective voice in whom everyone can find him/herself. One excerpt is enough to demonstrate this epical feature:

Talking about pain, I am the quintessence  
Of the pains of all New Yorkers; I have gathered  
The sorrow in every hair, every blood vessel  
Of the immigrants: Jews, Polish, Italians,  
Black people and children of Emperor Huang Di<sup>40</sup>. (Sun 43)

Similar passages can be found in all the three sections of the poem. Here the Chinese poet boldly demonstrates the cosmopolitan spirit of Whitman. In spite of the fact that he was

only a foreign student in the United States, Sun Dayu nonetheless confidently set the speaking “I” in his poem to represent the masses in New York City. For him, there is no border line between different nations, just as there are no boundaries between classes, races, genders, etc. In this way, Sun also made himself a world citizen who is able to embrace the whole human race at once. Yet for Sun, the cosmopolitan spirit may at the same time paradoxically serve as a source for his national pride: the Whitmanian idea of universal “I” enables Sun, the citizen of semi-colonial and under-developed China, to proudly participate in the chorus of different peoples as an equal member. Cosmopolitanism and nationalism / patriotism not only co-exist in the same passage but help to reinforce each other.

Side by side with the power, optimism, and cosmopolitan spirit of Whitman, however, *The Portrait of Myself* also contains a segment that is set in an evidently different tone. To the end of the first section, there all of a sudden appears the following passage:

#### 自己的写照

.....  
 我但见人生的剧本重重  
 叠叠的在我眼前来往。  
 青瞳黄发的姑娘，粉颈  
 紫披肩的姑娘，这大汉八尺高。  
 可惜了，徐娘，可惜了！张飞，  
 你底尊胡睥睨着一车  
 大姐：且不管她大姐，小姐，  
 大奶，时候还差十三分。  
 谁说今天是发薪天？这早报  
 分明印得是星期五，有阵头(?)，  
 因为昨夜约翰压得我  
 满身酸快，可是不要紧，  
 雇一只大船把全城底打字机，  
 香烟，香烟，他说明晚上  
 所得有一瓶上好的膏粱。  
 阿姐说过的，我要是有病，

可以打电话，如今那祸水  
 已经不来了两次，卫廉，  
 星星火火的夜明天，昨儿  
 早上那恶鬼，又是你在掌柜  
 面前作鬼戏！母亲说是  
 要从加州来，自己还得靠  
 晚上走街去贴补，那来钱  
 你这个孩子，可是再过  
 两年，她眯着一只眼睛  
 笑。.....大站到了，大站  
 到了，全车的乘客好比  
 风前的偃草。谁说圣书  
 旧约里吓死圣人的大蝗灾，  
 过路处绿野化作焦原，  
 有站上的群众这般密！  
 大站到了，大站到了。[1931]  
 (Sun 49-50)

[I see the drama of life put onto stage  
 In front of me, one scene after another.  
 The girl with blond hair and emerald eyes, the girl with fair nest  
 And purple wraps, the big guy eight feet high.  
 What a regret, antiquated coquettish lady, What a regret! Zhang Fei<sup>41</sup>,  
 Your graceful beard sneeringly glares  
 At all these women in the coach: women, Mesdemoiselles,  
 Old mums, all the same, the train will start off in thirteen minutes.  
 Who says that today is the payday? The morning paper  
 Says clearly that today is Friday. Still have to wait.  
 Last night John did me so hard  
 That my body is still sore, but doesn't matter,  
 To hire a ship to embark all the typewriters in the city  
 .....  
 Cigarettes, cigarettes, he said tomorrow evening  
 He would get a bottle of superb whiskey.  
 Elder sister has mentioned that if I'm sick,  
 I can call her, and now I have missed my period twice, William,  
 For good heaven's sake, the devil that jumped out  
 Yesterday morning, that's another practical joke of yours, ---  
 In front of the boss! Mama said she'll  
 Come from California, so I have to go on the streets  
 At night for a few extra bucks,  
 Where can I find the money for this kid?  
 But in two years, when she smiles with one eye half-closed...  
 The main station. The main station is close.  
 Passengers in the coach are like grasses



Bowing in front of wind. Even the plague of locusts  
 Mentioned in the *Old Testament*,<sup>42</sup>  
 Which scared the sages to death and  
 Turned fertile land into barren wilderness,  
 Even those locusts are not as dense as people on the platform!  
 The main station. The main station is close.]

A comparison with T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* will immediately demonstrate that the passage quoted above is in fact a creative re-writing of Eliot's poem. Themes, narrative structures, figures, images and even language patterns in this passage can all find their resources in *The Waste Land*. In this passage, we can distinguish three different voices: the voice of the "I," who is the observer and commenter; the voice of the woman typist, whose inner monologue occupies the center of the passage; and the cold, indifferent voice that mechanically announces "The main station is close" in the background. The first voice of the "I" may remind us of the figure Tiresias who appears in "The Fire Sermon," the third section of *The Waste Land*. Tiresias is the blind prophet in ancient Greek myth. Also according to the myth Tiresias was once transformed into a woman for separating two mating snakes for no apparent reason. After seven years, s/he was changed back into a man by striking the snakes again. In Eliot's poem, Tiresias becomes the "old man with wrinkled female breasts" who peeps at the female typist: "Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest--- / I too awaited the expected guest" (Eliot 72). It is ironical that the Whitmanian universal "I" is strangely replaced in this passage by this archaic voyeur. The inner monologue of the female typist in the passage above turns out to be a mixture of the dialogue between the two women in the pub in "A Game of Chess," section two in *The Waste Land*, and the scene of the typist dating with her boyfriend in "The Fire Sermon." Both episodes in Eliot's poem emphasize the banality and hollowness of

modern life (which reminds us of Simmel's observation on the blasé attitude). This theme is faithfully reproduced in the passage under discussion. Also the typist in Sun Dayu's poem is almost the replication of the typist in "The Fire Sermon," whose relationship with her "boyfriend" is all sex but not love. The line "[t]he main station. The main station is close" is an obvious transformation of "HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME" in "A Game of Chess" (Eliot 68, 69). The repetition of these lines represents the flow of mechanical time and indicates the world's indifferent attitude towards individual's suffering. Even the biblical image of "the plague of locusts" in Sun's poem may be inspired by the image of countless living dead flowing over London Bridge --- an image Eliot borrowed from Dante's *Inferno* (Eliot 65, 81).

Eliot's *Wasteland* --- the geography of which is largely based on the city of London, but it should be better regarded as an imaginary place --- is a more sinister environment for modern individual even in comparison with Baudelaire's Paris, let alone Whitman's America. In *The Waste Land*, the horror of modernity tears down its thin veil and demonstrates itself to the readers in its naked form. In particular, these two poets have very different understandings of the concept of "Self" in modern world. While the "Self" in Whitman's poem keeps on incorporating different identities and voices in order to make itself the universal soul, the speaking "I" in *The Wasteland* fails to maintain its integrity as an individual subject. The dramatic scenes in Eliot's poem in a way reflect the tragic, yet inevitable, fragmentation of selfhood in the alienating environment of modernity. It is an obvious fact that Whitman's idealism and Eliot's disillusionment are incompatible to each other. However, only when we put these two contradictory views together can we get a full picture of the complexity of modernity. The tension between

“two modernities,” or between two different understandings of the influence of modernization, has lasted for hundreds of years since the first half of the nineteenth century. On the one hand, there is the positive version of modernity, which is based on “[t]he doctrine of progress, the confidence in the beneficial possibilities of science and technology, the concern with time, the cult of reason, and the ideal of freedom defined within the framework of an abstract humanism” (Calinescu 41). On the other hand, there is the negative version which stresses the alienating and dehumanizing effects of modernity. Modern metropolis, as the central stage for modern life, best exemplifies this complexity of modernity. Maybe this is the reason for Sun Dayu’s decision to employ two competing poetic discourses simultaneously in his modern epic on metropolis--- to him, neither of the two can efficiently express the richness of modern city life alone. In the end, Sun Dayu fails to find out a solution to reconcile the two poetic discourses, just as the tension between the two versions of modernity cannot be easily relieved in real social life. I think that this is the true reason why he never finished the poem as he originally planned. However, paradoxically, this unfinished modern epic most vividly and faithfully reflects the true conditions of modern metropolitan life. Sun’s failure turns out to be his most endurable achievement.

## **VI. Conclusion**

This chapter provides a survey of different images of city life in modern Chinese literature and explores different strategies the Self adopts to create a private space and to construct a secured identity, either real or fantastic, in modern urban landscape. However, the analysis of relevant urban poems and stories also disclose the doleful failure of such

kind of effort --- a regrettable conclusion similar to that of the last chapter. We cannot help wondering whether maintaining integrity of individual self is still possible in modern age, and whether art and literature can provide a real solution to individual's spiritual crisis. However, besides the three types of city images discussed --- the sublime, the decadent, and the familiar, there is another type I deliberately choose not to touch in this chapter: City in Left-Wing and revolutionary literature. In many Left-Wing works, city appears either a sublime image, or a decadent one, or even a familiar and friendly environment; yet the ideological background of Left-Wing literature gives the same image quite different implications. For example, the clash between individual and the modern world in Left-Wing works is often transformed into a play of class struggles and consequently, individual's liberation is replaced by the liberation of the whole labor class. The class-consciousness and claim of collectivism make city a political allegory, which discloses a very different understanding on the nature of modernity. In a larger picture of history, Chinese Left-Wing literature is also a product of, and response to, Chinese modernization process and is faced with the same question: how can a modern individual cope with the changed world? However, it may offer a very different answer, and it is the topic of next chapter of my work.

## Chapter 3

### Collective Aspiration, the Political Sublime, and Literature of Action:

#### Left-Wing Literature and Art

##### Introduction:

In the previous chapters, we examined modern Chinese artists' experiments with aesthetic redemption characterized by retreats to nature and memory, and by various efforts to contain the shock of modern metropolitan experience through artistic, frequently fantastic creation. However, the attempt to maintain the integrity of individual subjectivity and to secure a private space through art is not always successful. Indeed, most of the writers whom we have scrutinized so far ended up in an insoluble dilemma and fell into a mood of melancholy when they finally came to realize the limitations of aesthetic redemption in the face of the disheartening malice of reality and began to doubt the efficacy of an individualistic interpretation of selfhood. In Contrast to the attempts of these writers, however, in modern Chinese literature and art there was always an alternative trend that tended to emphasize the utilitarian function of literature and art as an integral part of a larger movement of social reform. This trend also upheld the idea that the liberation and development of the individual self can only be achieved when the individual is incorporated into a collective identity and participates in a collective aspiration. Last but not least, this trend believed in a final synthesis between artistic creation and social reformation, between individual fulfillment and collective struggle, and between the process and the ultimate goal of action based on the "sublime" quality of a cause. The sublime, in a broader sense, as Ban Wang points out, "can roughly be seen as a process of cultural edification and elevation, a vigorous striving for the lofty heights

of personal and political perfection, a psychic defense mechanism designed to ward off dangers and threats, a constantly renewable heroic figure for popular emulation; a grand image of the body, or a crushing and uplifting experience ranging from the lowest depression to the highest rapture” (2). The literary movements that acclaim collective aspiration and social engagement may burgeon from different discursive backgrounds and reflect the interests of different social groups: They can either be based on the cosmopolitanism of Enlightenment, on nationalism, or on the radical ideology of Marxism. Each of these has its own followers as well as opponents. Moreover, these discourses are often strangely entangled with each other in the context of modern China despite their apparent contradictions. In this chapter, I will examine the theory and practice of one of these artistic trends that emphasize collective aspiration and social involvement: the Left-Wing art and literature written under the influence of Marxist ideology. This is, however, not necessarily a homogeneous and exclusive movement. Its connections with Enlightenment discourse of the New Culture Movement and the nationalist struggles of modern Chinese people both complicate and help to enrich Leftist writers’ self-perception. Also, the constant tension between the collective aspiration and individual consciousness that penetrates the history of the Chinese Leftist art movement sheds light on the difficulty and complexity of reconstructing a satisfactory selfhood in modern China. Finally, the examination of the achievements and limitations of the Left-Wing art movement may also provide meaningful lessons to the contemporary writers who are attempting to re-politicize literature and art, in China as well as in other parts of the world --- a trend which becomes more and more conspicuous in the age of globalization.

A brief survey of the history of Marxism in China, especially in the early years of the twentieth century, may be of some help to our present discussion. Marxism was introduced into China together with various other modern western ideas and philosophies at the turn of the century.<sup>43</sup> The victory of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1917 further kindled Chinese intellectuals' interest in Marxism, and some of the leading figures of the New Culture Movement quickly turned to embrace the Marxist theory in the late 1910s and early 1920s. In May, 1919, *New Youth*, the flagship journal of the New Culture Movement published the "Special Issue on Marxism" (Volume 6, Issue 5), in which Li Dazhao, one of the earliest Chinese Marxists and later founders of the Chinese Communist Party, published his article "Wode makesizhuyi guan" (My Concept of Marxism).<sup>44</sup> In this article Li introduced to his readers the three sections of Marxist theory: historical materialism, especially the theories about the dialectical movements between the economic basis and the superstructure as well as the concept of class struggle; political economics, especially the theory of surplus value and capital; and the theory of socialism. Li's article laid the foundation of what I call "orthodox Marxism." This understanding of Marxism, which emphasizes economic determinism, class struggle and proletariat consciousness, is indeed an oversimplified version of Marxism mainly imported from the Soviet Union (sometimes via Japan in the early days) rather than a faithful reflection of Marx's own ideas. Nonetheless, it is this version that later became the mainstream theory of the Chinese Communist Party and after 1949, the new state ideology. On the other hand, however, we may also argue that Li's article marked the beginning of the difficult love-hate struggle between Chinese intellectuals and the Communist party and its official ideology, which dominated the entire history of the

Chinese Communist revolution and is still a sensitive issue today in China. The publication of this special issue and especially Li's article marked the first high tide of Marxism in China.<sup>45</sup> In 1920, the first complete Chinese translation of *The Communist Manifesto* was published; one year later, the Chinese Communist party was established in Shanghai.

Although Marxism had already become popular in the late 1910s among some modern Chinese intellectuals, it was first and foremost regarded as a political, economic and social theory and did not have an immediate impact on literature and art. Yet when history entered the 1920s, the first generation of self-conscious Left-Wing writers and artists quickly came onto the stage. In 1924 the first Left-Wing literary society *chunlei she* (The Spring Thunder Society) was founded in Shanghai. It was followed by *taiyang she* (The Sun Society), founded in 1928; also around the same time *chuangzao she* (The Creation Society), which was founded in 1921 and used to acclaim individualism and aestheticism, made a "left" turn to baptize itself in Marxist ideology. The list of Left-Wing writers also began to include Lu Xun, the founding father of modern Chinese literature, and Mao Dun, who was the famous critic of *wenxue yanjiu hui* (The Association of Literature Studies), the eminent realist novelist, and one of the earliest members of the Chinese Communist Party. In spite of the heated arguments --- sometimes they even degenerated into vicious personal attacks --- between Lu Xun and the Sun Society and later the Creation Society, these writers all decided to accept Marxism as the guiding principle of their artistic creation. The development of Left-Wing artistic movement gradually expanded from the field of literature to visual arts such as painting, the woodcut, and more importantly, film industry.



The founding of *Zhongguo zuoyi zuojia lianmeng* (The Association of Chinese Left-Wing Writers) in 1930 marked the climax of the Left-Wing art movement in China. The burgeoning of Chinese Left-Wing culture during the 1930s was both the direct result of the awakening of the proletariat class consciousness in China and the development of the Chinese Communist revolution. At the same time it was also an integral part of the international Left-Wing cultural movement that swept the world in “the red 1930s.” Chinese Left-Wing artists paid close attention and enthusiastically reacted to their comrades’ efforts of establishing a proletariat culture in the Soviet Union, Japan, Western Europe and America, and in this way the Left-Wing artistic movement took on a cosmopolitan color that echoed Marx’s call at the end of *The Communist Manifesto*: “Working men of all countries, unite!” (Marx, 55). Moreover, the political radical and the artistic avant-garde in the early twentieth century were often tightly interwoven. As the result, between the Left-Wing, “proletariat” cultural movement both in China and abroad and other modernist schools and writers there were all kinds of close connections and interactions. Just as Mayakovsky is a futurist and Éluard is a surrealist, Guo Moruo’s poetic works were heavily influenced by late romanticism and Ai Qing never renounced his admiration for French symbolism. We should also keep in mind the fact that the Chinese Left-Wing art movement was cradled in Shanghai, and throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s it was primarily an urban culture movement. The metropolitan background of Shanghai, where the traffic between east and west, traditional and modern passed everyday in a dazzling manner, further reinforced the cosmopolitan aspect of Chinese Left-Wing culture in this period, allowing us to regard it as part of the larger campaign to contain the shock of and to respond modernity --- goals that, to me, define

modernism in general (see my “Introduction”). At the same time, from the early 1930s on, as the result of the continual deterioration of the Sino-Japanese relationship and Japan’s invasion of Northeast China, we can find in the Chinese Left-Wing cultural movement an increasingly distinctive nationalist tendency which finally converged with other nationalist callings and became the dominant voice in literature and art in the coming Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). Hence, we can argue that the Chinese Left-Wing art and literature movement in the pre-War years, instead of a form of pallid preaching of puritanical Marxism, was a vivacious campaign in which nationalism and cosmopolitanism co-existed and Marxist ideology and “decadent” and avant-garde art forms could work hand in hand.

The situation changed dramatically during the Sino-Japanese War years. The rural area replaced the modern cities as the new center of the Chinese Communist revolution and the Communist Party’s control of the Left-Wing culture movement, both ideologically and institutionally, became much tighter and more systematized. Mao Tse-Tung’s 1942 “Talks at the Yenan [Yan’an] Forum on Literature and Art,” which bluntly asserted that art and literature are only ideological forms and subjugated them to politics, was revered as the new Bible by most Chinese Left-Wing artists.<sup>46</sup> As Mao claimed in his talks:

In the world today all culture, all literature and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines. There is in fact no such thing as art for art’s sake, art that stands above classes or art that is detached from or independent of politics. Proletarian literature and art are part of the whole proletarian revolutionary cause; they are, as Lenin said, cogs and wheels in the whole revolutionary machine. (86)

Mao clearly ordained that art is no longer a self-sufficient and autonomous domain, but is always decided by, and is employed to serve, the need of politics. The ultimate standard

of good literature is whether it successfully serves the interest of the “workers, peasants and soldiers,” or the “people,” and the policies of the Communist party. The earlier experiments with different modernist styles were also stopped when Mao openly required a “mass style” in his 1942 *Talks*. In Mao’s words, “the thoughts and feelings of our writers and artists should be fused with those of the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers. To achieve this fusion, they should conscientiously learn the language of the masses.” Mao’s value system denigrated the language of the modernist literary style of intellectual writers as “insipid” and full of “nondescript expressions... which run counter to popular usage” and upheld the language of the masses as “rich” and “lively” (Mao, 72). Behind Mao’s attempt to privilege the language of the mass over that of the intellectuals, we can find not only his utilitarian understanding of the function of literature (using the language of the mass to appeal to the widest audience and to achieve the best propaganda effect), but also a deep skepticism toward the new literature tradition that developed since the May Fourth Era and an implicit defiance of the intellectuals as a social class.

The effect of Mao’s quest for a mass style was not completely negative; it pointed to a new direction of modern Chinese literature and art and directly led to a group of important literary works in the folk style in the 1940s. However, while opening a new path it also severed any possible connection between Left-Wing art and avant-garde art, a connection once seemed very promising in the 1920s and 1930s. Mao’s argument is not only an official statement of the revolutionary ideology of the proletariat class, but, in a broader sense, was also part of the nationalist discourse that was dominant in the Sino-Japanese War period. As we have noted, the trend of nationalism in wartime was the

most powerful collective movement in the period, no matter whether it was fused with Marxist ideology or took a totally different form.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, with the intellectuals' embracing of the ideal of nationalism from all directions, the titillating experiments with avant-garde style as well as the attention to the individual subject were eventually marginalized and often regarded as potential threats to the solidarity of the collective struggle for the nation's liberation.

The end of the Sino-Japanese War did not bring back the old diversification and dynamism to Left-Wing literature and art; on the contrary, the Party's (and after 1949, the Party-State's) control was further tightened and the creation of literature and art, if not totally stifled, was strictly disciplined according to the dogmatic version of Marxist ideology. It should be acknowledged that until the official ideology finally took a hegemonic control of the entire public sphere in the frenzied "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" Era (1966-1976), there was still (though limited) space for artists to negotiate with the party and state for freedom of creation under the general ideological umbrella. However, after the Yan'an *Talk* became the guiding principle for the entire Left-Wing literature and art movement, the relationship between artists and revolution was fundamentally changed and the romantic aura around the latter gradually dwindled until it was finally replaced by a kind of Kantian sublime that would lead to only a feeling of "negative pleasure," which in Kant's words will only "contravene" the "power of judgment" and lead to "an outrage on the imagination" (Kant, 495).

The vicissitudes of the reception of Left-Wing literature in post-1949 China seemed, ironically, to substantiate one of the basic beliefs of orthodox Marxism: the ultimate standard of literature is always the political standard. From the founding of the

new “People’s Republic” to the end of the Cultural Revolution in the mid-1970s, for explicitly ideological reasons Left-Wing literature was described as the mainstream in the development of modern Chinese literature and always put in the most conspicuous position in different studies of literary history, while all the other literary trends, schools and works were either marginalized or condemned.<sup>48</sup> The enshrinement of Left-Wing culture in the official history of literature in Communist China makes a sharp contrast to the constant deterioration of the quality of Left-Wing works in the post-1949 era, resulting from the tightened control by the party-state. Partly because of the degeneration of the Left-Wing literature and art in the post-1949 era, especially in the so-called Cultural Revolution period, and partly because of the decline, if not complete bankruptcy, of official ideology in general and people’s growing distrust in grand historical narratives in China, Leftist culture has been boldly questioned, challenged, and even ridiculed in the years immediately following the end of the Cultural Revolution, especially in the 1980s and early 1990s. However, China’s dramatic turn to the market economy in the 1990s and years ensuing has led to not only prosperity but also the sense of insecurity, loneliness, estrangement and frustration and caused the spread of a vulgar fetishism of money as well as cynicism in the society. The vast blank space in the spiritual life of contemporary Chinese urges them to try to find a sense of belonging and a way to actively keep in touch with reality.

For contemporary Chinese who wave between what Isaiah Berlin calls claustrophobia and agoraphobia in terms of cultural identity and spiritual home, the achievements and limitations of the Leftist cultural movement can still provide some good lessons. In the global context, the growing concerns about the effects of the all-

sweeping globalization also require a renewed form of collectivism and activism among ordinary people to make their voices heard and their needs fully taken care of. Globalization in some people's eyes serves as a congenial factor to bring different nations and countries much closer to each other and an opportunity for social development, as well as an economic boon in underdeveloped areas. Yet there is always the danger that without constant vigilance and without taking the necessary precautions it might degenerate into the latest form of Capital's conquest of the world, or end in the "World State" that Aldous Huxley has warned us about in the *Brave New World*. The new form of collectivism and activism must not repeat the mistake of the old hegemonic State and must manage to strike a balance between the collective course and individual freedom. In short, our re-thinking of the Chinese Left-Wing literature and art movement in the first half of the twentieth century is therefore not only a scholarly study of the past but also a response to the practical needs of contemporary Chinese society as well as a reaction to a world in change.

In the following parts, I aim to examine the complex relationship between individual selfhood and collective aspiration in early modern Chinese Left-Wing literature. How did the Leftist artists perceive themselves and how did they interpret their roles in the revolution as well as their relationship with the mass? How did they deal with the conflict between the utilitarian needs of practical politics and their artistic pursuit? What standard did they use to judge their own works and the works of others? What are the new "lyrical" forms they developed in the Leftist literature? And finally, did the revolutionary discourse and practice successfully solve their crisis of selfhood and bring them an assured identity?

### **The Artist as a Revolutionary: The Early Romanticist Imagination of Revolution**

In this section, I will first take a look of the romantic understanding of the relationship between art and revolution and that between artists and revolutionaries held as self-evident by some early Left-Wing writers, and then examine the changes that occurred in the later years of their careers. I hasten to that not all of them have undergone this later change, or at least not all of them have accepted the changes in the same way. I will take two of the Leftist writers, Guo Moruo (1892-1978) and Ke Zhongping (1902-1964), as my major examples, but I will also touch on some others in my discussion.

Guo Moruo was the most famous poet of the New Culture Movement and one of the founding members of the Creation Society. He first made his fame through his collection of poems *Nü shen* (The Goddess) (1921) and through his Chinese translation of Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (1922). These two publications led to his phenomenal popularity among young readers and helped to make him an icon of the individualist trend of the May Fourth Era that Jaroslav Průšek has elaborated on in his study (See my "Introduction"). While in his earlier years he was a passionate admirer of Tagore, Whitman, and Goethe and as he proclaimed himself, a pantheist, from the mid-1920s he made a dramatic turn to Marxism and was remembered in his later years as a prominent Marxist historian and literary critic, as well as a self-conscious Left-Wing writer. It will be interesting and rewarding to examine both the implicit connections between his early pantheist ideas and Marxist ideology, and the subtle differences between his romantic understanding of revolution in his early Marxist stage and his final

reception of “orthodox” Marxism, which at the same time also marked his complete renunciation of his early self.

Guo started his writing career as a self-assured romanticist. His admiration of nature, his emphasis on the subjective and the emotional aspects of literature, together with his fascination with mythology and his pantheist beliefs, made him an ideal heir of the western romantic literature that blossomed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In his “Preface” to his Chinese translation of *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*, Guo interpreted Goethe’s pantheism to his readers, which can also be regarded as his illustration of his own pantheist beliefs:

Pantheism is actually atheism. The entire nature is the expression of the divine, and so is the self. So I am the god, and the entire nature is also the expression of my self. When the human finally gets rid of the subjective “I,” he can then finally be in the oneness with the divine, and transcend the temporal and spatial limits to become immortal.... In order to enjoy the bliss of eternity, one must first forget oneself. However, Goethe’s method of forgetting self does not rely on the tranquility of the soul but on the action of the self. One must burn his entire body and soul for a moment of complete self-fulfillment and infinite self-expansion, and pour all of his spiritual power into the world. (10:178)

Guo’s interpretation of pantheism is composed of two parts. The first part emphasizes the importance of “forgetting” the limited subjective “I” to accomplish the universal self that can “transcend the temporal and spatial limits to become immortal.” If Guo had stopped here, then his pantheist theory would be hardly different from the poetic theory of Wang Guowei and may conveniently lead him to embrace the idea of aesthetic redemption that we have discussed in Chapter 1.

What distinguishes his transcending efforts from those of the aestheticians, however, is his emphasis on action. Instead of withdrawing the self from the world of reality and creating a secured haven in the enclosed world of art, the self must actively



invest its feelings and emotions in the objective world and try to expand to the extreme to absorb the entire objective world into the subjective domain in order to make the former an expression of the latter. Even if the efforts finally fail, the failure is paradoxically a mark of the subject's victory. Guo values passionate extremism much more than the balanced tranquility of the soul. In this aspect, his comment on Goethe once again is telling. As he says, "he [Goethe] shows unreserved compassion to the insane, and instead of taking suicide as a sin, he pays it his homage. To be able to commit suicide is the supreme virtue. --- This is the idea beyond those mediocre followers of the 'golden mean'" (10:179). From its very beginning, the ideal modern selfhood in Guo's understanding is a dynamic, optimistic, and universal self that bases its universality on the dialectical relationship with the objective world instead of the retreat from the latter. This is an extroverted rather than an introspective self. As a result, when Guo tries to combine his social concerns with his aesthetic theory, he hardly finds any contradiction between the two.

Guo's early pantheist and romantic understanding of selfhood and literature paved his way toward Marxism and Guo made his Leftist turn without too much hesitation. It is widely accepted that his 1924 translation of Japanese Marxist theorist Kawakami Hajime's (河上肇) *Social Structure and Social Revolution* marks the beginning of Guo's Marxist stage (see Qin, 122-125). In the same year, Guo Moruo also wrote a series of articles in which he tried to redefine the function of art and the role of artist in modern China according to Marxist theory. It should be noted, however, that Guo's acceptance of Marxism is both a rational and an emotional decision, and his interpretation of Marxist theory at this stage is in many ways a variation on his old romanticist idea rather than an

“orthodox” version of Marxist ideology. In a letter to his old friend and co-founder of the Creation Society, Cheng Fangwu, Guo disclosed his sense of frustration and ennui that prompted him to find a new solution that his old pantheist ideas could not provide:

Dear Fangwu, now I understand. The frustration and ennui that both of us suffer from --- I am afraid that all the Chinese youth have this feeling of frustration and ennui in common --- results from the fact that we do not have the good luck to fulfill ourselves and to find out a way to achieve the freedom and development of the mass. Our internal desires and external conditions are not in accord with each other; we are disoriented, we lose the ability to take action, so we are frustrated, we are trapped in ennui, we flow aimlessly, we even often think of committing suicide. Dear Fangwu, now I have realized the truth and changed my old ideas that were colored completely by individualism. (10: 289)

Guo Moruo’s description of the spiritual crisis of his contemporary Chinese intellectuals is penetrating. It immediately reminds us of Průšek’s comment that subjectivism and individualism, joined with pessimism and a feeling for the tragedy of life, along with an inclination to revolt and even the tendency to self-destruction, are the most characteristic qualities of Chinese literature from the May Fourth Movement of 1919 to the outbreak of war with Japan” (3). The pessimism and sense of tragedy are the basic components of the *Zeitgeist* of the late New Culture Movement Era and preconditions of the development of the lyrical mood in modern Chinese literature. Besides his piercing observations on the doleful spiritual conditions of modern Chinese, Guo’s unique contribution to the reconstruction of modern subjectivity is that he is one of the first Chinese writers who provided a Marxist analysis of the social roots of the epidemic pessimism among modern Chinese intellectuals and explicitly required that literature become part of the social revolution even if it meant that one had to sacrifice the quality of art. According to Guo, the age of revolution is a transitional yet inevitable stage in history, and literature in the revolutionary era has to put the propaganda

responsibility before the aesthetic pursuit. As he claims: “we the people living in this transitional age can only become midwives. We cannot become pure scientists, pure writers, pure artists, pure thinkers” (10: 288). He continued to argue in his letter:

My ideas on literature and art have also changed completely. I feel that the distinctions between all the “-isms” based on the differences of crafts should not be a central issue any longer. What is really important is whether the literature and art in question belongs to yesterday, today or tomorrow... Today’s literature and art are part of the on-going process of revolution, they are the yell of the oppressed people and the cry of the desperate lives, the spell of the soldiers and the prediction of the coming happiness brought by revolution’s victory... Today’s literature and art are revolutionary literature and art. I believe that it is a transitional but inevitable stage... Now it is the era of propaganda, and literature and art are propaganda weapons. (Guo, 10:299-300)

Guo’s changed idea of the role of art and artist in the revolutionary age in many ways, both positive and negative, foreshadows Mao Zedong’s 1942 Yan’an *Talks*. Guo is less concerned with the pursuit of a “mass style” based on the folk tradition, however, and in his early Marxist stage he still implicitly or explicitly privileges the artists and intellectuals over the “common readers” composed of ordinary people. For example, In “geming jia yu yishu jia” (Artists and Revolutionaries, 1924), Guo Moruo claims that art and social revolution are of equal importance, and revolution is indeed a special form of art. As the result, artists automatically become revolutionaries without the need of laborious self-renovation. As he maintains:

Let me put it boldly: all the real revolutionary movements are artistic movements, all the authentic activists are genuine artists, and all the passionate artists who aim to reform the society are also genuine revolutionaries... All the young artists and revolutionaries who love freedom and the human race, ... you should understand that the goal of the artistic movements in the twentieth century is to beautify the human society, and the goal of the grand movement of the world revolution in the twentieth century is exactly the same. Our aims are not different. The goddess of freedom calls us to go forward; let us go together. We are revolutionaries, and we are artists at the same time. We would be the

martyrs of our art, and at the same time we are the reformers of human society. Forward! Forward! Uphold high the flag of beautification, and march toward freedom! (10:77-78)

This understanding of the relationship between artists and revolutionaries is a thinly disguised variation of the romantic idea of the poet / artist as the prophet and of the New Culture Movement's conception of intellectuals as the leaders of China's modernization, who are destined to "awaken" people. Moreover, besides "today's" literature of revolution, Guo still sincerely believes that there might be a form of "tomorrow's literature and art" which can "transcend the limitation of the times and partiality." Although it can only be realized "after the realization of socialism" (10:299), the idea of a pure literature transcending spatial, temporal and historical limits must have seemed too idealistic to an orthodox Marxist.

Guo's early reception of Marxism, as I have mentioned, was to a large extent an emotional decision that aimed to ease his feeling of tension with an oppressive reality, to seek a tangible solution to his psychological and spiritual crisis, and to discover a replacement for the "sublime" quality of his pantheist belief that could endow the modern Chinese selfhood with infinite and absolute freedom. Despite his acceptance of the materialistic interpretation of history based on economic determinism, he was first and foremost fascinated by the prospect of the liberation and fulfillment of self promised by Marxism. And although he accepted the linear and topological pattern of historical development held by orthodox Marxism in his division of the literatures of "yesterday," "today" and "tomorrow," what really attracted him is, however, not the realization of an idealistic future but the exhilaration of participating in a sublime cause at the time of the present that could set his self free from the restraints and the limitations on his private life

and his times. To him, revolution is primarily a series of incessant actions set in a constant “now” that can endlessly provide energy and inspiration to the artists. Only in this context can we fully understand Guo’s ecstasy when he discovered Marxism and took it as the guiding principle for his life and career. As he exclaims: “Dear Fangwu, we are living in a most significant age! The age of the great revolution of the human race! The age of the great revolution in the history of humanity! I have become an absolute follower of Marxism! Marxism is the only sacred vessel in our times. The material is the mother of the spirit, and the great advancement of material civilization and the just distribution of its products is the placenta of spiritual civilization” (10:288).

Guo’s romantic interpretation of the nature of social revolution and of Marxist ideology is not unique. On the contrary, his idea represents a general trend among early modern Chinese Leftist writers and artists. Another early Chinese Left-Wing writer and colleague of Guo, Jiang Guangci, also clearly connects revolution with the romantic spirit: “Romantic? I myself am romantic. All revolutionaries are romantic. Without being romantic, who would come to start a revolution? ... Idealism, passion, discontent with the status quo and a desire to create something better --- here you have the spirit of romanticism. A romantic is one possessed with such a spirit” (qtd. In T. A. Hsia, 60). Guo obviously shares Jiang’s idea. As T. A. Hsia points out, “Kuo [Guo] liked the idea so much that he said that since he could not quote verbatim, the reader was free to take these lines as if they were Kuo’s own words put into Chiang’s mouth” (60).

Unlike Jiang Guangci, however, Guo Moruo did not carry on his romantic understanding of the revolution to the end. In the next few years after his translation of Kawakami Hajime’s works, Guo gradually turned to a more rigid and orthodox version of

Marxism, which more explicitly requires that literature and art submit to the needs of political revolution, and that artists deny their old selfhood in their efforts to obtain a proletariat class-consciousness. In other words, artists can no longer become revolutionaries automatically; on the contrary, they are themselves the targets of the revolution before they can claim to be its spokespersons. Guo's favorite metaphor for this changed self-image of artists, which shifts from romantic self-expansion to conscious self-annihilation in the face of the overwhelming power of the collective discourse of revolution, is gramophone. As he argues:

To be a gramophone --- this is the best motto of young artists.  
Do not think that it is easy. It requires several necessary conditions:  
First, you must get close to the sound;  
Second, you must erase your self;  
Third, you must be able to take actions.  
You think that it is a kind of insult?  
Then it is impossible to speak to you, and we can only send you onto the guillotine! (10:326-27)

Guo holds the idea that most of the young Chinese artists are the "young masters of the bourgeois or petit-bourgeois class" (10:355) and that many of them are "reactionaries" (10:337). This coarse and clumsy class analysis based on a mechanical understanding of Marxism leads him to believe that it is impossible to strike a balance between the "idealistic, subjective individualism" and "the road of revolutionary art and literature" (10:344-45). As the result, the young artist has to totally empty his old selfhood and completely surrender to the proletariat, revolutionary consciousness, and to actively participate in the real revolution in order to get familiar with the lives of the working class and to renew himself.

This idea is very close to Mao's requirement in his 1942 *Talks* about the necessity of the thoughts and feelings of the writers' being "fused with those of the masses of

workers, peasants and soldiers.” Although Guo uses the same term, “selfless,” to describe his ideal self in all three stages in his intellectual life, his new vision of the “selfless” artist represented by the gramophone differs remarkably from both his pantheist and his early romantic-Marxist understanding of the paradoxical “selflessness” of a renewed and satisfactory modern self. In short, the latter is always an active creator while the former, though engaging in ‘actions’ all the time, is a rather passive agent of a determined scheme of historical development. It is hard to answer how to prevent a collective movement that constantly denounces the development of the individuality of its members from being turned into an oppressive power itself, and how to maintain the diversity and livelihood of Left-Wing artistic creation if the authors are only allowed to copy an abstract sound of the working class that is at the same time always alien to them. Indeed, these dilemmas brought trouble to many Left-Wing writers and become new sources of anxiety.

Guo Moruo’s reception of Marxism, especially his change from an early romantic understanding of Marxism to his acceptance of the “orthodox” version of Marxist ideology, epitomizes the general experiences of many Chinese Left-Wing writers in the first half of the twentieth century. In the next section, I will take one of the less-known Leftist writers, Ke Zongping, as an example to further illustrate the influence of Marxist ideology on Chinese radical literature and art. Ke is another Left-Wing writer who went through a similar transformation to that of Guo in his turn to Marxism. I have to admit that Ke is, comparatively speaking, a minor poet even within the Leftist school. Nonetheless, I choose Ke to make a case study precisely because his honest simplicity made the differences between his romantic Marxist and orthodox Marxist stages so

distinctive, and his acceptance of orthodox Marxism and Mao Zedong's theory on literature was so absolute, that he became a paramount example of the Leftist writers who faithfully followed the teachings of the Communist party and contentedly turned themselves into "cogs and wheels in the whole revolutionary machine" (Mao, 86).

Some biographical information about Ke Zhongping may prove helpful to the reader. Ke was born in 1902 in Yunnan Province. He was a high school student in Kunming, the provincial capital when the campaign of New Culture reached its climax in the May Fourth Movement in 1919. Ke almost immediately became fascinated by the radical iconoclasm of the May Fourth Era and became a zealous student activist as well as a passionate lover of the new, vernacular literature. He moved to Beijing in the early 1920s, where he met Lu Xun, Yu Dafu and other leading figures of the New Culture Movement. In 1926, he came to Shanghai to work under Guo Moruo and Yu Dafu in the publication department of the Creation Society. He worked in Xi'an, Sha'anxi Province as a teacher in several high schools and in a teacher's college during April, 1926 and June, 1927 before he returned to Beijing and Shanghai and worked as a full-time freelance writer. In March, 1930 he joined the Chinese Communist Party and actively participated in the underground anti-government movement led by the Party. From 1926 to 1930 he was arrested by the Nationalist Party government three times and imprisoned for three years on his last arrest. In August, 1935, he went to Japan to study. In 1937, immediately after the Sino-Japanese War broke out, he returned to China and became actively involved in the anti-Japanese propaganda campaign. In November, 1937 he went to Yan'an, the capital of the Communist-controlled area, devoting his talent and passion to the composition of poems as well as dramatic works of political content that relied



heavily on the folk song and opera tradition of the Northwest China in their structure and style. When Ke was in Yan'an he also organized a “minzhong ju tuan” (People’s Troupe) to give performances of his own dramatic works to illiterate peasants around the Northwest region under Communist control. These works were very successful and were praised by Mao Zedong. Though a Left-Wing writer from the beginning of his career, still Ke’s turn to the folk song form was a dramatic change and his later works made a sharp contrast to his early romantic poems, many of which were indeed amateurish imitations of Guo Moruo’s works. Ke was one of the very few among Leftist writers who consciously took up the “mass style” of the peasantry and made a success before Mao’s 1942 *Talks*. Ke remained a loyal Communist and stuck to his simple, straight-forward folk-song style until the end of his life, although in the 1960s he also became a victim of political persecution.

Ke Zhongping’s early understanding of the relationship between art, revolution and selfhood is similar to that of Guo Moruo in his romantic stage. For example, in an article written in 1927 titled “geming yu yishu” (Revolution and Art), Ke argues that revolution and art “reflect on each other, criticize each other, stimulate each other, and find their fulfillment in each other” (3:37). He urges modern Chinese artists to work “for the sake of life” and use their artistic works to affect the world of reality, yet he also admits that “once the historical background changes, the effects [of the works for the sake of life] will dwindle, even disappear. The times urge art to express life, yet the artists of the art for the sake of life school may also become a noble sacrifice to their times” (3:24). Like Guo Moruo, Ke at this time still regards revolution and revolutionary art as a transitional period in human history and is not confident whether the

revolutionary art works can enjoy eternal aesthetic value. The most interesting part of this article is his interpretation of the relationship between art and the self. On the one hand, he accepts the idea that art, in the final analysis, is a form of self-expression, yet on the other hand he redefines the concept of self to make it fit his Leftist ideology. His interpretation, however, is far from an “orthodox” one; rather it is a mixture of several different discourses:

What is the “self” in “self-expression”? ... The narrower self is the self centered on the individual ego of the author. The broader self is the self centered on a social class or the human race. And naturally, the large self is the self that breaks the boundary between human life and the universe and brews this universal being into a river of good wine. The scale of the self is decided by the author’s life philosophy and his power of life. For example, if an author struggles for the happiness for all his oppressed friends, then his self is expanded to include all the oppressed people in the world. Apart from the self, what can art express? So, if we want to acknowledge that art is a form of self-expression, we have to understand and enrich the self in a profound way to make sure that we can have something to be expressed at all. (3:25-26)

He first denounces the “narrow” understanding of self based on individualism and asks for the expansion of selfhood. His “broader” version of self begins to connect the individual self with a collective identity, which is either a particular social class or the human race in general. According to orthodox Marxist ideology, however, the class struggles between the oppressors and the oppressed make it impossible to discover an abstract and all-inclusive voice of the entire “human race,” and any effort to present this general identity in art is deceptive and misleading, and part of the bourgeois ideology. If Ke’s “broader” version of the modern self still manages to follow the Marxist idea despite its flaws, then his final, “large” self is indeed a typical romanticist and pantheist understanding of the selfhood that has nothing to do with the official ideology of the Party. Like the early Guo Moruo, Ke asks for action and urges artists to work for the sake

of life, but his final goal is still the liberation and absolute freedom of each individual member of the society, first the artists themselves. Underneath his bold claim, we can discover a kind of dilemma, a form of unresolved tension, which, although Ke may not be fully aware of it, nonetheless disturbs many of the Leftist writers and shakes the homogeneity of the official discourse of the Left-Wing literature and art movement.

However, Ke himself seems not to have been troubled by this intrinsic dilemma when he moved from his first, romantic Marxist stage to his second, more rigid and utilitarian one. In his transition, the Sino-Japanese War played the role of catalyst: the urgent national crisis, the passion of the national movement, the immediate need of propaganda --- all these drove a poet to momentarily forget the pursuit of independent artistic value and use his art as a weapon in the sacred war. Ke's old belief in revolutionary literature as a tool to serve the need of his times made it easier for him to "forget" himself and to devote his art to a sublime cause. In this aspect, American scholar Cary Nelson's comments on the function of American Left-Wing poetry may help us to better understand Chinese Leftist artists' self-perception at this pivotal moment of history. According to Nelson, writing and reading Leftist poetry

was to find more than an echo of one's own sense of cultural crisis and necessity. It was to find a place to stand ideologically, a concise discursive perspective on America's history and engagement with its contemporary culture. It was also to find a voice one could temporarily take up as one's own. Poetry at once gave people radical critique and visionary aspiration, and it did so in language fit for the speaking voice. It strengthened the beliefs of those already radicalized and helped to persuade some who were not yet decided. It was thus a notable force in articulating and cementing what was a significant cultural and political shift toward the Left. To write poetry under these conditions of readership was therefore to ask not only what one wanted to say but also what other people wanted to read; the sense of audience was pressing, immediate. (144)

Ke Zongping and his comrades' works in the Yan'an period are a perfect embodiment of Nelson's interpretation of Leftist poetry. By engaging in immediate political themes and employing popular folk-song forms, Ke consciously wrote "what other people wanted to read" to a large audience and gave them a voice that they could "take up as one's own." However, the seemingly harmonious reciprocal relations between artist and audience actually have the potential danger of completely erasing the poet's dynamic self and turning him into a "gramophone," and the balance between the pursuit of eternal aesthetic value and the temporary, utilitarian need of art as propaganda, as well as that between the individual consciousness of the artist that struggles for freedom and the determinism and ideological control of official Marxist theory, are hard to maintain. Ke's simple songs may have well served the political needs of his time, but they failed to reflect the complex inner world of the Leftist writers and their entangled relationship with the sublime cause of revolution for which they zealously worked, yet with which they also constantly struggled. In the next section, I will discuss Ai Qing (1910-1996), the most important Leftist poet after Guo Moruo, and some younger Leftist writers from the "qi yue" (July) school as examples to examine the complexity within the Leftist school in the 1930s and 1940s.

### **Ai Qing and the *Qiyue* School: The Pilgrimage toward a Renewed Self**

Unlike Guo Moruo and many others, Ai Qing was a self-conscious Leftist artist from the beginning of his career, although he started as a painter and maker of woodcuts and only shifted to poetic writing in the early 1930s. This background does not make his works a simple propaganda of Marxist theories and the Communist Party's policies,

however. In fact, I would argue that Ai Qing is one of the most stubborn Leftist writers who struggled to defend his dynamic self instead of contentedly turning it into a “gramophone” of a voice from the outside. In a sense, we may even say that Ai Qing begins from where Guo Moruo stops (although their styles are totally different): Ai Qing’s poems are faithful records of his self’s expansion and its conflict with the alien world. Unlike the early individualists of the May Fourth generation, Ai Qing wanted to embrace the sublime cause of revolution and break the limitations of egoistic individualism. Yet he also wanted to keep his renewed self a unique, dynamic, and free being, a being that had its own will and that had the control on its own fate. For example, even in the late 1930s, he still maintained in his famous essay “shi lun” (On Poetry), “[P]oets and revolutionaries share a common compassion, and both of them want to put their compassion into action --- whenever a great time comes, they want to work hand in hand as brothers” (*Ai Qing*, 3:44). This was exactly Guo Moruo’s early idea in his romantic-Marxist stage, but Guo had renounced it as early as 1926. To Ai Qing, however, it was a life-long motto.

Ai Qing’s early passion for symbolist poetry and his metropolitan experiences, both in foreign lands and in China, accompanied him throughout his entire writing career. We can take an early poem of Ai Qing to demonstrate this subtle connection between Left-Wing poetry and western avant-garde art. This is a long poem titled “Bali” (Paris) written in 1933 when he was in the KMT’s (Nationalist Party) prison in Shanghai. By that time he had already become a self-conscious revolutionary writer and an active member of the League of Left-Wing Artists. However, a close reading of this poem shows an amazing mixture of two seemingly contradictory attitudes toward this

paramount example of the modern cosmopolis. Under Ai Qing's pen, Paris is personified as a "hysterical yet beautiful prostitute" who "Loosens the scarlet blouse, / Exposes the succulent flesh / And willfully indulges in promiscuity" to "[t]irelessly send to me / And to hundreds and thousands of immigrants / That irresistible temptation" (1:34). The personified / feminized city is endowed with a life of its own. It is both a symbol of decadence and a source of temptation, and the poet despises yet simultaneously becomes fascinated by the "degenerating" sensuality of the modern, exotic (to a young Chinese) urban experience. Later in the poem Ai Qing intuitively catches the rhythm of the modern city and successfully reflects it in a unique writing style: "The cantos of iron and steel--- / Buses, trolleys and subway cars become Resounding letters, / Asphalt roads, railways and trottoirs are nimble sentences, / Wheel + wheel + wheel are bouncing punctuation marks / Whistle + whistle + whistle are exclamation marks!" (1:36). These hilarious lines not only describe but themselves embody the boisterous life of Paris, and the poet, in the process of writing, shares and possesses the amazing energy of city life. We can find something close to an echo of Italian futurism in these lines. Even at the end of the poem when the poet finally shows his "revolutionary" side and claims "When the right time comes / We will consolidate the troops / And fight back," the victory of the revolution, for him, means to "Let you hang on our arms / Laugh and sing ecstatically!" (1:41).

It should be acknowledged that as Ai Qing entered his mature years, his early fascination with the modern metropolis gradually subsided. From the mid-1930s on, two important symbols repeatedly appear in his poetry, which enthrall the poet and play a central part in his new poetic works: "land" and the "sun." This change might be interpreted as the direct result of the poet's retreat from the metropolis to the Communist-

controlled countryside during the Sino-Japanese War Era. However, his biography tells us that unlike Ke Zhongping, Ai Qing went to Yan'an rather late (he did not move to Yan'an until 1940), and before that he mostly worked as a teacher and editor in several Chinese cities to support himself while writing poems. Hence, the shift from the metropolitan theme to the new themes of land and sun is not a simple result of the changes in the poet's private life but reflects his altered understanding of the relationship between the poet and his world. At the risk of oversimplifying, I would suggest that in Ai Qing's poems both the land and the sun represent a kind of collective aspiration, but their specific connotations are subtly different.

The land often serves as the symbol of the people and the nation. The land and the people on it endure countless sufferings and bear intolerable injustice, and toil for mere survival in the most miserable conditions, yet in their silent endurance there lies an insurmountable power of life, which earns the poet's admiration and provides the poet with courage and confidence in his own struggle. As Ai Qing sings at the end of his famous poem "bei fang" (The North):

I love this wretched country,  
Her vast, barren soil,  
Which gave us a language pure and simple,  
And a capacious spirit as well.  
I believe this language and this spirit,  
Strong and sturdy, will survive on the land,  
Never to be extinguished.  
I love this wretched country,  
This age-old country,  
This country  
That has nourished what I have loved:  
The world's most long-suffering  
And most venerable people. (1: 176)<sup>49</sup>

Ai Qing's attachment to the land gives his poems a clearly nationalist color. Yet even in his most emotional lines Ai Qing avoids straightforward exclamation and expresses his feelings toward his country and people through carefully designed poetic language based on concrete images neatly set together. His nationalist passion does not necessarily reduce his poems to mere propaganda. In another famous poem by Ai Qing, "wo ai zhe tudi" (I Love this Land), the turbulent feelings of the poet are externalized and embodied in a series of touching images, and the poem continues to move contemporary Chinese readers decades after the end of the Sino-Japanese War:

If I were a bird,  
I would sing with my hoarse voice  
Of this land buffeted by storms,  
Of this river turbulent with our grief,  
Of this angry winds ceaselessly blowing,  
And of the dawn, infinitely gentle over the woods...  
--- Then I would die  
And even my feathers would rot in the soil.

Why are my eyes always brimming with tears?  
Because I love this land so deeply... (1: 229)<sup>50</sup>

The poetic language in Ai Qing's poems on the theme of "land" is also affected by the poet's attitude toward the people and the nation. Unlike the May Fourth intellectuals, Ai Qing did not elevate himself above the people as a self-appointed leader to "enlighten" the mass. On the other hand, he did not blindly submit himself to the abstract "mass" and he did not accept the idea of the "original sin" that was imposed on the intellectuals as a social class by the official ideology of the Communist Party in Mao's era. Rather, He regarded himself as an equal member with all the other members of the nation instead of taking the people as a sublimated yet also alienated other in relation to his individual subjectivity. As a patriot, a Leftist, and in a broader sense, a



nationalist, his aspiration for a form of collective identity and a sense of belonging is sincere. Yet as his poems on the “land” theme reflect, his way to achieve this collective inspiration is to expand his personal self through empathy to embrace other individuals and finally to include them into his own selfhood; he finally achieves a collective selfhood, but it still keeps his distinctive individual voice. The idea of self-expansion reminds us of the early Guo Moruo in his pantheist and romantic-Marxist stages, although Guo later abandoned his own ideas. Ai Qing’s treatment of the theme of “land” convinces us that though it is a symbol of the collective, the land is not a form of sublime power that can bring individuals both awe and ecstasy in which the individual self is dissolved.

Ai Qing’s poems on the theme of the “sun,” on the other hand, treat the relations between the individual subjectivity and the sublime quality of the collective aspiration in a different way. The sun is another favorite topic of Ai Qing. Before 1949, he wrote at least five poems that take the sun as the subject, and the images of the sun and sunlight also appear in many of his other poems. The five poems are: “Taiyang” (The Sun) (1937), “Xiang taiyang” (Toward the Sun) (1938), “Taiyang” (The Sun) (1940), “Gei taiyang” (To the Sun) (1942), and “Taiyang de hua” (The Words of the Sun) (1942). Owing to the limitations of space, I will only take the first of these sun poems, Ai Qing’s “Taiyang” (The Sun) written in 1937, to make an analysis:

From the graves of the ancient past,  
 From the ages of darkness  
 From the death stream of humanity,  
 Awakening mountains from their slumber,  
 Like a wheel of fire over the sand dunes  
 The sun rolls on towards me...

With invincible rays

It gives breath to life,  
 Making the branches of trees dance towards it,  
 Making the rivers rush forward with song.  
 When it comes I can hear  
 The sleeping insects turning underground,  
 The people talking loudly in the squares,  
 The cities beckoning to it from the distance  
 With electricity and steel.

Then my breast  
 Is torn open by the hands of fire, my rotten soul  
 Gets discarded by the river,  
 And I gain faith once more  
 In the resurgence of humanity. (1:132)<sup>51</sup>

In this poem, the sun is obviously an embodiment of the sublime. With immense power the sun becomes a dynamic drive to renew the world as well as the soul of the poet. It expels darkness and awakens the dead, bringing with its glamorous light the ecstatic power that first unsettles and galvanizes nature and then brings life to the human world.

Finally, the vitalizing power of the sun catches the poet; in a fanatic manner it terminates his “rotten soul” and brings a complete rebirth to the poet after the death of his old self. The mysterious power of the sun holds absolute control of the universe and its light fills even the furthest corner of the world. Its renovating effects are first felt in nature, then in the human society (it should be noted that here again Ai Qing uses urban images to represent the world of human civilization: “The cities... with electricity and steel”), and finally in the individual self of the poet. The shift from the collective human to an individual selfhood may seem to be an anticlimax. However, the experience of the “rebirth” of the poet’s soul, which is a rapturous moment of epiphany under the impact of the sun’s sacred violence, makes the poet see himself as a representative of the human race and helps him fulfill the identification with the collective; thus, he finds hope for the “the resurgence of humanity” through his own salvation. Under the sun, the difference

between the natural and the human disappears and the boundary between the individual and his world is removed. They are all parts of a renewed world, and even in the minutest section of it we can clearly see the picture of the whole. We may also notice that the power of the sun is both exhilarating and violent. It simultaneously creates new lives and destroys the old world, in this process tolerating no resistance and allowing no hesitation. As a result, the self-renewal of the poet is not a peaceful process but an experience of both joy and agony in their most intense forms.

What does the image of the sun symbolize? Is it just a signifier for the political revolution and the struggle for national independence in China during the war period? This argument seems to be supported by Ai Qing's own works. In another poem that employs the sun as a central poetic image, "Xiang taiyang" (Toward the Sun) (1938), Ai Qing openly sings:

The sun  
It reminds me of the revolutions of France and America  
Of fraternity equality liberty  
Of democracy  
Of *La Marseillaise* *L'Internationale*  
Of Washington Lenin Sun Yat-sen  
And the names of all the figures who  
Salvage the human race from their miseries (1:207)

As the lines quoted above illustrate, the sublime quality of the sun is actually the reflection of the political sublime, which characterizes the revolutions that struggle for the freedom of human beings, and of the noble figures in history who have led the revolutions and sacrificed for their people. There is no doubt that the Communist revolution and especially the sacred war for the nation's independence, which in Ai Qing's eyes is the latest development of the tradition of world revolution, gives the poet hope and inspiration. However, as the previous poem on the sun illustrates, Ai Qing's

vision of the Communist and national revolution is based on a rather romantic understanding that takes the revolution as a way towards the liberation of both the world and all the individuals in it, and the sacred violence of the war as a purgative factor necessary for the renewal. His fascination with the revolution, like that of the early Guo Moruo, is more emotional than rational, and to him the current revolution is the grandest form of art of eternal value: “The sun is beautiful / The sun is of eternal life” (1:207). He desires to be melted in this sacred movement and share its ecstasy and eternity, but he refuses to imagine himself as a cog in a big revolutionary machine.

Ai Qing’s passionate and romantic imagination of the revolution and his quest for a balanced relationship between individual subjectivity and collective aspiration were inherited by the younger poets of the “qi yue” (July) school. The July school refers to a group of young writers who came on the stage during the Sino-Japanese War period under the influence of the Chinese Marxist critic Hu Feng and the eminent Leftist poet Ai Qing. They are the last generation of Chinese Leftist writers before the foundation of the People’s Republic in 1949. Many of them published their works in the journal *July*, a Leftist journal of literature which was originally published in the Nationalist-controlled area between 1939 and 1941. Edited by Hu Feng, the journal later gave its name to the school of poets. Although the journal ended in 1941, these young writers never stopped their artistic creation and continued to publish in other Leftist journals. Hu Feng also edited and published a series of anthologies for these young writers after 1941. After the Sino-Japanese War, Hu established a new journal titled *Xiwang* (Hope) while continuing with the publication of new volumes of the *July* series. After 1949, however, Hu Feng was accused of being an anti-revolutionary and thrown into prison because of his

disagreement with Mao Zedong's Yan'an *Talks* and his dispute with some of the leaders of literature and art in the new government. Ai Qing was labeled as a "rightist," which is just another name for anti-revolutionary, and was sent to the labor camps in the border area. As a result, the July school was forced to dissolve and its members had to stop writing (many of them were imprisoned and persecuted themselves). This is not the place to make a comprehensive study of the July school, however, and I do not want to make a theoretical analysis of Hu Feng's theory of literature. Instead, I want to focus on several poetic works of the young poets in the July school to examine how they try to resolve the tension between collective aspiration and individual consciousness while maintaining the basic Marxist belief. The first poem I want to discuss is A Long's "Qin de xianji" (The Sacrifice of the Strings).

The poem starts with the lament of the poet that this is "an age without poetry... / I do not even have a string" (*Baise hua*, 17-18). His anxiety and frustration, which originate from his hatred of the ugliness of the present world, gradually build into a form of fury and the desire for destruction: "I am angry, I am so painfully angry / I am so angry that I want to set fire on this world of slaughterhouses and dustbins to destroy it" (*Baise hua*, 19). His search for a solution to his crisis finally leads him to the discovery of the collective, and it is in the collective that he finally finds both his position and his happiness:

My watchword is:  
 People! people! The humble, lusterless people  
 Oh people!.....

Only now when I finally reach you  
 Then can I enjoy this share of real pleasure  
 My dry, sand-filled eyes glow,  
 And tears as ruthless as melted iron flow in my smiles

And the smile, when I stare at you my smile is so beautiful,  
 I would play my strings for you! ---  
 Even if only for you, for you alone  
 Even if no single string is left on my instrument. (*Baise hua*, 20-21)

A Long's poem, on the one hand, faithfully follows the Left-wing literature's belief that literature should serve the needs of the mass and that the artist should try to identify with the people, especially the "humble, lusterless people" of the working class at the bottom of society. The image of the string instrument is no doubt a symbol of the poet's self. At the beginning of the poem the poet does not have his string because the world of reality has been deprived of all the poetic beauty. At the very end of the poem, he is still left without a single string, but the meaning of this image is changed into a symbol of self-sacrifice --- the poet would totally consume himself for the cause of the "people" until no string is left on his instrument. On the other hand, however, we may also notice that this poem, instead of directly reflecting the lives, sufferings and struggles of the "people" as a class, is more about the spiritual crisis and consequent struggles of the poet himself. His quest for the answer to his own problem, in retrospect, is also his pilgrimage toward the "people" as well as a journey of self-discovery. Although he expresses his sincere desire to sacrifice himself for the noble cause of the mass's liberation, the self-destruction is paradoxically the highest form of self-fulfillment that can bring the poet unparalleled pleasure.

In Lu Dian's poem titled "Xing dong" (Action) (1949), the poet offers a different perspective on the relationship between individual selfhood and collective aspiration. Instead of pinpointing a sublime historical cause or a clear collective identity, the poet devotes this poem to the "action" of history:

Action, oh action!

Since I found you,  
 I feel that all is worthless,  
 Only you are the most authentic being,  
 The noblest existence in my life;  
 Since I found you,  
 I never cease my pursuit of you,  
 .....  
 Oh action! I know that you would never stop for me,  
 But I will never stop for a rest,  
 I believe that finally I can catch up with you,  
 I can get close to you and with you become one,  
 In the end you will understand,  
 I am the man who knows how to love you best! (*Baise hua*, 238-39)

This poem was composed on December 26, 1949 and its subtitle is “dedicated to the age that gives birth to me and raises me” (*Baise hua*, 237). Putting the immediate historical background into consideration, we can easily see that it is meant to be a hymn for the victory of the Chinese Communist revolution and the founding of the People’s Republic of China. However, these significant historical events do not appear in the poem. The poet regards these events as the logical results of the development of history, and he believes that the best way to make the individual self a part of the grand history that is moving from the “Realm of necessity ( [das] *Reich der Notwendigkeit*)” in which “man (‘classes’) fight among themselves for recognition and fight against Nature by work” to the “Realm of freedom ([das] *Reich der Freiheit*)” in which “men (mutually recognizing one another without reservation) no longer fight, and work as little as possible (Nature having been definitively mastered --- that is, harmonized with man)” (See Kojève, 158-59 no. 6) is through the identification with “action.”

Action in this context not only refers to various forms of specific revolutionary practice but, more importantly, to the dialectical development of history in general. To “become one” with the action of the history, one must change from a being of itself to a

being for itself, turning into a new subject who is fully aware of his own historical specificity as well as the direction of history's development, and then design his own actions according to the general action of history. However, we see that the poet still tries to strike a balance between the macrocosmic and the microcosmic and to play a dynamic role in the process of his pursuit of action. Whether this balance and the dynamism of the individual subject was still possible in the changed political milieu after 1949, however, is a question that none of these young poets had ever thought of. Their romantic expectations would soon be crushed by the increasingly rigid rule of the party-state. Revolution, when it no longer sets the liberation and full development of each individual member as its goal, will soon turn to devour its own children. The Leftist vision of modern selfhood based on collective aspiration and the identification of a sublime cause leaves us valuable lessons through both its glory and its failures.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Apocalypse or Catastrophe?: National Trauma, Individual Crisis, and Historical Dilemma**

As the last chapter has illustrated, radical art and literature, inspired by idealism and collective aspiration, can often successfully replace the aesthetic sublime and fulfill the expectation of transcendence and the will to freedom of modern people. This was particularly true in modern Chinese history when national crises, social turmoil and the constant sense of insecurity and anxiety drove so many to seek a solid identity and self-assurance in revolutionary, nationalist, and other forms of collectivist art and literature and to embrace the related ideologies. Among all the collective discourses, revolution (not necessarily limited to the Communist, “proletariat” one but understood as a general trend of radicalism) is no doubt the most powerful and influential one. The lure of revolution is largely based on the understanding that it is a form of collective practice aiming to tear down the existing social structure and to destroy the dominant official ideology, which is often viewed as unproductive, corrupted, and out of date, and to make radical changes in the society to bring an overall renewal. We can call such ideas of revolution “apocalyptic.” During the anti-Japanese War Era (1937-1945), this apocalyptic trend in Chinese literature reached a climax as the result of the immediate threat to China’s national survival and the rise of popular patriotism. Many writers took the war as a sacred moment in history and sincerely believed that China’s victory in the war would lead both to the revival of the nation and to the freedom and self-fulfillment of individuals. However, there were also writers who maintained a more skeptical view on

the purifying power of the war and on the apocalyptic understanding of history. Though no less patriotic than their comrades, they regarded the war rather as a catastrophe that might only lead to an uncertain and probably chaotic future. It could bring neither the rebirth of the nation nor the liberation of the individual subject.

The suspicion of the apocalyptic effect of the war and the sublime historical cause in general is reflected in the works of a group of young modernist poets in the 1940s who are normally named the “jiu ye” (nine leaves) school in today’s literary history. These young men and women, some of them university students, some editors of new literary journals, first began to publish their poems during the war era. Their shared ideas of the nature of art, of its relations with reality, and of poetic form and language gradually drew them together, and finally the nine young poets formed a small poetic school centered on two journals in Shanghai, *The Creation of Poetry* and *Chinese New Poetry*.<sup>52</sup> Let us remember their names, which were once sealed in a dusty corner for decades but now frequently appear in all kinds of books about modern Chinese literary history. They are Xin Di (Wang Xindi), Chen Jingrong, Du Yunxie, Hang Youhe (Cao Xinzhi), Zheng Min, Tang Qi (Tang Kefan), Tang Shi (Tang Yanghe), Yuan Kejia, and Mu Dan (Zha Liangzheng). Together with the “July” school, they became the last generation of modern Chinese poets before 1949. Yet their opinions on poetry as well as on the relationship between individual consciousness and the grand narrative of history differ significantly from those of the “July” school poets, and the two sides actually held heated debates on these issues in the late 1940s (See You, 41-52). Having taken a glimpse of the July school in the last chapter, we can learn from the works of the Nine Leaves School some other useful lessons for the reconstruction of modern Chinese selfhood. In the works of

the Nine Leaves School, Chinese poetry turned its full attention to modern people's anxiety, to the haunting specter of loneliness and unnamable despair, and to the fragmentation of self and the consequent inner struggles, which were either marginalized or covered under the aesthetic ideal in the works of their predecessors and many of their contemporaries.

I do not intend to make a comprehensive study on the artistic achievement of the Nine Leaves School in this chapter, however, nor do I aim to give a full-fledged explanation of its recent dramatic revival in recent studies of the history of modern Chinese literature. In this chapter I only plan to discuss the poetic works of Mu Dan (1918-1977), whose poems exemplify the sense of perplexity and angst of wartime Chinese intellectuals in a compelling way. In a broader sense, Mu Dan's poetry provides us with a penetrating observation on modern Chinese intellectuals' failure of maintaining / reconstructing an integrated selfhood, and serves as a form of implicit criticism of all the three strategies that we have discussed in previous chapters. Yet his realization of the impotence of his comrades (himself included) was far from making him feel contented; rather, the clairvoyant poet, who was also a highly sensitive and compassionate figure in real life, was incessantly tortured by his discovery and from time to time became tempted by the pledge of other strategies to deliver the integrity of selfhood. His views on the nationalist struggle and Leftist aspirations are rather complicated and deserve our close attention.

We read Mu Dan's poem "Spring" in the "Introduction" and therefore already have a taste of his talent. A brief introduction to Mu Dan's life may help us better understand the writer and his works. Mu Dan was born in 1918 in an impoverished urban

family. He nonetheless managed to attend Nankai Middle and High School in Tianjin from 1929 to 1935, and then entered the Foreign Languages Department of Tsinghua University to continue his education. Both his middle school and his university are preeminent ones in China and “models” of modern western education. In 1940, twenty-two-year old Mu Dan graduated from the Foreign Languages Department of Southwest United University in Kunming, Yunnan Province. In his undergraduate years he had become an open admirer of western modernist poets such as Yeats, T. S. Eliot and Auden, and had systematically studied western modernism under William Empson, who was then a professor in the university. Mu Dan was a prolific and astonishingly mature poet even when he was only a college student; his poetry both reflected the influence of Anglo-American modernism and also acquired, along with it, a unique “local color” of Chinese experience. After serving as an assistant lecturer of English at his alma mater for two years, in February 1942 he joined the Chinese Expedition Force for Burma in an effort to aid the British troops there to fight off the Japanese.

Owing to a series of strategic mistakes, however, the Chinese army was defeated in the first stage of the war and was forced to retreat back to China. This effort failed and the remaining Chinese troops turned to India, at that time still a British colony. The whole withdrawal process was a disaster. Among 100,000 soldiers only about 40,000 survived. A large part of those that died were not killed on the battlefield but were victims of the severe natural conditions they underwent on their way of retreat. Most of them died when they were obliged to pass through the jungles in Hukan River Valley in North Burma (“Hukan” in Burmese means “where devils dwell”), which was also known as “Savage Mountain” (*yeren shan*). Mu Dan, who was then a young interpreter in the

army, miraculously managed to cut his way out of the jungle and thinly escaped from the jaws of death. The expedition is undoubtedly the most traumatic experience in our poet's life. Yet it was but about three years later that Mu Dan decided, for the first time, and actually the only time, to take this experience as the subject matter in a poem. He finally went back to China in 1943 and took miscellaneous jobs in the next two years to support himself and his family. The experience of the hardship of life, together with the nightmarish memory of the war, deepened his sense of disillusionment and endowed his poetry with both an ironic tone and a deep sense of tragedy.

In August, 1949 he went to the United States to study English and Russian literature and received a master's degree at the University of Chicago the next year. He set out for the motherland in 1952 and arrived in January, 1953. Within the few years between the late 1940s and early 1950s, we must admit, the poet seemed to have been temporarily attracted by the idealism of Chinese Communist revolution and endeavored to embrace the new collective discourse in his poems. His effort at self-adjustment did not succeed, however. He could neither completely negate his old view of life to fit in with the changed society, nor did the new Communist state trust him. In 1958 he was announced to be a "historical anti-revolutionary" because of his service in the Chinese Expedition Force in the 1940s, and was forced into silence. Until his death in 1977 he was not allowed to teach or to publish. He also stopped writing poetry for seventeen years. However, in 1975, two years before his death, he suddenly resumed writing, and these poems were finally published posthumously in the 1980s. Compared with his works in the 1930s and 40s, his last poems are less dramatic and ironic, and more meditative and self-reflective. Yet the sense of loneliness and disillusionment, and the denial of

sentimentalism as well as any form of “salvation,” not only remained but was further intensified and crystallized. His skepticism about the grand narrative of history and his distrust of revolutionary discourse, together with his sarcastic and pessimistic interpretation of the fate of the modern Chinese self, distinctively distances him from many of his contemporaries.

Since this dissertation focuses only on the modern Chinese literature and art in the first half of the twentieth century, in the following part I will limit my discussion to Mu Dan’s poems in the 1930s and 40s.

### **Between Irony and Tragedy: The Disintegrated Self and Banal Wartime Life**

Mu Dan demonstrated his talent for poetry when he was still a young man. What makes him even more unique among his contemporaries is that from an early age he had been fully aware of the disintegrated and fragmentary status of modern selfhood and had been able to treat this fact with a striking calmness. We can take two poems of his, “wo” (I) and ‘wo dui ziji shuo’ (I Speak to Myself), which Mu Dan wrote just after his graduation from the Southwest United University when he was only in his early twenties, to demonstrate his vision of modern subjectivity:

#### **I**

Severed from the womb, losing the warmth,  
It is a shattered part that urgently desires rescue,  
Always itself, locked in the wilderness,

Having left the group when in a still dream,  
In agony it feels the flow of time, with nothing to hold,  
Incessant memory cannot bring back the self,

When meeting other parts it weeps and cries,

It is the ecstasy of first love; it wants to break out of the restraint,  
But when stretching out both hands it only holds itself,

The metamorphosed image, it is profounder despair,  
Always itself, locked in the wilderness,  
Abhorring being dispelled by mother from the world of dream.  
November, 1940 (Mu Dan, 86)

The poem is a metaphysical meditation on the existential conditions of the modern subject. As the first stanza indicates, the modern self is predestined to suffer from loneliness and the consequent sense of anxiety and frustration because from the very beginning it is a being incomplete that is thrown ruthlessly into a hostile world. This is a dramatic subversion of the innocent imaginings about life that were once popular in romantic literature. In Mu Dan's view, life is not a blessing but rather a constant suffering, and birth is not necessarily a commendable, let alone sacred, moment, but marks the beginning of modern people's tragic fate. Mu Dan's description of the tragic beginning of the self employs the image of the womb, a provocative image that was disturbing to most of his contemporary Chinese readers, yet it is one of the poet's favorite poetic images. By paralleling the biological beginning of life and the philosophical "birth" of a modern subjectivity characterized by the awakening of individual consciousness, Mu Dan not only re-emphasizes his modern understanding of the self as a combination of soul and body, and the rational and the irrational, but also deepens the sense of the existential crisis of the modern subject: it is a universal tragedy that disturbs everyone despite their differences of race, gender, and class. The poet's description of the loneliness and incompleteness of the modern subject reminds us of Terry Eagleton's argument that the individual subject that "reinterpret[s] the world with reference to itself" is in fact a product of bourgeois society "which a ruling class requires for its ideological solidarity"

(70, 75) and also the doleful result of the disintegration of the traditional communal spirit and stable social structure. The integrity and self-sufficiency of this individual selfhood is deceptive and misleading.

Simply the realization of the crisis of individual selfhood is not enough to make Mu Dan special, however, because writers from earlier generations and of different ideological and philosophical backgrounds had also painfully felt it --- in fact, every single author discussed in this work had a similar experience. Mu Dan's unique contribution is not only that he can boldly face this dispiriting fact but also that he reveals the falsehood and hopelessness of any schema that aims to change the status quo and rescue the selfhood from its tragic destiny. In the second stanza, Mu Dan further depicts the price one has to pay for the awakening of individual consciousness. In the constant flow of time, one is desperate to hold onto something that can give him / her a clear meaning of life and a sense of belonging, yet this effort just ends in failure; on the other hand, the endeavor to "bring back" a satisfactory self-perception through the nostalgic memory of a lost golden past also comes to nothing. The line "Incessant memory cannot bring back the self" is almost an open denunciation of the practices of aesthetic redemption that we have discussed in chapter 1. The third stanza, on the superficial level, seems to ridicule the naïve expectations of romantic love and comradeship, but a second reading will make it clear to us that Mu Dan's real target is the effort to reconstruct selfhood on the basis of collective aspiration that we have labored to analyze in chapter 3. It is amazing that, in wartime, and surrounded by the collectivist, nationalist mainstream literature, Mu Dan could still calmly, to some extent mercilessly, disclose the hallucinatory nature of the collective efforts that aim to renew the nation and individuals



simultaneously. Not that Mu Dan is against the war, of course; but he does put the belief in the purgative and salutary power of the collective movement under scrutiny all the time, and often finds it less than convincing. “The metamorphosed image,” as Mu Dan says in the last stanza, may only lead to deeper despair after the disillusionment. When all the struggles of the modern self fail he can only return to where he started, and curses himself as well as the mother who brought him into this world. Mu Dan’s depiction of the fate of the individual self is astoundingly pessimistic, even nihilistic; moreover, he refuses to fall into melancholy and self-pity but always keeps his impersonal tone and maintains a proper distance from his persona. Employing a kind of scientific accuracy and disinterestedness where others might be extravagantly sentimental and emotional, he hides the sense of tragedy underneath his irony.

### **I Speak to Myself**

I would not pray for the impossible, God,  
When what can be possible is still impossible,  
The decay of life, the defect of love, the cooling down of innocence,  
I inherited them all, what I pray for

Because it demonstrates your power more and more,  
Just one step I move from the school to your church,  
Here past becomes sin,  
And I crawl on the ground, in the destined position of the sheep,

No, no, although I have been gradually taken back by you,  
Although I have known the cruelty of the school  
After repeated despair, don’t let me  
Denounce all those courses at the foot of your altar,

Although incessant chuckles make me tremble,  
And my patron sighs in desperation,  
No, no, when the possible is still impossible,  
My remaining blood is steaming viciously.

March, 1941 (Mu Dan, 99)

The second poem about the fate of the “I,” “I Speak to Myself,” is another work in which the poet challenges the lure of the sublime, which in this poem is embodied by the figure of “God.” In this poem, the image of the “school” is used to symbolize the cruel world of reality while the “church” represents the spiritual asylum one can find in one’s belief in the sublime. This poem is in the style of a confession, but instead of scolding himself and crawling on the ground “in the destined position of the sheep” at the foot of the authority of God, the speaker in the poem, disillusioned, acknowledges and accepts his human defects. Paradoxically, it is just “the decay of life, the defects of love, the cooling down of innocence” that makes the speaker human. What he once prayed for --- the power that can help the flawed individual to transcend his limits and to be close to perfection, the absolute freedom and infinite space of self-development, the unity between the individual and the universal --- these are only temptations of the sublime God that are employed to persuade the speaker to abandon his wretched, but concretely human, selfhood. Despite the hardships in the world of reality, the speaker refuses to be penitent and rejects the lure of the sublime; his “viciously steaming blood” boldly demonstrates his defiance against the calls from the all-mighty.

As we have just seen, in Mu Dan’s poems both the complacent belief in a transcendental selfhood based on aesthetic redemption and the idea of self-renewal through identification with a sublime collective cause are replaced by a kind of almost cruel self-interrogation. Under Mu Dan’s pen, the self becomes an accidental existence, a trace left by powers beyond one’s control, full of contradictions, enthralled in endless self-negation yet without the hope of a final salvation. As he laments in his poem “sanshi danchen yougan” (On My Thirtieth Birthday):

Sometimes powerfully, sometimes modestly, flowing into these dusts,  
Time, mean and jealous, creates at one moment and destroys in the next,  
The endurance of its obstinacy gives birth to me.

Between the two poles of infinite darkness, past and future, with the  
incessant withering  
Present, upheld were dust, thoughts and glory,  
You and me, and the detestable boundary between all and all.

And at every moment of falling apart, I see a hostile me,  
Love and precautions can but collapse with it in vain,  
No steel or boulder can resist being shattered in its hands. (Mu Dan, 227-228)

His doubts about the meaning of life have reached the existential level. As the quotation illustrates, this self is only the product of indifferent time, an awesome power that creates and destroys for its own pleasure. Life is ephemeral, and it is an incessant process of alienation. The idealistic universal harmony is in essence alien to life; the effort to realize it, no matter whether it takes the form of regression to the “origin,” an intuitive epiphany, or progress toward a future, can only end in vain. Life brings only boundaries that separate everything and everyone, and its final strike is no less than the dissociation of the self.

If the poems discussed above are based on irony mixed with the sense of tragedy, then Mu Dan’s “Huashen xiansheng de pijuan” (The Exhaustion of Mr. Huashen), written in 1941, challenges the collective aspiration from another perspective. It is a poem that demonstrates the banality and emptiness of the lives of modern man and woman in a sarcastic tone. It is a monologue from the first-person perspective. The title character, Mr. Huashen, is dating a Ms. Yang for the first time in a park. He is a middle-aged dandy of rich experience, and, with his dating skills, he soon wins the favor of Ms. Yang. Yet deeply in his heart Mr. Huashen has become tired of these petty games of emotion, which

to him are repetitive, superficial, and meaningless. While he successfully plays his role in this battle between sexes, he secretly misses his first love, yet is afraid of engaging in another sincere emotional relationship. We can easily find the influence of T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" on this poem, from the subject matter to the structure, from the characterization of the title character to the sarcastic tone. When Mr. Huashen and Ms. Yang meet each other in the park, Mr. Huashen effectively manipulates the dialogue to achieve his goal. He leads Ms. Yang to "[t]alk about music, social problems, and their past, / What they like most and hate most," "all for one purpose":

One moment of humor, sudden intrusion and retreat,  
Then successfully lure an intimate person out of Ms. Yang, no doubt,  
So begin to visit her freely, focus on the decided strategies,  
Like an album of propaganda pictures, present me to her page after page.  
(Mu Dan, 102)

His teasing is no doubt successful, yet readers clearly see that it is based on nothing but a pile of empty phrases. Mr. Huashen, while engaging in this game of emotions, also despises himself: "I have seen bargaining, if the compromise is successfully made, /It is a form of wisdom shown among clowns and pretensions" (Mu Dan, 102).

His mind at this moment jumps back to a sincere love experience he had once had:

I have been once stubborn as a mower,  
Loved sincerely, running on the rolling mountains,  
My face and heart are parallel to each other,  
I have cried and laughed, without a single purpose,  
I did not cluster my facial expressions together into a conspiracy  
To make her like me ... (Mu Dan, 103)

This memory of a tender moment in the past leads him to momentarily desire for another authentic emotional relationship in which "people can find rest and eternity" (103). However, he quickly changes his mind: "Yet I see the past and foresee the future, / I must be vigilant, and keep my voice low: / Do you like cherries? No. Do you love dusk? / No. /

The temptation is in the distance, don't lose yourself, / In the formulae of chemistry, the maneuver of the war between two basic elements in enmity!" (103). His denial of authentic love leads the date to a banal end:

After making an appointment for the next meeting, I pick up my hat.  
I have something to do, I need to see some friends,  
To say "please..." or "sorry, I have to..."  
In order to continue the ancient war, in human love.  
(Mu Dan, 102-104)

Mr. Huashen is more capable and manipulative than J. Alfred Prufrock, yet both of them, who are middle-aged and have already passed the most glamorous days in their life, are wasting their lives in pretentious games of emotion while scared by authentic love; hesitant and exhausted, they finally get drowned in their everyday world of banality. Moreover, the sense of irony in Mu Dan's poem is even more conspicuous and significant, given the fact that this poem was written in 1941 during the Sino-Japanese War. The supposed renovating power of the sacred war did not touch people like Mr. Huashen at all. They are still preoccupied with their own petty "wars" of teasing and flirting and indifferent to the real historical crisis that is happening next to them.

### **A Soldier's Memory of War: Traumatic Experience and the Splintered Self**

As I have mentioned earlier in this chapter, Mu Dan kept silent about his experience as a soldier in the war for almost three years. It was only in 1945 that he broke his silence and began to write about it in his poetry. The result is a long poem in the form of a chorus, "Shenlin zhi mei --- ji Hukang he shang de baigu" (The Phantasm of the Jungle ----- A Sacrifice to the Bones on Hukan River). Actually, it is the only poem that he wrote on his war experience in his entire life. I will devote this section to the

discussion of this particular text. What interests me most is the poet's ambivalent attitude toward the sublime quality and the cathartic power of the war --- which were almost taken for granted by many of his contemporaries. Since this poem has never been translated into English before, in the next part I will first present to readers my own rough translation of the poem before moving onto an analysis of the text.

森林之魅

——祭胡康河上的白骨

森林：

没有人知道我，我站在世界的一方。

我的容量大如海，随微风而起舞，

张开绿色肥大的叶子，我的牙齿。

没有人看见我笑，我笑而无声，

我又自己倒下去，长久的腐烂，

仍旧是滋养了自己的内心。

从山坡到河谷，从河谷到群山，

仙子早死去，人也不再来，

那幽深的小径埋在榛莽下，

我出自原始，重把密密的原始展开。

那飘来飘去的白云在我头顶，

全不过来遮盖，多种掩盖下的我

是一个生命，隐藏而不能移动。

The Phantasm of the Jungle

----- A Sacrifice to the Bones on Hukan River

Jungle:

Nobody knows me, I stand at the side of the world.

As wide and deep as the sea, I dance with the breeze,

And open those green, plump leaves, my teeth.

Nobody sees me laugh, I laugh in silence.

I fall on myself, then get rotten, endlessly,

Yet the inside of me is nurtured at the same time.

From hillside to valley, from valley to mountains,

Fairies have been dead for long time, and humans have stopped coming,

The deep alley is buried under groves,

I originate from chaos, and I have the wrapped chaos unfolded.

人:

离开文明，是离开了众多的敌人，  
在青苔藤蔓间，在百年的枯叶上，  
死去了世间的声音。这青青杂草，  
这红色小花，和花丛中的嗡营，  
这不知名的虫类，爬行或飞走，  
和跳跃的猿鸣，鸟叫，和水中的  
游鱼，陆上的蟒和象和更大的畏惧，  
以自然之名，全得到自然的崇奉，  
无始无终，窒息在难懂的梦里。  
我不和谐的旅程把一切惊动。

森林:

欢迎你来，把血肉脱尽。

人:

是什么声音呼唤？有什么东西  
忽然躲避我？在绿叶后面  
它露出眼睛，向我注视，我移动  
它轻轻跟随。黑夜带来它嫉妒的沉默  
贴近我全身。而树和树织成的网  
压住我的呼吸，隔去我享有的天空！  
是饥饿的空间，低语又飞旋，

White clouds flow above me,

But they don't shelter me; I, under various covers,

Am a life, hiding in secret, unable to move.

Human:

When leaving civilization I also leave countless enemies  
behind me,

In the midst of moss and vines, on the dead leaves that are  
a hundred years old,

Lies the deceased voice of the world of humans. The blue,  
blue wild grass,

The small red flower, and the buzzing in the flowering  
shrubs,

Those nameless insects, crawling and flying

And hopping shrieking of apes, chirping of birds, and fish

In the water, pythons and elephants and horrors even  
bigger on land,

In the name of nature, they are all worshipped,

With no beginning and end, suffocated in an obscure  
dream.

My cacophonous voyage disturbs all.

Jungle:

象多智的灵魂，使我渐渐明白  
 它的要求温柔而邪恶，它散布  
 疾病和绝望，和憩静，要我依从。  
 在横倒的大树旁，在腐烂的叶上，  
 绿色的毒，你瘫痪了我的血肉和深心！

森林：

这不过是我，设法朝你走近，  
 我要把你领过黑暗的门径；  
 美丽的一切，由我无形的掌握，  
 全在这一边，等你枯萎后来临。  
 美丽的将是你无目的眼，  
 一个梦去了，另一个梦来代替，  
 无言的牙齿，它有更好听的声音。  
 从此我们一起，在空幻的世界游走，  
 空幻的是所有你血液里的纷争，  
 你的花你的叶你的幼虫。

祭歌：

在阴暗的树下，在急流的水边，  
 逝去的六月和七月，在无人的山间，  
 你们的身体还挣扎着想要回返，  
 而无名的野花已在头上开满。

Welcome, and shrug off your blood and flesh.

Human:

What is the voice that calls me? What all of a sudden  
 escapes me? Behind green leaves

It shows its eyes, staring at me, I move on,

It follows lightly. Night brings its jealous silence

Pressing on my body. The web woven by trees

Strangles me, and grabs the piece of sky belonging to me.

It is the space of hunger, murmuring and whirling,

Like a metaphysical spirit, it gradually makes me  
 understand

Its demands, tender and evil, it spreads

Diseases and despair, and quietude, and asks me to obey.

Beside the fallen trees, on the rotten leaves,

Emerald poison, you paralyze my blood, my flesh, and my  
 profound soul!

Jungle:

It is but me, managing to come close to you,

I would lead you to cross the threshold of darkness,



那刻骨的饥饿，那山洪的冲击，  
那毒虫的啮咬和痛楚的夜晚，  
你们受不了要向人讲述，  
如今却是欣欣的树木把一切遗忘。

过去的是你们对死的抗争，  
你们死去为了要活的人们的生存，  
那白热的纷争还没有停止，  
你们却在森林的周期内，不再听闻。

静静的，在那被遗忘的山坡上，  
还下着密雨，还吹着细风，  
没有人知道历史曾在此走过，  
留下了英灵化入树干而滋生。

1945年9月

Beauty, all the beauty, in my invisible control,  
Is on this side, waiting for your coming after you  
withered.  
How beautiful are your eyes without eyeballs,  
One dream passes, another comes to replace it,  
Speechless teeth, they make a more euphonious sound.  
From now on we will be together, wandering in the  
phantasmal world,  
It is but a dream, all the conflicts in your blood,  
Your blossoms your leaves your larvae.  
  
Liturgical Song:  
In the dark shade of trees, on the bank of torrents,  
Late June and July, empty mountains where now no man  
goes by,  
Your bodies still struggle to return home,  
Yet nameless wild flowers now burgeon all over your  
heads.  
  
The piercing hunger, the crashes of mountain floods,  
The bites of poisonous insects and those painful nights,  
You can bear them no more and want to tell,

Yet now there are only vigorous trees left, and all is forgotten.

What passed is your battle against death,

You died, for the survival of the living,

The white-hot war has not stopped yet,

But you have already been absorbed into the cycle of the forest, and will be disturbed no more.

Without a sound, on the mount that has been thrown into oblivion,

Sometimes puffs a gentle breeze, sometimes falls heavy rain,

Nobody knows that history has once passed this site,

And left heroic souls in the trunks, where they continue to grow.

September, 1945

Ambiguity haunts this poem from the very beginning --- we can start, for example, from the poet's motive in writing the poem. As its title suggests, the poem is dedicated to the soldiers who died in Hukan River valley three years before, and the fact that Mu Dan wrote it shortly after Japan's surrender makes it appear an ideal gesture of honorary

commemoration. Yet we also need to remember that the nightmarish journey through the jungle was obviously a traumatic experience for the poet. As one of his friends recalled later, Mu Dan refused to discuss this matter with others. He only made a concession to his friends' curiosity once, and what he told them was very close to the poem under discussion (see Mu Dan, 377-78). In this light, the poem may be regarded as Mu Dan's effort to exorcize the trauma through artistic sublimation, a delicate *fort / da* game of a young artist. Moreover, we may also note that in a poem whose subject matter is war and soldiers' sacrifice for the nation, the element of history is astoundingly elusive. Except for the last part of the poem ("the liturgical song"), the whole poem is a dialogue between the personified Jungle and an abstract Human. It is more a metaphysical speculation on the meaning of life and death than a patriotic song in memory of the nation's heroes. Even in the last section where the poet sings "Nobody knows that history has once passed this site, / And left heroic souls in the trunks, where they continue to grow" (Mu Dan, 214), the specific historical background of the poem is still absent. The poet seems to deliberately distance his poem from the details of actual history.

With these general observations in mind, let us now turn to a close reading of the text. The whole poem is set in a dramatic form: it has two dramatic personae, Jungle and Human, and a chorus, whose voice is presented in the final "liturgical song." In this poem Jungle is not simply the setting or background but a living power, a distinct voice, an active agent who engages in a dialectical movement with the Human: "...I, under various covers, / Am a life, hiding in secret, unable to move" (211). Yet Jungle, if it is alive, is also an odd existence, which challenges established laws of epistemology in many ways. As the poem reveals to us, this is still an uncharted land to human beings: "Nobody

knows me, I stand at the side of the world / ... / Nobody sees me laugh, I laugh in silence” (211). Moreover, it is an enigma to human beings not simply because it has not been touched by civilization but because it is by nature a being that cannot be named, represented and controlled by language and rationality. It is the universal Non-I that embodies chaos: “I originate from chaos, and I have the wrapped chaos unfolded” (211). It is also beyond the control of linear time and transcends the dichotomy between life and death. Instead, it follows its own cyclical law of time and in that way gains eternity: “I fall on myself, then get rotten, endlessly, / Yet the inside of me is nurtured at the same time” (211). All kinds of natural plants burgeon in the Jungle, yet it is a deserted place, a wild land, where “Fairies have been dead for long time, and humans have stopped coming” (211). By the end of the first stanza we can already feel the implicit hostility of the Jungle toward human beings and the civilized world. Proudly yet maliciously, Jungle exhibits its power in front of the fragile human who by chance enters the unfamiliar territory and disturbs the established order. This personified Jungle presents a totally new image of nature to us. Instead of a symbol of beauty and goodness, Jungle in this poem represents rather the temptation of what Freud calls the “death instinct” (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 73-74) and the mythical power of chaos which proceeds and incessantly undermines signification / individuation / civilization. Nature is turned into a supernatural being that is wild, enigmatic, and destructive; it has its own will and refuses to become the supplement to the world of humans (*shi jian*).

The tension between the Jungle / Nature and the Human becomes more explicit when, in the second stanza, the human comes onstage. The first line of this stanza (“When leaving civilization I also leave countless enemies behind me”) seems to suggest

a lonely human figure weary of the civilized world and aiming to find rest in the natural world, a familiar image which can be traced back to Romanticism and, even earlier, to the pastoral tradition. Yet the Jungle / Nature that the human enters is fundamentally different from the pastoral world of tranquility and happiness. Instead of a haven to a wounded soul, it is an alien environment to the human being. Composed of nameless plants, flowers, and insects, and apes, birds, pythons, elephants, and formless "horrors even bigger," it is self-sufficient and incompatible with the logic of the outside world. The Human is amazed and intimidated when he steps into this surreal world where everything is "suffocated in an obscure dream" and "the deceased voice of the world of humans" lies "on the dead leaves that are a hundred years old" (212). Seeking reconciliation with nature, the human figure only finds out that his "cacophonous voyage disturbs all" (212). A reconciliation is still possible, however --- in the form of death. The Human becomes the prey of the Jungle, yet when hunting the Human, Jungle does not solely rely on sheer violence. Instead, it turns itself into a seductive Siren and lures the Human with its voice, "murmuring and whirling, / Like a metaphysical spirit." It "spreads /Disease and despair, and quietude," and asks the human "to obey" (212). The Human struggles to resist, yet the resistance only ends in vain. Dominated first by anxiety, then fright, and in the end despair, the Human is gradually strangled, paralyzed, and finally led "to cross the threshold of darkness" (213).

Nonetheless, for both the Jungle and the Human, death is not an end but a beginning. With the demise of the Human, a terrible beauty is born: "Beauty, all the beauty, in my invisible control, / Is on this side, waiting for your coming after you withered" (213). If death signifies the disintegration of the individual self embodied by

the abstract Human,<sup>53</sup> it simultaneously paves the way for the (re)union of the self with the alien power of the Jungle in the chaos of darkness. The reborn self is no longer regulated and refrained by individual consciousness, however, but becomes a universal being in the “phantasmal world.” Here “one dream passes, another comes to replace it,” and “Speechless teeth, they make a more euphonious sound” (213). The newly-born self is the absolute master of the world of dreams, because he is in oneness with this world. He knows no limits, because fantasy has no boundary. The destruction of the individual self, paradoxically, seems to bring to it its ultimate liberation.

It seems that the dialectical interactions between the Jungle, which represents the inhuman power in the world, and the (individualistic) Human, finally reach an ideal synthesis in the Hegelian sense. This is an ending that makes everyone happy --- but soon readers may begin to feel uneasy. Something is still missing in the picture, and that is the consciousness of history. This poem is not a traditional lyric poem that portrays the awakening, development and maturation of individual consciousness but a modern epic on a small scale that depicts the cruelest moment in a fatal war. It would be rather ironic if the final conclusion of the poet is that the key to the liberation of the individual lies in the passive acceptance of the “tender and evil” demands of the alien power. And also it seems rather problematic that the concept of selfhood in this poem is limited to its two polarized forms: either the individual self of “I” or the abstract, universal one who “wander[s] in the phantasmal world.” The absence of another alternative, namely a selfhood based on collective aspiration and practice, is too conspicuous to be ignored. What is the goal of the toil and sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of Chinese soldiers, after all? This question can only be satisfactorily answered in a specific historical context,

yet again in this poem we only witness either a civilized world marked by its enmity to the individual or a phantasmal world where the selfhood is dissolved into a mythical universal one. The poet's silence reflects his own dilemma: is self-sacrifice in a war of national liberation, though a noble action, really able to bring an overall renewal to the country? Can a catastrophe in real life successfully turn out to be apocalyptic? Is a concrete identity based on collective aspiration ever possible? Is one particular form of death more meaningful than another for the individual? And if the disintegration of individual self and the disillusionment of collective aspiration are both unavoidable, then what is left, after all?

I do not think the poet had answers to these questions, and maybe he was scared by his own skepticism. That partly explains why the "liturgical song," which roughly equals the Chorus in Ancient Greek tragedy, reintroduces the ethical / historical dimension into the poem and redefines the abstract and singular "human" as the specific and collective "you" (*ni men*) who are the "heroic souls" dying in the war. With a concrete identity for the human persona and the solid, yet somehow clichéd moral judgment ("You died, for the survival of the living"), this ending section to some extent draws the poem back to a conventional hymn for national heroes and reassures its readers, maybe also the poet himself. Yet even in this soothing section the problem still remains: "You can bear them no more and want to tell, / Yet now there are only vigorous trees left, and all is forgotten." Are we ready to listen to the souls of the dead? Mu Dan provides an indirect reply to this question in another poem titled "tamen siqu le" (They Are Dead), which is rather disheartening:

Poor guys! They are dead,  
But we live to enjoy spring and time now.

They lie beneath the awakened earth, numb,  
 Without any feeling, but we have warm blood,  
 Bright eyes, sharp noses, and  
 Ears to hear God talking sweetly on the wild land  
 And in the forest and the throats of little birds.

...

They have died for God who is always free from worries,  
 They have died in rotten oblivion. (Mu Dan, 223-224)

### **Under the Flag: Mu Dan's Conflict between Dream and Disillusionment**

It has been pointed out by many critics that among all the modern Chinese poets, Mu Dan is spiritually closest to the modernist school in the West. For one thing, from the beginning of his career, he deliberately avoided being enthralled by classical Chinese poetry. One of his university classmates recalls: "At that time Mu Dan seemed to believe that too much influence from the classical poetry is harmful to the writing of new poetry... Obviously, he practiced this idea in his composition. The impact of the Western tradition is overwhelmingly stronger than that of classical Chinese poetry in his works" (Du, *Yige* 20). Near the end of his life, in the 1970s, Mu Dan even openly expressed his disappointment of classical poetry: "Sometimes I read classical poetry, hoping to get something from it, but was always disappointed. Its choice and arrangements of words are indeed attractive, but, trapped in the old literary language, they are of no use to vernacular poems. As to its images, I think they are too dated" (Du, *Yige* 180). Noticing the spiritual connections and formal similarities between Mu Dan and western modernists as well as his experimentalism, some critics have offered even a post-modernist reading of his poems. For example, Li Zhuoxiong, when analyzing Mu Dan's "shi ba shou" (Eight Poems), comments that Mu Dan's distrust of language is based on his idea that "the signifiers do not equal reality, hence they are unable to illuminate and designate the



whole world” (Du, *Fengfu* 52). Unlike his predecessors, who still hoped to keep the old tradition as much as possible in modern vernacular poetry, Mu Dan deliberately overthrew the tranquility and harmony in classical poems just as he boldly uncovered the crisis of the modern subject. By absorbing Western modernism into Chinese poetry, Mu Dan implicitly creates a sort of polylingualism within Chinese literary language, and forms a subversive literature.

However, Mu Dan’s apparent calmness in the face of the cruelty and absurdity of the world as well as the powerlessness and fragmentation of modern subjectivity cannot hide the fact that he is constantly tortured by his discovery and also secretly desires a possible answer to his desperate struggle for hope. Although he refuses to accept any soothing yet deceptive ideas of salvation or escape, there are nonetheless moments in his career when he cannot help but seek a kind of certainty for modern subjectivity, his personal self included. Even in these works, nonetheless, Mu Dan’s skepticism can still be felt from time to time, and he often ends his quest for an assured self-identity with further doubts and deepened frustration. This side of Mu Dan is also worth our close examination, and in this section I will concentrate on Mu Dan’s works that reflect his quest for a solid identity, especially works affected by nationalism. They are interesting not only for their own sake, but also because they form a kind of dialogue with Mu Dan’s more pessimistic works and together they build an innate tension into Mu Dan’s poetry, which is also the reflection of the poet’s dilemma in the world of reality. In the following part, I will put together his poems that seem to bear contradictory ideas to make an analysis of this inner dialogue and to try to give a clearer picture of the poet’s conflict.

Mu Dan witnessed the brutality of the war and served as a soldier himself, fighting the Japanese army in Burma. He also lived in an age when corruption and social injustice in China under the rule of the Nationalist Party made his contemporaries zealous about social reformation, if not necessarily radical revolution. Most of the time, however, Mu Dan kept a distance from the idealism of his contemporary writers and tended to believe that neither the victory of the war, nor social reform, was sufficient to renew Chinese society, to solve the spiritual crisis of a modern Chinese, and to bring him a satisfactory modern selfhood. His observation of the post-World War II Chinese society further confirmed his distrust of these grand narratives. In “ji’er de zhongguo” (Starving China), for example, we witness a bleak picture of China after the end of the Sino-Japanese War:

Yesterday has passed, a pastoral,  
The days blithe as spring water, going to flow into  
A significant tomorrow: but today is starvation.

...  
The center is suddenly dispersed: today is a kite with a broken strip  
Twirling when looking upward, our grasp is useless  
Today is chaos, insanity, self-degeneration, death in vain---  
Yet we will still live: today is starvation. (Mu Dan, 231)

Mu Dan is not indifferent to the social crisis of his times, but the idea of changing China through a sacred war for national independence seems to him an illusion. As we see in “Starving China,” in this post-war world, one is still forced to struggle to live in the days of “starvation” when the nostalgia for an idealistic yesterday and the self-deceptive hope for a bright tomorrow have proved powerless for one’s salvation, even escape. The war brought one catastrophe after another, but not an apocalyptic end and new beginning. However, when all the dreams and expectations have become bankrupted, the desperate struggle of the individual in the time “now” paradoxically gives him a tragic yet heroic

stature that may remind us of the trend of existentialism that burgeoned in post-World War II Europe.

Mu Dan, after all, is himself a Chinese poet who lived during one of the most unstable periods in Chinese history and who wanted to find a meaning for his existence. Side by side with his almost ruthless destruction of the old rosy fancies is his stubborn, almost heroic, struggle against gloomy reality. Irony and cynicism cannot satisfy him, and the pessimistic tone in his songs does not necessarily lead to passive resignation. He boldly stares at the face of life and is ready to answer its challenge. Moreover, he is neither an apathetic onlooker nor a self-assured superman with a bloated ego. Like Ai Qing and the poets of the July school, Mu Dan also regards himself as one of the people, as a member of this ancient and ill-fated nation who struggles in the land of starvation, although he is hesitant to acknowledge the purgative and elevating power of the collective that Ai Qing and the July School have found in the “people.” Hence, the grim reality of life disclosed in Mu Dan’s poems is both a personal and a national tragedy while Mu Dan’s sharp modernist consciousness makes him a universal “every man.” Mu Dan’s songs, his torturing self-interrogation, turn out to be his way to make a contribution to his nation, one which may remind us of Lu Xun. I agree with Liang Bingjun, who, when analyzing the idea of “self” in Mu Dan’s poems, argues: “The ‘Self’ in Mu Dan’s poem still keeps its specific social, cultural, and psychological identity. Despite its volatility it is still possible to trace its development. Through this modern ‘Self’ he still wants to write about his specific times” (Du, *Yige* 54). We can hardly find the same patriotic passion in Western modernism. Mu Dan and other Nine Leaves School poets, after abandoning almost everything belonging to the classical tradition of China, still

obstinately keep their own sense of belonging to their nation although they may not believe that this attachment can necessarily bring them salvation. They also retain their concern for immediate social problems (though at the same time defining them with a universal meaning).

Many literary critics have long before noticed this feature of modern Chinese writers, yet when evaluating it they are often biased by the old Euro-centric prejudice on modernism. For example, C. T. Hsia has observed:

The Chinese writer sees the conditions of China as peculiarly Chinese and not applicable elsewhere. He shares with the modern Western writer a vision of disgust if not despair, but since his vision does not extend beyond China, at the same time he leaves the door open for hope... If he had the courage or insight to equate the Chinese scene with the condition of modern man, he would have been in the mainstream of modern literature. But he dares not do so, since to do so would have blotted out hope for the betterment of life, for the restoration of human dignity. (536)

Hsia's problem is that he presupposes a general "modern disease" in all nations and cultures, and then sets the literary works in a hierarchical order according to their depiction of this particular theme. He in fact aims to establish a universal aesthetic standard for various modernist literatures around the world. On the contrary, I believe that instead of a sign of weakness, patriotism is a bond which ties various and sometimes drastically different Chinese literary schools together, which is a key to the understanding of the modern Chinese subject as compared to his foreign counterparts, especially in the years of the Sino-Japanese War. What is important for Chinese modern poets is not to be "in the mainstream," but to be able to participate in an equal dialogue with other sub-cultures while keeping their unique identity. The fact that this concern for their nation is remarkably strong even in the poems of Mu Dan, the one closest to Western modernism among Chinese poets, both underlines the difference between Western and Chinese

modernism, and leaves us a useful clue when we turn to modernist literatures in other, especially non-western, backgrounds.

One of the most outspoken nationalist poems by Mu Dan is “zanmei” (The Hymn) (1941), a poem in free verse style that reads similar to Ai Qing’s works both in form and in content. In this poem Mu Dan stretches the individual self of the speaker to reach the mass, and by connecting with them he feels the strong blood tie between them and gains confidence in the nation’s renewal:

I will embrace you with everything, you,  
O my fellow men I see everywhere,  
Back-bending people who live in shame,  
I will embrace every one of you, with my blood-tainted hands,  
For a nation has stood up.

...

When I walk by the road, I stop and linger,  
I linger because too long a history of shame  
Is still waiting in this vast land,  
Waiting, we have too many silent pains,  
But a nation has stood up,  
But a nation has stood up.  
(Mu Dan, 134, 136)

Another poem that reflects Mu Dan’s fascination with the collective inspiration and political sublime is “qi” (Flag) (1945). This is also the title poem of Mu Dan’s third collection of poems. This flag is obviously the national flag of China:

Flag

We are all under you, you flow high in the sky,  
Wind is your body, you go together with the sun,  
Often want to fly beyond the world, but are held tight by the earth.

You are words written on the sky, everyone knows,  
Simple, clear, grand, formless,  
You are the spirits of the heroes coming back to life.

Your petite body is the generating power of the war,  
After the war, you are the only complete object,

We have been burned to ashes, you hold the glory,

You take too much responsibility, sometimes confuse us,  
Capitalists and landlords use you to make excuses,  
To win peace from people.

You are our heart, but wiser than us,  
You bring the dawn, and suffer together with the dark night,  
You speak of the happiness of freedom best.

You sense the storms from the different directions first,  
You are our direction, now stabled by the victory,  
We love you, because now you belong to the people.

May, 1945 (Mu Dan, 188-89)

This flag is a sublime image that transcends the limitations of individual selfhood and embodies the collective aspiration for the national's renewal through China's victory in the Sino-Japanese War, which was already a certainty when Mu Dan wrote this poem. It flies high above the individual's everyday experience and represents a conspicuous truth that everyone admits. Through its "Simple, clear, grand, formless" words, the flag brings the whole nation together and keeps the sacrifices of the heroes in the war alive in the collective memory of the nation forever. People are content to sacrifice themselves for the noble cause --- national survival and revival --- represented by the flag, and it finally becomes a symbol of the coming of the age of freedom and an icon of people's liberation.

This poem can be included in the collection of July School poems and nobody may distinguish them from each other. But Mu Dan's skepticism is still present in this most optimistic and idealistic work: the sublime quality of the flag may not only be used by the people as an icon of freedom, but also by "capitalists and landlords" to "make excuses, / To win peace from people." In other words, how can we prevent the discourse of the sublime and the collective from being manipulated and abused by the privileged? How can we ensure that it always "belongs to the people"? Mu Dan, though without an

answer to these questions, did keenly notice the danger. Three years later, when the victory of the Chinese Communist revolution became clearly inevitable, Mu Dan wrote in another poem: “Welcome the coming of the new century! But don’t / Be lazy and careless, don’t restrain it in rigid clothes of human names, movements, and ‘-isms’ /Don’t let ignorance holds its thinking subjectivity” (Mu Dan, 269). Unfortunately, his worries became a reality after 1949.

Mu Dan’s realization of the fragmentary, powerless and desperate conditions of modern selfhood makes him a self-appointed critic of all the other strategies and efforts employed by modern Chinese writers to maintain the integrity of the subject and to find a final answer to the meaning of life. Caught in an eternal “present” and deprived of even the opportunities of dreams, the naked self in a modern wasteland can only find a meaning for himself either in a struggle without a purpose or a retreat into irony. However, Mu Dan’s attachment to his nation, though for him not a concrete form or ensured source of salvation, nonetheless helps to connect him with his contemporaries and makes a dialogue between them possible. This chance of dialogue, however, was not put into realization in the past. As I have mentioned earlier in this chapter, the debates between the July School and the Nine Leaves School in the 1940s focused on their differences much more than on their similarities and how they might cooperate. Whether it is possible to reconcile the two and combine the passion of the former with the clairvoyance of the latter to create a new vision of selfhood for modern Chinese, however, is an interesting question waiting to be explored by contemporary writers and critics.

---

<sup>1</sup> The translations of foreign texts in this work, unless indicated otherwise, are all done by me.

<sup>2</sup> In this study all references to the Bible are from the King James version.

<sup>3</sup> For this issue, see, for example, Tang Xiaobing, *Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity: the Historical Thinking of Liang Qichao*, (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> For the heritage of the May Fourth Era and different interpretations of it, see, among other works, Benjamin I. Schwartz, ed., *Reflections on the May Fourth Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1972) and Milena Doleželová-Velingerová and Oldřich Král, ed., *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital: China's May Fourth Project* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, David Der-wei Wang, *Fin-de-siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849-1911* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997); Yang Lianfen, *Wan Qing zhi wu si: zhongguo wenxue xiandaixing de fasheng* (From Late Qing to May Fourth: The Emergence of Modernity in Chinese Literature) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> For the emergence of “socialist realism” and its conflict with conventional realism, see Sylvia Chan, “Realism or Socialist Realism?: The ‘Proletarian’ Episode in Modern Chinese Literature 1927-1932.” *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 9: 55-74.

<sup>7</sup> Though the ossification of the concept of realism in post-1949 China is to a large extent the result of the radical change in China's political life and the requirements of the new official ideology, the pseudo-scientific and implicitly prescriptive quality had actually been built into Chinese realist works long before the Communist takeover. This tendency can be traced back to Lu Xun and his contemporaries. As David Der-wei Wang points out, “[e]ven at its beginning, the realist campaign of Lu Xun and his contemporaries entertained a paradox: it called into question the real while at the same time re-essentializing the Real. The movement historicized what had been regarded as sacred, disturbing immanent cultural / political institutions, while it nervously prescribed a replacement, cultivating the old yearnings for an ontology of the Real” (Wang 1992, 2). In the global context, we may notice that in the west realism and its late development, naturalism often tend to encourage an empiricist / pragmatic method in the observation and description of the outside world, stress the connection between literature and science, and frequently serve as a social corrective (See Lehan 3-33). These pursuits had an obvious impact on modern Chinese writers.

On the other hand, while exploring the bond between realism in literature and empiricist philosophy and science, western critics also pay some attention to the connection between realism and the identity crisis in west. In their eyes, “[w]hile realist writers varied in matters of style and literary technique, they all portrayed the individual struggling for identity in a hostile society” (Lehan 6). This observation is very close to Průšek's idea of Chinese realism. However, this interest in the individual was gradually outweighed by the emphasis on collectivism and on a grand historical narrative later in Left-Wing literary criticism, which became the mainstream criticism in post-1949 China. This shift of focus also reflects the changed view of selfhood: the “self” is only secure when it is based on a collective identity and meets the need of the master plot of history.



<sup>8</sup> Průšek's idea of Chinese realism appears to hold an affinity with modernist aesthetics in its emphasis on the subjective side of art and its openness to various forms of experimentalism. Yet we have to carefully distinguish what he actually says from the deductions which we can logically draw from his argument. Průšek is obviously unsatisfied with vulgar realism, yet he is also critical of modern western literature, for which "[p]ersonal experience, personal vision, self-confession and judgment, are held to be the only approach to reality, the only criteria of value, in the assessment of a work of art" (100). For him, "[a] proper balance between the mass of facts and their proper interpretation, evaluation and artistic presentation, can alone provide a firm foundation for realistic art" (101). Nonetheless, his observation makes it possible to discuss realism and modernism together in the same theoretical and historical framework instead of taking them as two mutually exclusive artistic movements. For the innate connection between realism and modernism, please also see George Levine, *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley* (Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1981).

<sup>9</sup> See Qian Liqun, *Zhou Zuoren zhuan* (The Biography of Zhou Zuoren), (Beijing: Beijing shiyue wenyi, 1990), 207-219, 223-234, 243-251, 293-94, 300-302; Susan Daruvala, *Zhou Zuoren and an Alternative Chinese Response to Modernity*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2000), 1-14, 40-58.

<sup>10</sup> A piece of fictional writing can "lyrical" in two senses: being subjective, sometimes explicitly autobiographical, and often verging on sentimentalism; or experimental in form, confronting the principles of classical realism and in a more general sense, the law of mimesis. The two modes of lyrical fiction, of course, can often overlap. When Průšek discusses the "lyrical" element in modern Chinese literature, what he emphasizes is the first aspect, though he also touches on the experimentalism of modern Chinese writers and connects it both to western influence and the tradition of Chinese poetry. In my discussion of "lyrical" fiction, I manage to balance the two sides and discovers their innate relations.

<sup>11</sup> A good example is the modern Chinese poet Zhu Xiang (1904-1933). He was a zealous advocate of aestheticism and a talented poet. At the age of 29, however, he drowned himself in the Yangtze River, a gesture, in his own words, of "declaring war against desperation."

<sup>12</sup> Some examples of decadent aestheticism in modern Chinese literature may include Yu Dafu's melodramatic stories, Tian Han's early dramatic works such as *Gutan de shengyin* (The Sound of Ancient Pond) and *Hu shang de beiju* (The Tragedy over the Lake), Wen Yiduo's poems "Lan guo" (Rotten Fruits) and "Si shui" (Dead Water), and Zhu Xiang's poem "Zang wo" (Bury Me), just to name a few. In all these works, death becomes the central theme but it is explicitly poeticized / aestheticized at the same time.

<sup>13</sup> As Marx argues, "[i]t is just in the working-up of the objective world, therefore, that man first really proves himself to be a *species being*.... Through and because of this production, nature appears as *his* work and his reality... he duplicates himself not only, as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore he contemplates himself in a world that he has created." For the dialectical relationship between human and nature, see Karl Marx, *Economic And Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1988), 76-77.

<sup>14</sup> It should be made clear that in this paper I am only discussing the early, that is, pre-Marxist stage of Lu Xun, and my descriptions of and comments on Lu Xun are only sufficient within this particular context. However, it is interesting to observe that Lu Xun's belief in social progress was an important stimulus to his turn toward Marxism, and Marxism itself shares a common ideological background with many other western discourses derived from the Enlightenment tradition.

<sup>15</sup> For a more detailed biographical record of Fei Ming, see Chen Jianjun 陈建军, *Fei Ming nian pu* 废名年谱 (The Annual Record of the Life of Fei Ming), (Wuhan: Huazhong shifan daxue, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> These collections and novels are: *Zhulin de gushi* (The Story of the Bamboo Grove, 1925), *Tao yuan* (The Peach Orchard, 1928), and *Zao* (Jujube, 1930); *Qiao* (The Bridge, 1932) and *Mo Xuyou xiansheng zhuan* (The Biography of Mr. No Such Man, 1932).

<sup>17</sup> See Sheng Congwen, "Lun Feng Wenbing" (On Feng Wenbing), in *Shen Congwen wen ji* (Collected Works of Shen Congwen), vol. 11. (Hong Kong: Sanlian, 1985), 96-102; Bian Zhilin, "Feng Wenbing xuanji xu," (Preface to the Selected Works of Feng Wenbing), in *Bian Zhilin wen ji*, vol. 2. (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu, 2002), 333-46; Jiang Ruoshui, *Bian Zhilin shiyi yanjiu* (Studies of the Art of Bian Zhilin's Poetry), (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu, 2000), 275-84.

<sup>18</sup> A few of Fei Ming's early stories also clearly show the trace of Yu Dafu's subjective and exclamatory style, but Fei Ming soon abandoned it and managed to develop a narrative and language style of his own.

<sup>19</sup> For a detailed record and analysis of the dispute between Lu Xun and Zhou Zuoren, see, for example, Qian Liqun 钱理群, *Zhou Zuoren zhuan* 周作人传 (The Biography of Zhou Zuoren), (Beijing: Beijing shiyue wenyi, 1990), 280-290.

<sup>20</sup> The text of *The Bridge* used in my dissertation is taken from *Fei Ming xuan ji* 废名选集 (Selected Works of Fei Ming), ed. Li Baoyan 李葆琰, (Chengdu: Sichuan wenyi, 1988). As the editor Li Baoyan made clear, when he prepared the text of *The Bridge* for the *Selected Works*, what he used is the edition published by *kaiming shudian* (开明书店) in 1932. After this edition, Fei Ming composed another seven chapters for *The Bridge* and published them in different literary journals from 1932 to 1937. According to Fei Ming, the 1932 edition is only "the first part" of the novel, and this work was never really finished. However, I argue that because of the unique aesthetic characteristics of this novel, *The Bridge* is by nature an "open" text which does not require a formal ending --- or beginning.

<sup>21</sup> Hardy maybe is the only exception, but he stopped writing novels in 1895; also strictly speaking, Hardy was not a core member of high modernism, although many modernists are his admirers.

<sup>22</sup> Also known as Li Shangyin, a ninth-century Chinese poet.

<sup>23</sup> Weber regards cities in the late Middle Ages in the Low Countries and later in the early Renaissance cities of Italy as the exemplary of his ideal. Yet in his research he does not provide a satisfactory answer to the question of how to rebuild such ideal cities in the age of late Capitalism.

<sup>24</sup> At the same time, de Certeau's observation on the connection between totalistic vision of city and "rationalization" can also be regarded as a development of Horkheimer and Adorno's criticism on Enlightenment ideology.

<sup>25</sup> For the distinction between “space” and “place,” or “inhabited space” and “geometrical space,” see Creswell and Bachelard.

<sup>26</sup> Jacques Lacan, “The Mirror Stage,” in *Ecrits*, 2.

<sup>27</sup> See the section on Dai Wangshu, “The Alley in the Rain.”

<sup>28</sup> See the section on Shi Zhecun, “One Evening in the Rainy Season.”

<sup>29</sup> See Eileen Zhang, “Sealed Off,” trans. Karen Kingsbury, in Lau and Goldblatt, 188-97.

<sup>30</sup> See Xi Xi, “A Woman Like Me,” trans. Howard Goldblatt, in Lau and Goldblatt, 315-25.

<sup>31</sup> See Zhu Tianwen, “Fin de siècle [sic] Splendor,” trans. Eva Hung, in Lau and Goldblatt, 444-59.

<sup>32</sup> In the danger of oversimplification, I would suggest that it is the largest difference between Benjamin’s *flâneur* in the nineteenth century Paris and de Certeau’s practitioner of everyday life in contemporary society.

<sup>33</sup> The English translations of poems in this paper, unless indicated otherwise, are all done by me.

<sup>34</sup> For female characters as symbols of city in Dai and Baudelaire’s poems, also see Zhang Yingjin, 169-72.

<sup>35</sup> Benjamin’s theory of the *flâneur* suggests that the 19th century urban figure disappeared after the threats of mechanization made his pedestrian strolling impossible. However, arguments can be made against this supposed extinction; twentieth century incarnations of the *flâneur*, particularly in modernist literature and art as well as urban studies, continue to challenge conventional definitions of what it means to practice *flânerie*. See, for example, de Certeau’s discussion on everyday life (Certeau 91-130); also see Berman 164-71; 313-28.

<sup>36</sup> My employment of such phrases as “Chinese color” or “local color” neither suggests that I take the western value as “universal” nor implies that I hold an essentialist understanding of Chinese urban poetry. These phrases are only used in their literary sense to indicate the differences between the particular Chinese and western texts under discussion.

<sup>37</sup> Shi Zhecun, “One Evening in the Rainy Season,” trans. Gregory B. Lee, in Lau and Goldblatt, 128. The English translations of the story in this paper are all from the same edition and will be noted parenthetically later.

<sup>38</sup> For psychoanalysis’s influence on Shi Zhecun, see Zhang Xinyin 143-145 and Lee 153-89; for a more comprehensive study of the connection between Shi’s works and western literature and philosophy, see Shih 339-70.

<sup>39</sup> Sun’s choice of New York City as the subject matter of his poem is not exceptional in modern Chinese literature. Many early modern Chinese writers introduced their overseas experiences into their literary works. In the field of poetry, some other examples include: Li Jinfa’s “Luxemburg Garden,” “The Dusk of Berlin,” “Berlin Tiergarten”; Xu Zhimo’s “Venice,” “Marseille,” “Farewell to Cambridge,” “Second Farewell to Cambridge,” and “One Night in Florence”; and Ai Qing’s “Marseille” and “Paris.”

<sup>40</sup> Huang Di, or the Yellow Emperor, is the mythical ancestor of the Chinese people. Here “children of Emperor Huang Di” obviously refers to the Chinese immigrants in the United States.

<sup>41</sup> Zhang Fei (?-221 C.E.), is the legendary Chinese general of the Three Kingdoms period (220-265 C. E.). He is famous for, among other things, his bushy beard and his gigantic strength and stature. Here the poet uses this historical figure to refer to one of the anonymous passengers, probably “the big guy” in the last line.

<sup>42</sup> This may refer to the plague of locusts mentioned in *The Old Testament* (Joel 1.1-2.11).

<sup>43</sup> For example, in 1906 Zhu Zhixin, a follower of Sun Yat-sen and an active member of the nationalist revolutionary movement, published a translation of excerpts of *The Communist Manifesto* in his essay “Deyizhi shehui gemingjia xiaozhuan” (Biographical Stories of German Social Revolutionaries) in *Min bao* (The People’s Journal) in Japan.

<sup>44</sup> This article is divided into two parts and the second part was published in Volume 6, Issue 6 of *New Youth* in November, 1919.

<sup>45</sup> Li Dazhao began to publish articles on Marxism in 1918. However, “Wode makesi-zhuyi guan” is his first comprehensive study of Marxist theory.

<sup>46</sup> There were nevertheless some dissenting voices at the beginning even within the Leftist camp. For example, Hu Feng and his followers tried to defend the relative independence of art and artist (in Hu’s terminology, the writer’s “subjective spirit of struggle”) in face of the ideological control, and questioned the efficacy of the “mass style” based on the folklore tradition. They were soon ousted as heretics, however, and many of them were even thrown into prison after 1949 after being labeled as members of a “reactionary gang.”

<sup>47</sup> A good example of the former is the “National Defense Literature” movement in the mid-1930s; for the latter, the nationalist-statist school of *zhanguo ce pai* is an important example.

<sup>E</sup>xamples of studies of the history of modern Chinese literature published during this period include: Wang Yao 王瑶, *Zhongguo xin wenxue shigao* 中国新文学史稿 [Draft of a History of New Chinese Literature] (1952), *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue shi* 现代中国文学史 [The History of Modern Chinese Literature], by the Chinese Department of Fudan University (1959), *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue shi* 现代中国文学史 [The History of Modern Chinese Literature], by the Chinese Department of Beijing University (1960), etc.

<sup>49</sup> The English translation is taken from Eoyang, 59-60.

<sup>50</sup> The English translation is taken from Eoyang, 105.

<sup>51</sup> The English translation of is taken from Eoyang, 25-27.

<sup>52</sup> It should be pointed out that the “Nine Leaves” school is a rather loose and flexible school of art. It is not a formal organization like the Creation Society and the Association of Studies of Literature. It does not have a leading figure and definitely is not under the control of any political power. Some of the nine major members never met each other and the name of the school, “Nine Leaves,” was first used only in 1981 when an anthology of the poetic works of these nine writers published in that year used the phrase in its title. For a detailed description of the “Nine Leaves School,” see You, 3-8.

<sup>53</sup> The original Chinese text keeps using *ren*, the singular form of “human being”, to refer to “the Human” in the poem. When addressing himself “the Human” always uses “I” (*wo*), and when addressed by the Jungle the human is always referred as “*ni*,” the singular form of “you.” It is noteworthy that the poet intentionally makes “the human” in the poem a representative of individual self.

## Bibliography

- Abrams, M. H. *The Mirror and the lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1971 [1953].
- . *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1971.
- Adorno, Theodor W. *Notes to Literature*. Vol. 1. Ed. Rolf Thedemann. Trans. Shierry Weber Nicolsen. New York: Columbia UP, 1991.
- . *Notes to Literature*. Vol. 2. Ed. Rolf Thedemann. Trans. Shierry Weber Nicolsen. New York: Columbia UP, 1992.
- Ai Qing 艾青. *Ai Qing quan ji* 艾青全集 (Collected Works of Ai Qing). 5 vols. Shijiazhuang: Huashan wenyi chubanshe, 1991.
- . *Ai Qing shi xuan* 艾青诗选 (Selected Poems of Ai Qing). 3<sup>rd</sup> and expanded ed. Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1998.
- Albright, Daniel. *Quantum Poetics: Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and the Science of Modernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.
- Alcorn, John. *The Natural Novel from Hardy to Lawrence*. London: Macmillan, 1977.
- Alexander, Michael. *The Poetic Achievement of Ezra Pound*. London: Faber and Faber, 1979.
- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)." *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971, 127-186.
- Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. London: Verso, 1991.
- Auden, W. H. *Collected Poems*. Ed. Edward Mendelson. New York: Vintage Books, 1991.
- Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: The U of Michigan P, 1994.
- Baudelaire, Charles. *Oeuvres complètes*. Paris: Gallimard, 1975.
- . *The Flowers of Evil*. Trans. James McGowan. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993.
- . *Baudelaire as a Literary Critic: Selected Essays*. Trans. Lois Boe Hyslop and Francis E. Hyslop, Jr. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State UP, 1964.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: The U of Michigan P, 1994.
- Bell, Michael. *Literature, Modernism and Myth: Belief and Responsibility in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Charles Baudelaire : A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*. Trans. Harry Zohn. London : Verso, 1983.
- . *Illuminations*. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 1969.

- Berman, Marshall. *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Penguin Books, 1988.
- Bian Zhilin 卞之琳. *Bian Zhilin 卞之琳*. Ed. Zhang Manyi 张曼仪. *Zhongguo xiandai zuojia xuanji, shi*, 中国现代作家选集十 (Selected Works of Modern Chinese Writers, Vol. 10). Taipei: Shulin, 1992.
- . *Bian Zhilin wen ji* 卞之琳文集 (Collected Works of Bian Zhilin), Vols. 1-3. Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000.
- . *Diao chong ji li: 1930-1958* 雕虫纪历: 1930-1958 (The Record of Carving Insects, 1930-1958). Expanded ed. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Sanlian shudian, 1982.
- Birrell, Anne. *Chinese Mythology: An Introduction*. Baltimore: the Johns Hopkins UP, 1993.
- Bradbury, Malcolm and James McFarlane, ed. *Modernism 1890-1930*. London: Penguin Books, 1991.
- Bryton, J. Scott, ed. *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction*. Salt Lake: The U of Utah P, 2002.
- Burckhardt, Jacob. *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. Trans. S. G. C. Middelmore. New York: Random House, 1954.
- Byron, George (Lord Byron). *Selected Poems*. Ed. Susan J. Wolfson and Peter J. Manning. London: Penguin Books, 1996.
- Calinescu, Matei. *Five Faces of Modernity*. Durham: Duke UP, 1987.
- Caochuan Weiyu (Zhang Xiuzhong) 草川未雨 (张秀中). *Zhongguo shi tan de zuori, jinri he mingri* 中国新诗坛的昨日, 今日和明日 (Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow of Modern Chinese Poetry). Beiping (Beijing): Haiyin shuju, 1929.
- Chan, Sylvia. "Realism or Socialist Realism?: The 'Proletarian' Episode in Modern Chinese Literature 1927-1932." *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 9: 55-74.
- Chang Wenchang 常文昌. *Zhongguo xiandai shilun yaolue* 中国现代诗论要略 (A Concise Study of Modern Chinese Poetry). Lanzhou: Lanzhou daxue chubanshe, 1991.
- Chatterjee, Partha. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986.
- Chen Bingying 陈丙莹. *Bian Zhilin ping zhuan* 卞之琳评传 (A Critical Biography of Bian Zhilin). Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1998.
- . *Dai Wangshu ping zhuan* 戴望舒评传 (A Critical Biography of Dai Wangshu). Chongqing: Chongqing renmin chubanshe, 1993.
- Chen Jianjun 陈建军. *Fei Ming nian pu* 废名年谱 (The Annual Record of the Life of Fei Ming). Wuhan: Huazhong shifan daxue, 2003.
- Chen Jianhua 陈建华. "Gemingshi de xiandai xing: Zhongguo geming huayu kaolun" "革命"的现代性: 中国革命话语考论 (Modernity and "Revolution": A Historical Analysis of Revolutionary Discourse in China), Shanghai: Shanghai Guji chubanshe, 2000.
- Chen Liangyun 陈良运. *Xinshi de zhexue yu meixue* 新诗的哲学与美学 (The Philosophy and Aesthetics of New Poetry). Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 1989.
- Chen Mengjia 陈梦家, ed. *Xinyue shixuan* 新月诗选 (Selected Poems of the Crescent School). Beijing: Jiefangjun wenyi chubanshe, 2000.

- Chen Qiyou 陈启佑. *Xinshi xingshi sheji de meixue* 新诗形式设计的美学 (The Aesthetics of the New Poetry's Form Design). Taizhong: Taiwan Shixuejikan Zazhishe, 1993.
- Chen Shaowei 陈绍伟, ed. *Zhongguo Xinshiji Xu Ba Xuan* 中国新诗集序跋选 (Prefaces and Postscripts of New Chinese Poetry's Collections). Changsha: Hunan wenyi chubanshe, 1986.
- Chen Sihe 陈思和. *Zhongguo Dangdai Wenxue Guanjianci Shijiang* 中国当代文学关键词十讲 (Ten Keywords in Contemporary Chinese Literature). Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2002.
- Chen, Xiaomei. *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China*. New York: Oxford UP, 1995.
- Chen Yuanzheng 陈远征. *Xiandai Zhongguo de Shiren yu Shipai* 现代中国的诗人与诗派 (Modern Chinese Poets and Poetical Schools). Changsha: Huanan shifandaxue chubanshe, 1994.
- Certeau, Michel de. *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986.
- . *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven Rendall. Berkeley: U of California P, 1984.
- Cheung, Dominic. *Feng Chih*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979.
- Crawford, Fred D. *Mixing Memory and Desire: The Waste Land and British Novels*. University Park: The Pennsylvania UP, 1982.
- Creswell, Tim. *Place: A Short Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004.
- Culler, Jonathan. "Introduction." *The Flowers of Evil*. By Charles Baudelaire. Trans. James McGowan. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993, xiii-xxxvii.
- . *W. H. Auden: A Commentary*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1998.
- Dai Wangshu 戴望舒. *Dai Wangshu shi quanbian* 戴望舒诗全编 (The Collected Poetic Works of Dai Wangshu). Ed. Liang Ren 梁仁. Hangzhou: Zhejiang wenyi chubanshe, 1989.
- . *Dai Wangshu shi* 戴望舒诗 (The Poems of Dai Wangshu). Ed. Liang Ren 梁仁. Hangzhou: Zhejiang wenyi chubanshe, 2001.
- Daruvala, Susan. *Zhou Zuoren and an Alternative Chinese Response to Modernity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2000.
- De Man, Paul. *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1983.
- Du Ronggen 杜荣根. *Xunqiu yu Chaoyue: Zhongguo Xinshi Xingshi Piping* 寻求与超越: 中国新诗形式批评 (Quest and Transcendence: Formal Criticism on New Chinese Poetry). Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 1993.
- Du Yunxie 杜运燮, et al, ed. *Yige minzu yijing qilai* 一个民族已经起来 (A Nation Has Stood Up). Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 1987.
- , et al., ed. *Fengfu yu fengfu de tongku* 丰富与丰富的痛苦 (Abundance and the Pain of Abundance). Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 1997.
- Duara, Prasenjit. *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995.
- Eagleton, Terry. *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990.

- Eliot, T. S. *Collected Poems 1909-1962*. London: Faber and Faber, 1963.
- Emig, Rainer. *Modernism in Poetry: Motivations, Structures and Limits*. London: Longman, 1995.
- Empson, William. *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. New York: New Directions, 1966.
- Eoyang Chen, Pen Wenlan and Marilyn Chin, trans. *Ai Qing: Selected Poems*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2000.
- Fan Jiyan and Wanliang Qian 范际燕 钱文亮. *Hu Feng lun: dui Hu Feng de wenhua yu wenxue chanshi* 胡风论：对胡风的文化与文学阐释 (A Study of Hu Feng: Cultural and Literary Interpretations of Hu Feng). Wuhan: Hubei Renmin Chubanshe, 1999.
- Fang Rennian 方仁念 ed. *xinyüepai pinglun ziliao xuan* 新月派评论资料选 (Selected Criticism on Crescent School). Shanghai: Huadong shifandaxue Chubanshe, 1993.
- Fei Ming (Feng Wenbing) 废名 (冯文炳). *Lun xinshi ji qita* 论新诗及其他 (On New Poetry, with Miscellaneous Writings). Shenyang: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998.
- . *Fei Ming xuanji* 废名选集 (Selected Works of Fei Ming). Chengdu: Xichuan wenyi, 1988.
- Feng Zhi 冯至. *Feng Zhi quanji* 冯至全集 (Collected Works of Feng Zhi), vols. 1-12. Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 1999.
- Feuerwerker, Yi-tsi Mei. *Ideology, Power, Text: Self-Representation and the Peasant "Other" in Modern Chinese Literature*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998.
- Foucault, Michel. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977.
- Fowlie, Wallace. *Poem and Symbol: A Brief History of French Symbolism*. University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State UP, 1990.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Trans. James Strachey. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1961.
- . *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XVII. Trans. James Strachey. London: the Hogarth Press, 1955.
- Friedrich, Hugo. *The Structure of Modern Poetry: From the Mid-Nineteenth to the Mid-Twentieth Century*. Trans. Joachim Neugroschel. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1974.
- Goldman, Merle and Leo Ou-Fan Lee, ed. *An Intellectual History of Modern China*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002.
- Greg, Walter W. *Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama*. London: A. H. Bullen, 1906.
- Guo Moruo 郭沫若. *Moruo wenji* 沫若文集 (Collected Works of Moruo). 17 vols. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1957-1963.
- Guo Xiacong 郭小聪. *Zai Xinshiji de Menkan Shang: Zhongguo Xiandai Shiren Xinlun* 在新世纪的门槛上：中国现代诗人新论 (On the Threshold of A New Century: A New Study of Modern Chinese Poets). Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1997.
- Haft, Lloyd. *Pien Chih-lin: A Study in Modern Chinese Poetry*. Dordrecht, Holland: Foris, 1983.
- Hardy, Barbara. *The Advantage of Lyric: Essays on Feeling in Poetry*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1977.
- He Qifang 何其芳. *He Qifang Wenji* 何其芳文集 (Collected Works of He Qifang). 6



- vols. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1982.
- Heath-Stubbs, John. *The Pastoral*. London: Oxford UP, 1969.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. *Nations and Nationalism: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990.
- Hockx, Michel. *Questions of Style: Literary Societies and Literary Journals in Modern China, 1911-1937*. Leiden: Brill, 2003.
- Hong Zicheng and Liu Denghan 洪子诚 刘登翰. *Zhongguo dangdai xinshi shi* 中国当代新诗史 (A History of Contemporary Chinese New Poetry), Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1993.
- Hsia, C. T. *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*. 3<sup>rd</sup>. ed. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1999.
- Hsia, T. A. *The Gate of Darkness: Studies on the Leftist Literary Movement in China*. Seattle: U of Washington P, 1968.
- Hsu, Kai-yu. *Wen I-To*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980.
- , trans. et. ed. *Twentieth Century Chinese Poetry: An Anthology*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1963.
- Hu Shi 胡适. *Hu Shi shihua* 胡适诗话 (Hu Shi on Poetry). Ed. Wu Benxing and Li Xinghua 吴奔星, 李兴华. Chengdu: Sichuan wenyi chubanshe, 1991.
- . *Hu Shi wencun* 胡适文存 (Selected Works of Hu Shi), vols. 1-4.
- Huang Jian 黄键. *Jingpai wenxue piping yanjiu* 京派文学批评研究 (A Study on Literary Criticism of "Beijing School"), Shanghai: Shanghai Sanlian shudian, 2002.
- Huang Weiliang 黄维樑. *Zenyang du xin shi* 怎样读新诗 (How to Read New Poetry). Taipei: Wusi shudian, 1989.
- Huang Xiuji 黄修己. *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue fazhanshi* 中国现代文学发展史 (A History of modern Chinese Literature's Development). Beijing: Chongguo Qingnian chubanshe, 1988.
- Hutton, Patrick H. *History as an Art of Memory*. Hanover: UP of New England, 1993.
- Jancovich, Mark. *The Cultural Politics of the New Criticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993.
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981.
- . "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." *Social Text*, 15: 65-88.
- Jiang Ruoshui 江弱水. *Bian Zhilin shiyi yanjiu* 卞之琳诗艺研究 (Studies of the Art of Bian Zhilin's Poetry). Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu, 2000.
- Jin Qijun 金钦俊. *Xinshi shanshinian* 新诗三十年 (Thirty Years of New Poetry). Guangzhou: Zhongshan daxue chubanshe, 1991.
- Jin Siyan 金丝燕. *Wenhua jieshou yu wenhua guolü: Zhongguo dui Faguo xiangzheng zhuyi shige de jieshou* 文化接受与文化过滤: 中国对法国象征主义诗歌的接受 (Cultural Reception and Cultural Filtration: Chinese Reception of French Symbolist Poetry). Beijing: Renmin daxue chubanshe, 1994.
- Johnson, W. R. *The Idea of Lyric: Lyric Modes in Ancient and Modern Poetry*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1982.
- Jones, P. Mansell. *Verhaeren*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1957.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*. Trans. James C. Meredith. Chicago:

- 
- Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952.
- Karl, Rebecca. *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*. Durham: Duke UP, 2002.
- Katznelson, Ira. *Marxism and the City*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- Ke Zhongbing 柯仲平. *Ke Zhongping wenji* 柯仲平文集 (Collective Works of Ke Zhongping). 3 vols. Kunming: Yunnan Renmin, 2002.
- Kojève, Alexandre. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. James H. Nichols, Jr. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980.
- Korg, Jacob. *Ritual and Experiment in Modern Poetry*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.
- Kubin, Wolfgang. *Der Durchsichtige Berg: Die Entwicklung der Naturanschauung in der chinesischen Literatur*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1985.
- Lambert, José and André Lefevere, ed. *La traduction dans le développement des littératures / Translation in the Development of Literatures*. New York: Peter Lang; [Leuven]: Leuven UP, 1993.
- Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之. *Xiandaishi de qinggan yu xingshi* 现代诗的情感与形式 (The Emotion and Form of Modern Poetry). Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 1994.
- . *Zhengtongde yu yiduande* 正统的与异端的 (The Orthodox and the Heretic). Hangzhou: Zhejiang wenyi chubanshe, 1988.
- Lau, D. C. Trans. *Tao Te Ching*. Hong Kong: The Chinese UP, 2001.
- Lau, Joseph S. M. and Goldblatt ed. *Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature*. New York: Columbia UP, 1995.
- Lawler, James, R. *The Language of French Symbolism*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969.
- Lee, Gregory B. *Dai Wangshu: The Life and Poetry of A Chinese Modernist*. Hong Kong: The Chinese UP, 1989.
- . *Troubadours, Trumpeters, Troubled Makers: Lyricism, Nationalism and Hybridity in China and its Others*. Durham: Duke UP, 1996.
- Lee, Leo Ou-fan. "Foreword." Jaroslav Průšek, *The Lyrical and the Epic: Studies of Modern Chinese Literature*. Ed. Leo Ou-fan Lee. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1980. vii-xii.
- . *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of A New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1999.
- . *Voices from the Iron House: A Study of Lu Xun*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987.
- Legge, James. Trans. *The Tao Te Ching and the Writings of Chuang-Tzu*. Taipei: Ch'engwen Publishing Company, 1969.
- Lehan, Richard. *Realism and Naturalism: The Novel in an Age of Transition*. Madison: The U of Wisconsin P, 2005.
- Lerner, Laurence. *The Use of Nostalgia: Studies in Pastoral Poetry*. New York: Schocken Books, 1972.
- Levine, George. *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterly*. Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1981.
- Li Xinyu 李新宇. *Zhongguo dangdai shigeyishu yanbianshi* 中国当代诗歌艺术演变史 (A History on the transformation of Contemporary Chinese Poetical Art). Hangzhou: Zhejiang daxue chubanshe, 2000.
- Li Yi 李怡. *Zhongguo xiandai xinshi yu gudian shige chuantong* 中国现代新诗与古典

- 诗歌传统 (Modern Chinese New Poetry and Classical Poetical Tradition).  
Chongqing: Xinan shifan daxue chubanshe, 1994.
- Liang Zongdai 梁宗岱. *Liang Zongdai piping wenji* 梁宗岱批评文集 (Critical Writings of Liang Zongdai). Zhuhai: Zhuhai chubanshe, 1998.
- . *Liang Zongdai xuanji* 梁宗岱选集 (Selected Works of Liang Zongdai). Hong Kong: Hong Kong Wenxue Yanjiushe, 1979.
- . *Shi yu zhen, Shi yu zhen er ji* 诗与真 诗与真二集 (Poetry and the Truth, I & II). Beijing: Waiguo wenxue, 1984.
- Liao, W. K. Trans. *The Complete Works of Han Fei Tzu: A Classic of Chinese Political Science*. 2 vols. London: Arthur Probsthain, 1959.
- Lin, Julia C. *Modern Chinese Poetry: An Introduction*. Seattle: U of Washington P, 1972.
- Lin, Yü-sheng. *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Antitraditionalism in the May Fourth Era*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1979.
- , et al. *Wu si: duoyuan de fansi* 五四: 多元的反思 (May Fourth: Multiple Reflections). Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 1989.
- Lindley, David. *Lyric*. London: Methuen, 1985.
- Link, Perry. *The Use of Literature: Life in the Socialist Chinese Literary System*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000.
- Liu, Haoming. "Fei Ming's Poetics of Representation: Dream, Fantasy, Illusion, and Alayavijnana." *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* (13:2): 30-71.
- Liu, James J. Y. *The Art of Chinese Poetry*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1962.
- Liu, Lydia. *Translingual Practice: Literature, National culture, and Translated Modernity — China, 1900-1937*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995.
- Liu Shijie 刘士杰. *Zouxiang bianyuan de shishen* 走向边缘的诗神 (The Marginalized Muse). Taiyuan: Shanxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 1999.
- Liu Yanglie 刘扬烈. *Shishen, lianyu, baisehua---qiyue shipai lungao* 诗神, 炼狱, 白色花---七月诗派论稿 (Muse, Purgatory, White Flowers---A Study of the Qiyue School). Beijing: Beijing shifan xueyuan chubanshe, 1991.
- Lu Xun 鲁迅. *Lu Xun quanji* 鲁迅全集 (Collected Works of Lu Xun) 16 vols. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1981.
- . *The Complete Stories of Lu Xun: Call to Arms · Wandering*. Trans. Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1981.
- . *Wild Grass*. Trans. Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang. Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1974.
- Lukács, Georg. *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*. Trans. Anna Bostock. Cambridge MA: MIT P, 1971.
- Luo Hanchao 骆寒超. *Xin shi zhu chao lun* 新诗主潮论 (A Study on the Mainstream of New Poetry). Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1999.
- . *Ai Qing ping zhuan* 艾青评传 (A Critical Biography of Ai Qing). Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2000.
- Luo Qing 罗青. *Cong Xu Zhimo dao Yu Guangzhong* 从徐志摩到余光中 (From Xu Zhimo to Yu Guangzhong). Taipei: Erya chubanshe, 1978.
- . *Shi de zhao ming dan* 诗的照明弹 (The Flash Bomb of Poetry). Taipei: Erya, 1994.
- Luo Zhitian 罗志田. *Luanshi qianliu: minzuzhuyi yu minguo zhengzhi* 乱世潜流: 民族

- 主义与民国政治 (A Hidden Torrent in a Turbulent Time: Nationalism and Republic of China Politics), Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001.
- Lü Jin 吕进. *Zhongguo xiandai shixue* 中国现代诗学 (Modern Chinese Poetics). Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1991.
- Lü Yuan 绿原, ed. *Baisehua: ershiren ji* 白色花: 二十人集 (White Flowers: A Collection of Twenty Poets' Works). Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2000.
- Lü Zhouju 吕周聚 *Zhongguo xiandai zhuyi shixue* 中国现代主义诗学 (Poetics of Chinese Modernism). Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2001.
- Ma Yazhong 马亚中. *Zhongguo jindai shige shi* 中国近代诗歌史 (A History of Chinese Poetry in Early Modern Era). Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1992.
- Mallarmé, Stéphane. *Poésies*. Ed. Bertrand Marchal. Paris: Gallimard, 1992.
- Mao Tse-Tung. "Talks at the Yen'an Forum on Literature and Art." *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, Vol. III. Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965. 69-98.
- Marx, Karl. *Economic And Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Trans. Martin Milligan. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1988.
- , and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*. ?: Filiquarian, 2007.
- Miller, Paul Allen. *Lyric Texts and Lyric Consciousness: The Birth of a Genre from Archaic Greece to Augustan Rome*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- McDougall, Bonnie S. *The Introduction of Western Literary Theories into Modern China: 1919-1925*. Tokyo: The Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1971.
- Mu Dan 穆旦. *Mu Dan shi quanji* 穆旦诗全集 (Collected Poems of Mu Dan). Ed. Li Fang 李方. Beijing: Zhongguo wenxue chubanshe, 1996.
- Nelson, Cary. *Revolutionary Memory: Recovering the Poetry of the American Left*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- North, Michael. *The Political Aesthetic of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991.
- Oerlemans, Onno. *Romanticism and the Materiality of Nature*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2002.
- Owen, Stephen. *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1992.
- Pang Bingjun 庞秉钧, John Minford and Seán Golden, trans. *One hundred Modern Chinese Poems*. Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1987.
- Pang, Laikwan. *Building A New China in Cinema: The Chinese Left-Wing Cinema Movement, 1932-1937*. Lanham: Rowman, 2002.
- Pei Xiaowei 裴效维 ed. *Jindai wenxue yanjiu* 近代文学研究 (Studies on Early Modern Chinese Literature). Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2001.
- Perloff, Marjorie. *Poetry on & off the Page: Essays for Emergent Occasions*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1998.
- Poggioli, Renato. *The Oaten Flute: Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1975.
- Průšek, Jaroslav. *The Lyrical and the Epic: Studies of Modern Chinese Literature*. Ed. Leo Ou-fan Lee. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1980.
- Qian Liqun 钱理群. *Zhou Zuoren zhuan* 周作人传 (The Biography of Zhou Zuoren). Beijing: Beijing shiyue wenyi, 1990.

- Qin Chuan 秦川. *Guo Moruo pingzhuan* 郭沫若评传 (A Critical Biography of Guo Moruo). Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1993.
- Rickett, Adele Austin. *Wang Guo-wei's Jen-Chien Tz'u-Hua: A Study in Chinese Literary Criticism*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong UP, 1977.
- Rogers, William Elford. *The Three Genres and the Interpretation of Lyric*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983.
- Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.
- Schwartz, Benjamin I. ed. *Reflections on the May Fourth Movement*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1972.
- Schwartz, Sanford. *The Matrix of Modernism: Pound, Eliot and Early Twentieth-Century Thought*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985.
- Sennett, Richard, ed. *Classic Essays on the Culture of Cities*. New York: Meredith Corporation, 1969.
- Sharpe, William. *Unreal Cities: Urban Figuration in Wordsworth, Baudelaire, Whitman, Eliot, and Williams*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1990.
- Sheng Congwen 沈从文. "Lun Feng Wenbing" 论冯文炳 (On Feng Wenbing). *Shen Congwen wen ji* 沈从文文集 (Collected Works of Shen Congwen), vol. 11. Hong Kong: Sanlian, 1985, 96-102.
- Shih, Shu-mei. *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917-1937*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2001.
- Shu Lan (Dai Shuxun) 舒兰 (戴书训). *Zhongguo xinshi shihua, yi zhi si juan* 中国新诗史话1-4卷 (Archive of Modern Chinese Poetry, vols. 1-4). Taipei: Hanhaitang wenhuashiye youxiangongsi, 1998.
- Shu, Yunzhong. *Buglers on the Home Front: The Wartime Practice of the Qiyue School*. Albany, NY: State U of New York P, 2000.
- Simmel, Georg. *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*. Ed. David Frisby and Mike Featherstone. London: Sage Publications, 1997.
- Staiger, Emil. *Basic Concepts of Poetics*. Trans. Janette C. Hudson and Luanne T. Frank. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State UP, 1991.
- Strozier, Robert M. *Foucault, Subjectivity, and Identity: Historical Constructions of Subject and Self*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2002.
- Su Xuelin 苏雪林. *Er san shi niandai zuojia yu zuopin* 二三十年代作家与作品 (Writers and Their Works in 1920s and 30s). Taipei: Guangdong, 1979.
- Sun Dayu 孙大雨. *Sun Dayu shiwen ji* 孙大雨诗文集 (Selected Works of Sun Dayu). Ed. Sun Jinren 孙近仁. Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 1996.
- Sun Kegang 孙克刚 et al. *Zhongguo yuanzheng jun zai mian bei* 中国远征军在缅北 (Chinese Expedition Force in North Burma) Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 2002.
- Sun Yushi 孙玉石, ed. *Zhongguo xiandai shi daodu (1917-1938)* 中国现代诗导读 (1917-1938) (A Guide to Modern Chinese Poetry, 1917-1938). Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1990.
- . *Zhongguo xiandai shige yishu* 中国现代诗歌艺术 (The Art of Modern Chinese Poetry). Beijing: Renmin Wenxue chubanshe, 1992.
- . *Zhongguo xiandai zhuyi shichao shilun* 中国现代主义诗潮史论 (A Historical Review of Modernist Poetical Trends in China). Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999.

- Symons, Arthur. *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1919.
- Tang, Xiaobing. *Chinese Modern: The Heroic and the Quotidian*. Durham: Duke UP, 2000.
- . *Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity: the Historical Thinking of Liang Qichao*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996.
- Verlaine, Paul. *Oeuvres poétiques*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1995.
- Vice, Sue. *Introducing Bakhtin*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1997.
- Wang, Ban. *The Sublime Figure of History: Aesthetics and Politics in Twentieth-Century China*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997.
- Wang Benzhaoh 王本朝. *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue zhidu yanjiu* 中国现代文学制度研究 (Study of the Social System of Modern Chinese Literature). Chongqing: Xinan shifandaxue chubanshe, 2002.
- Wang, David Der-wei. *Fictional Realism in Twentieth-Century China: Mao Dun, Lao She, Shen Congwen*. New York: Columbia UP, 1992.
- Wang Guangming 王光明. *Jiannan de zhixiang: "xin shi chao" yu ershi shiji zhongguo xiandai shi* 艰难的指向: “新诗潮”与二十世纪中国现代诗 (A Hard-Wrung Orientation: “New Poetical Trend” and the Twentieth Century Modern Chinese Poetry). Changchun: Shidai wenyi chubanshe, 1993.
- Wang Guowei 王国维 *Renjian cihua* 人间词话 (Remarks on *Ci* Poetry in the Human World). Annotated. 徐调孚. Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1961.
- Wang Jialiang et al. 王嘉良. *Zhongguo Xinwenxue Xianshizhuyi Xingtai Lun* 中国新文学现实主义形态论 (On the Forms of Realism in Chinese “New Literature”). Beijing: Wenhua Yishu chubanshe, 2000.
- Wang Qingbo 王清波. *Shichao yu shishen: zhongguo xiandai shige shanshi nian* 诗潮与诗神: 中国现代诗歌三十年 (Poetical Trend and Muse: Thirty Years of Modern Chinese Poetry). Beijing: Renmin daxue chubanshe, 1989.
- Wang Shengsi 王圣思, ed. *“Jiuye shiren” pinglun ziliao xuan* “九叶诗人”评论资料选 (Selected Criticism on the “Nine Leaves” School). Shanghai: Huadong shifandaxue chubanshe, 1995.
- Wang Xunzhao 王训昭, ed. *Hupan shishe pinlun ziliao xuan* 湖畔诗社评论资料选 (Selected Criticism on Lakeside School). Shanghai: Huadong shifandaxue chubanshe, 1986.
- Wang Yichuan 王一川. *Zhongguo xingxiang shixue* 中国形象诗学 (Chinese Formal Poetics). Shanghai: Shanghai Sanlian shudian, 1998.
- Wang Yuanhua 王元化. *Chuantong yu fan chuantong* 传统与反传统 (Tradition and Antitraditionalism) Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1990.
- Watson, Burton. Trans. *Basic Writings of Mo Tzu, Hsiün Tzu, and Han Fei Tzu*. New York: Columbia UP, 1963.
- . Trans. *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*. New York: Columbia UP, 1968.
- Weinberg, Bernard. *The Limits of Symbolism: Studies of Five Modern French Poets*. Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1966.
- Weiskel, Thomas. *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986.
- Welsh, Andrew. *Roots of Lyric*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978.

- Wen Rumin 温儒敏. *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue piping shi* 中国现代文学批评史 (A History of Modern Chinese Literary Criticism). Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1993.
- Wen Yiduo 闻一多. *Wen Yiduo shi quanbian* 闻一多诗全编, ed. Lan Dizhi 蓝棣之 (Collected Poems of Wen Yiduo). Hangzhou: Zhejiang wenyi chubanshe, 1995.
- . *Wen Yiduo lun xinshi* 闻一多论新诗 (Wen Yiduo on New Poetry). Wuhan: Wuhan daxue chubanshe, 1985.
- Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford UP, 1973.
- . *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Rev. ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1983.
- Woolf, Virginia. *Collected Essays*, Vol 2. London: Hogarth, 1966.
- Wu Kaijin 吴开晋, ed. With Wang Chuanbin 王传斌. *Dangdai shige mingpian shangxi* 当代诗歌名篇赏析 (Appreciating and Interpreting Famous Contemporary Poems). Fuzhou: Haxia wenyi chubanshe, 1986.
- , ed. *Xin shiqi shi chao lun* 新时期诗潮论 (On the Poetical Trends in the New Era). Jinan: Jinan chubanshe, 1991.
- Xiao Xiao 萧萧. *Xiandai xixue* 现代诗学 (Modern Poetics). Taipei: Dongdai tushu youxian gongsi, 1987.
- Xie Mian 谢冕, ed. with Tang, Xiaodu 唐晓渡. *Cichang yu mofang: xinchao shilun juan* 磁场与魔方: 新潮诗论卷 (Magnetic Field and Magic Cube: A New Fashion of Poetic Theory). Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 1993.
- . *Xinshijie de taiyang: ershi shiji zhongguo shichao* 新世纪的太阳---二十世纪中国诗潮 (The Sun of the New Century: Chinese Poetical Trends of the Twentieth Century). Changchun: Shidai wenyi chubanshe, 1993.
- . *Zhongguo xiandai shiren lun* 中国现代诗人论 (On Modern Chinese Poets). Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1986.
- Xin Di 辛笛. *Shouzhang ji* 手掌集 (Palms). Hangzhou: Zhejiang wenyi chubanshe, 1996.
- Xu Shixu 许世旭. *Xinshi lun* 新诗论 (On New Poetry). Taipei: Sanmin Shuju, 1998.
- Xu Ting and Lu Dejun 许霆 鲁德俊. *Xin gelvshi yanjiu* 新格律诗研究 (A Study of New Metrical Poetry). [Yinchuan]: Ningxia renmin chubanshe, 1991.
- Ya Xian (Wang Qinglin) 痙弦 (王庆麟). *Ya Xian shiji* 痙弦诗集 (Poems of Ya Xian). Taipei: Hongfan shudian, 1981.
- , ed. with Jian Zhengzhen 简政珍. *Chuangshiji sishinian pinglun xuan: 1954-1994* 《创世纪》四十年评论选: 1954-1994 (An Anthology of Reviews in Chuangshiji Journal: 1954-1994). Taipei: Chuangshiji zazhishe, 1994.
- Yang Changping 杨昌平. *Xiandaishi de chuanguo yu xinshang* 现代诗的创作与欣赏 (The Composition and Appreciation of Modern Poetry). Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1991.
- Yang Kuanghan 杨匡汉. *Shi mi de jidian yu xuanze* 诗美的积淀与选择 (The Accretion and Selection of Poetical Beauty). Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1987.
- Yang Lianfen 杨联芬. *Wan Qing zhi wu si: zhongguo wenxue xiandaixing de fasheng* 晚清至五四: 中国文学现代性的发生 (From Late Qing to May Fourth: The Emergence of Modernity in Chinese Literature). Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe,

- 2003.
- Yeh, Michelle Mi-Hsi. *Modern Chinese Poetry: Theory and Practice since 1917*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1991.
- Yin Fu 殷夫. *Yin Fu ji* 殷夫集 (Collected Works of Yin Fu). Hangzhou: Zhejiang wenyi chubanshe, 1984.
- Yip, Wai-lim 叶维廉. *Cong xianxiang dao biao xian* 从现象到表现 (From Phenomenology to Expression). Taipei: Dadong tushu chubanshe, 1994.
- . *Ezra Pound's Cathay*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969.
- You Youji 游有基. *Jiuye shipai yanjiu* 九叶诗派研究 (A Study of the Nine Leaves School). Fuzhou: Fujian jiaoyu chubanshe, 1997.
- . *Zhongguo xiandai shichao yu liupai* 中国现代诗潮与流派 (Trends and Schools of Modern Chinese Poetry). Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 1993.
- Yu, Pauline. *The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic tradition*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987.
- Yu Yingshi 余英时. *Zhongguo jindai sixiangshi shang de Hu Shi* 中国近代思想史上的胡适 (Hu Shi in Modern Chinese Intellectual History). Taipei: Jinjian chuban Shiye gongshi, 1984.
- Yuan Kejia 袁可嘉. *Lun xinshi de xiandaihua* 论新诗现代化 (On the Modernization of New Poetry). Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1988.
- Yue Dayun and Wang Ning 乐黛云 王宁. Ed. *Xifang wenyi sichao yu ershishiji Zhongguo wenxue* 西方文艺思潮与二十世纪中国文学 (Western Literary and Artistic Trends and Twentieth Century Chinese Literature). Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1990.
- Zang Kejia 臧克家. *Kejia lun shi* 克家论诗 (Kejia on Poetry). Ed. Wu Jia 吴嘉. Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1985.
- . *Zang Kejia wenji* 臧克家文集 (Works of Zang Kejia). 6 vols. Jinan: Shandong wenyi chubanshe, 1985.
- Zhang Dehou 张德厚. *Zhongguo xiandai shige shilun* 中国现代诗歌史论 (A Historical Study of Modern Chinese Poetry). Changchun: Jilin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1995.
- Zhang Jian 张健. *Zhongguo xiandai shi* 中国现代诗 (Modern Chinese Poetry). Taipei: Wunan tushu chubanshe, 1984.
- Zhang, Longxi. *Mighty Opposites: From Dichotomies to Differences in the Comparative Study of China*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1998.
- . *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West*. Durham: Duke UP, 1992.
- Zhang Xinyin 张新颖. *Ershishiji shangbanqi Zhongguo wenxue de xiandaiyishi* 20 世纪上半期中国文学的现代意识 (Modern Consciousness in Early Twentieth Century Chinese Literature). Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2001.
- Zhang, Yingjin. *The City in Modern Chinese Literature and Film: Configuration of Space, Time, and Gender*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996.
- , ed. *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai, 1922-1943*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999.
- Zhang, Zao. "Development and Continuity of Modernism in Poetry." *Inside Out: Modernism and Postmodernism in Chinese Literary Culture*. Ed. Wendy Larson and Anne Wedell-Wedellsborg. Aarhus, Den.: Aarhus UP, 1993. 38-59.



- 
- Zhongguo xin wenxue da xi, 1927-1937 di shisi ji: shiji* 中国新文学大系 1927-1937 第十四集：诗集 (Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature 1927-1937, vol. 14: Poetry). Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi, 1985.
- Zhou, Cezong (Chow Tse-tsung). *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1960.
- Zhu Guangcan 朱光灿. *Zhongguo xiandai shige shi* 中国现代诗歌史 (A History of Modern Chinese Poetry). Jinan: Shandong daxue chubanshe, 1997.
- Zhu Guangqian 朱光潜. *Zhu Guangqian piping wenji* 朱光潜批评文集 (Critical Writings of Zhu Guangqian). Zhuhai: Zhuhai chubanshe, 1998.
- Zhu Xian 祝宪. *Wusi xinshishi* 五四新诗史 (A History of New Poetry in the May Fourth Era). Xi'an: Shaanxi shifandaxue chubanshe, 1987.
- Zhuang Rourü 庄柔玉. *Zhongguo dangdai menglongshi yanjiu: cong kunjing dao tanshuo* 中国当代朦胧诗研究：从困境到探索 (A Study of Contemporary Chinese "Vague" Poetry: From Dilemma to Exploration). Taipei: Da'an chubanshe, 1993.
- Zhu zi jicheng* 诸子集成 (Magni Opera of Ancient Chinese Thinkers). 8 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1954.
- Žižek, Slavoj. *The Plague of Fantasies*. London: Verso, 1997.

## Curriculum Vita

Xin Ning

### Educational Backgrounds:

**October, 2008:** Ph. D., Graduate Program in Comparative Literature, Rutgers University  
**September, 2000 – October, 2008:** Ph.D. student, Graduate Program in Comparative Literature, Rutgers University  
**May, 2000:** M.A. Beijing Foreign Studies University, English and American Literature  
**September, 1997 – May, 2000:** Graduate Program, English Department, Beijing Foreign Studies University  
**May, 1997:** B.A. Beijing Foreign Studies University, English Language and Literature  
**September, 1993 – May, 1997:** English Department, Beijing Foreign Studies University (Beijing, China)

### Principal Occupations and Positions:

**2007-2008:** Visiting Assistant Professorship, Asian Studies Program, Sewanee, The University of the South  
**2006-2007:** Dissertation Teaching Assistantship, Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, Rutgers University  
**2005-2006:** Dissertation Teaching Assistantship, Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, Rutgers University  
**2002-2003, 2003-2004:** Teaching Assistantship, Graduate Program in Comparative Literature, Rutgers University

### Publications:

“Ziran de liubian: jianlun bijiao shiye zhong de xiandaixing” 自然的流变：兼论比较视野中的现代性 (The Evolution of Nature: On Modernity in Comparative Context). In *Zhongguo wenxue: chuantong yu xiandai de duihua* 中国文学：传统与现代的对话 (Chinese Literature: Dialogues between Tradition and Modernity), ed. Zhang Hongsheng and Qian Nanxiu, Shanghai: Shanghai guji 上海古籍, 2007, 424-440.

---

“Political Lyrics.” In *Revolutionary Discourse in China: Words and Their Stories*, ed. Ban Wang, Netherland: Brill, forthcoming

“Reading *Er shi si shi pin* in the Postmodern Age: Some New Angles of Observation.” In Cheng Aimin and Yang Lixin, eds. *Comparative Literature in the Cross-cultural Context*. Nanjing [China]: Yilin Press 译林, 2003: 217-226.

“Nine Leaves: Chinese Reception of Modernist Poetry in the 1940s.” *Exit 9: The Rutgers Graduate Journal of Comparative Literature* 4:1 (2002): 29-37.

“Eugene O’Neill *Changri ruye xing zhong de wenxuexing yinyu*” 尤金 奥尼尔《长日入夜行》中的文学性引喻 Literary Allusions in Eugene O’Neill’s *Long Day’s Journey into Night*” *Waiguo wenxue pinglun* 外国文学评论 ([Beijing]Foreign Literature Review) 4 (2000): 69-77.

“Xiandai xifang Pound yanjiu shuping” 现代西方庞德研究述评 Contemporary Studies of Ezra Pound in the West. *Dangdai waiguo wenxue* 当代外国文学 ([Nanjing] Contemporary Foreign Literature) 2 (2000): 125-133.