

Belief, History and the Individual  
in Modern Chinese Literary Culture



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in Modern Chinese Literary Culture

Edited by

Artur K. Wardega, S.J.

**CAMBRIDGE  
SCHOLARS**

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P U B L I S H I N G

Belief, History and the Individual in Modern Chinese Literary Culture,  
Edited by Artur K. Wardega, S.J.

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*To Fr. Luís Sequeira, S.J.,  
and my Friends in Macao*

獻給呂碩基神父和澳門的朋友們

*Je ne suis pas responsable de ce  
que j'ai créé : virtus de illo exibat.*

—Georges Bernanos

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## PREFACE

The ten articles in this book originated in the Macau Ricci Institute's Symposium on "The Individual and Society in Modern Chinese Literature", which took place in November 2007 with the aim of reviewing and re-evaluating the present state of literature in China. Neither the symposium nor the published proceedings would have been possible without a generous grant from the Fundação Macau; in addition, the Banco Nacional Ultramarino and Fundação Oriente are among many others who also contributed generously. Thanks to this financial support, it was possible to bring together participants from mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and abroad.

We are also grateful to the symposium's organizing committee, chaired by Artur Wardega and Luís Sequeira; our coordinators, Peter Cheng Wai-ming, Fernando Sales Lopes and Zeng Yuan; our staff, Yves Camus, Dave M. L. Cheung, César Guillén-Núñez, Jerónimo Hung, Josiana Lee, Gary Lei, Sandy Lei and Tereza Sena; our interpreters Wang Dan and Zhang Ling; and our MC, Brent Johnson.

The conference was fortunate to have in attendance many distinguished Chinese and Western scholars, including Cao Jing, Chen Wenye, Eugene Eoyang Chen, Ge Tao, Ho Wai Kit, Jiang Xiangyuan, Jin Siyan, Wolfgang Kubin, Lam Lai Sing, Leung Ping-kwan, Li Jinchao, Li Sher-shiueh, Lin Gang, Liu Guangyao, Mao Sihui, Bonnie S. McDougall, Shen Shuang, Keith Tester, Glenn Timmermans, Sebastian Veg, Tudor Vlădescu, Wu Xiaoming, Yang Jianlong, Yee Lai Man and Zhang Yesong. Three eminent Jesuit philosophers who kindly served as discussants, Thierry Meynard, Edmund Ryden and Dominique Tyl, and Professor Liu Dong and Mr. Patrick Li Feng, who traveled from Beijing to Macau to attend our preparatory meeting, enhanced the formal program and contributed their insider's knowledge and expertise.

A large body of writers, poets, literary journalists and critics, including Ah Cheng, Bei Dao, He Xi, Lu Yang, Su Qiqi, Wang Xiaoyu, Artur Wardega and Zeng Yuan, enlivened and informed the papers in this volume in their

open-floor contributions to the discussion and informal conversations outside the conference hall.

An integral part of the symposium was the MRI Literary Salon, held in the elegant surroundings of the Salon of the Clube Militar de Macau. As well as those mentioned above who contributed to this event, we would like to express our gratitude to the Macau poets who read from their recent work in Portuguese, Chinese and English: Cheng Wai-ming, Huang Wenhui, He Lingsheng, Alberto Estima de Oliveira, Lu Jiehua, Gao Ge, Fernando Sales Lopes, Shu Wang, Zhuang Wenyong, Fernanda Dias, Yi Ling, Wei Ming, Silveira Machado and Yao Feng; we also thank the readers who assisted with the translated versions: Ana Duarte, Fernando Sales Lopes, Helder Fernando, Huang Wenhui, Liu Yuelian, Miguel Senna Fernandes and Stella Lee. Special thanks are due to our local artists, Mio Pang Fei and Konstantin Bessmertny, who graciously entrusted us with their paintings, and to the musicians of the Macau String Trio e Amigos, who's playing charmed the audience with Oriental and Portuguese music. The occasion allowed our visitors a fascinating glimpse into the cultural delights of Macau.

The academic leadership of Artur Wardega, Zeng Yuan and the staff of the Macau Ricci Institute played an invaluable part in making both conference and volume possible. Betty Wei Peh T'i, Leung Ping-kwan and Eugene Eoyang Chen supported the project from its early stage and gave us valuable suggestions on substantive issues. Mr. Gary Lei assisted us throughout with logistical support. The MRI is especially grateful to Bonnie S. McDougall for her help in the selection and revision of the papers in this volume and for her contributions to preparing the present publication.

Macau Ricci Institute  
Macau, April 2009

# INTRODUCTION

ARTUR K. WARDEGA, S.J.

A value system in constant change; a longing for stability amid uncertainties about the future; a new consciousness about the unlimited challenges and aspirations in modern life: these are themes in modern Chinese literature that attract the attention of overseas readers as well as its domestic audience. They also provide Chinese and foreign literary researchers with complex questions about human life and achievements that search beyond national identities for global interaction and exchange. This volume presents ten outstanding essays by Chinese and European scholars who have undertaken such exchange for the purpose of examining the individual and society in modern Chinese literature.

## **Jesuit Contributions to Sino-European Dialogue**

The Sino-European dialogue represented in this book has a history of several centuries. The Jesuit order initiated such a dialogue in China in the final years of the Ming dynasty, based on knowledge and belief, arts and letters, language skills and communication, friendship and diplomacy. This immensely influential intercultural encounter was established through and from Macau, the City of the Name of God; it is the mission of the Macau Ricci Institute to promote and further such exchanges.

One measure of Jesuit contributions to European understanding of China is its record in producing dictionaries and translations of Chinese classics. It can't be said too often that the first bi-lingual Chinese dictionary (Portuguese-Chinese) was compiled by Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) and Michele Ruggieri (1543-1607) in 肇庆 Zhaoqing in 1588. The Latin version of the *Book of Changes* by Jean-Baptiste Régis (1664-1738) and his Jesuit companions dates from the first half of the eighteenth century, although it was not published until 1832. The Confucian *Analects* was translated into Latin in the late seventeenth century (1687) by another team of Jesuits and subsequently appeared in French and English versions in 1688 and 1691 respectively. Jean-Baptiste du Halde's *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique de l'empire de la*

*Chine*, published in four volumes in 1735, an epitome of the work of Jesuits of the previous century and a half, was translated into English twice in succession in 1736 and in 1738. These works are considered as the first European anthologies of translations from the Chinese. Apart from the Jesuit order, Protestant missionaries of the early nineteenth century were also active in Macau: for example, Robert Morrison's *A Dictionary of the Chinese Language in Three Parts* and *A Grammar of the Chinese Language* were written in Macau between 1815 and 1823. The culmination of these efforts was a seven-volume Chinese-French dictionary completed towards the end of the twentieth century: *Le Grand Dictionnaire Ricci de la Langue Chinoise* (DDB, Paris, 2001), compiled by a team of Jesuit sinologists and based on Fr. Jean Lefeuve's, S.J. (雷煥章) lifelong research on 甲骨文 *Jia guwen* (oracle bone inscriptions). As these few examples show, Jesuit scholars have made immense contributions to Chinese lexicography and bibliography from the very beginning of the Jesuit mission in China.

Until quite recently, nevertheless, few if any of these remarkable achievements have been related to Chinese literature, even modern Chinese literature. A seminal work in this respect is a voluminous book on 吳漁山 Wu Yushan, published in the MRI Studies Series in 2006. A famous late Ming and early Qing literati painter, Wu Yushan became a Jesuit priest, and during his seminarian studies in Macau (1680/81 to 1683) he wrote first Christian poetry in Chinese.<sup>1</sup> Since 2004 a good number of articles and reviews on modern Chinese literature has been published by the MRI bilingual quarterly journal 神州交流 *Chinese Cross Currents*. The present volume adds to this encouraging new trend.

## Chinese-Western Literary Relations

With its newfound economic growth and cultural revival, Chinese literature seems to have regained its once-faltering dynamic. Responding to readers' concerns, contemporary fiction, poetry and drama reflect upon what is at stake for the individual person involved in social changes in the cities and in the countryside. Modern literature bears witness to the construction of new identities in a new Chinese society. While continuously searching for fresh, innovative ways of expression, modern writers also return to China's ancient classics and millenary traditions. This rediscovery of the past is a necessary step in repudiating some of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Culture, Art, Religion: Wu Li (1632-1718) and His Inner Journey*, Macau, Macau Ricci Institute, 2006, pp. 511.

shortcomings in twentieth century Chinese culture. It has also encouraged new interest in Chinese literature by readers abroad.

This revival of interest in Chinese culture, most noticeable in fiction and film, dates back to the middle of the 1980s. The most prominent example is probably the novel *Hong gaoliang jiazu* (The Red Sorghum Clan, 1986) by Mo Yan (1956-) and its filmed version *Hong gaoliang* (Red Sorghum, 1987), directed by Zhang Yimou (1950-). The trend towards multiculturalism at the turn of the century is represented by *Xiao cai feng* (Balzac and Little Seamstress, 2002), written and transferred to the screen by Dai Sijie (1954- ), a French writer and film maker. Chinese literature abroad attained its apogee in a series of spectacular distinctions given to Chinese writers, such as the Nobel Prize for Literature awarded to Gao Xingjian (1940-) citing his novel *Lingshan* (Soul Mountain, 2000), the French order of Chevalier Arts et Culture de France to Han Shaogong (1953-) in 2002 for *Maqiao cidian* (A Dictionary of Maqiao, 1996), and an armchair among the forty “immortals” under the dome of the French Academy to 程抱一 Cheng Baoyi (François Cheng, 1929-) in 2002.

The official Chinese reaction to such acclaim has been cold; many of the writers who found audiences abroad were dismissed as troublemakers and dissidents, accused of pandering to debased Western myths about China. Even among Chinese intellectuals there remained a suspicion that eighteenth century *chinoiserie* or *cuentos chinos* still governed Western taste, and that (in Eugene Chen Eoyang’s phrase) Westerners preferred a China that was not entirely Chinese.<sup>2</sup>

## The Individual and Society in Modern Chinese Literature

The interaction between individual and society had already become a topic of literary writing in the late imperial era, the closing years of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth. It was around this time that Chinese writers identified “*le mal chinois*” as the country’s most serious problem. Written under the pseudonym 東亞病夫 *Dongya bingfu* (The Sick Man of East Asia), the 1905 novel *Nie Hai Hua* (Flowers on the Ocean of Sin) by 曾樸 Zeng Pu (1872-1935) took as its main subject a careful examination of the Chinese conscience. The author concluded that 中國人民是自作自愛 *Zhongguoren shi zizuo ziai* (Chinese people suffer the consequences of their own deeds). As Wang Xiaoyu shows in his essay

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<sup>2</sup> Eugene Chen Eoyang, “Cuentos Chinos (“Chinese Tales”) The New Chinoiserie,” in 神州交流 *Chinese Cross Currents*, 4.2, April 2007, pp. 95-113.

“From Red Idealism to Bloody Romanticism. A Study of Old Devil’s biographical writing”, this theme was revived in the last decades of the century.

The novel *Xuese huanghun* (A Bloody Dusk) by Lao Gui (Old Devil) recounts the initiation process of an educated young man who loves his mother and rejects his father. At the very beginning, the protagonist, lured by red idealism, makes a voluntary decision to settle down in the remote border area. The realities that confront him there lead him to question the patriarchal system still embedded in modern Chinese society. Underlying themes of oedipal love, castration and incest are given additional significance by the parallel plot structure of a famous 1950s novel written by Old Devil’s mother, Yang Mo. To Old Devil, the spiritual void in the earlier work must be filled by his own narrative. An even more innovative explorer of human resilience under extreme pressure was Wang Xiaobo (1952-1997), the subject of two essays in this volume. In “Utopian Fiction and Critical Examination: The Cultural Revolution in Wang Xiaobo’s *The Golden Age*”, Sebastian Veg begins by paying tribute to contemporary fiction as ‘the only public venue for reflection on the significance of the events of 1966-1976’; while in Wang’s fiction, these events appear ‘within a larger historical pattern in which the individual is repeatedly a victim of power structures of various kinds.’ As Ah Cheng had already noted in stories such as *Qi wang* (The King of Chess, 1984), the social disruption set in motion by Cultural Revolution provided opportunities for individuals to escape social oppression. In comparison to his predecessor’s intermittently idyllic vision, however, Wang Xiaobo’s interpretations of this world are often brutal.

Chen Wenye, in “Blending Past and Present: Wang Xiaobo’s *The Bronze Age*”, focuses on Wang Xiaobo’s experimental treatment of history. The stories Wang borrows from the past are ‘stripped of their historicity’, coming ‘under the control of the present as determined by the narrator’s will.’ Abandoning notions of objectivity and historical progress, Wang instead favours subjectivity and contingency. In conclusion, Chen quotes Wang’s three famous hypotheses: ‘all human beings love wisdom; all human beings love the opposite sex; and all human beings love play.’

### **Redefinitions of Humanism and Debates on ‘Human Nature’**

The launch of a new literature in China was promoted by the patriotic student movement of May 4th 1919, which in addition to its political demands sought a new approach to the national language and its literature.

With such writers as Lu Xun (1881-1936) and his brother Zhou Zuoren (1885-1967), twentieth century literary circles introduced wide-ranging discussions on humanism, human nature and the place of the individual in society. The 1930s debate between Leftist writers and Liang Shiqiu (1903-1987) over human nature and class character represented the conflicting ideological concepts in the thought of Leftist intellectuals and liberal intellectuals. Yang Jianlong shows in “Debates over the Theory of Human Nature in the History of Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature” how these discussions took on a more threatening cast in the debates of the 1950s and 1960s, as Mao Zedong’s insistence on the class nature of all human actions became the only acceptable thesis on human nature. It was not until the 1980s that it became possible again for a genuine dialogue to emerge. In these debates, much of the terminology was coded to express support for or dissent from the prevailing political line. Thus, the expressions ‘human nature’ and ‘human feelings’ were shorthand terms that suggest a pluralist approach to ideologies and beliefs. The debate continues into the present time with different terminologies and varied points of view.

Over the same time-scale as the debates on human nature, dogmatism replaced research on the history of modern Chinese literature. For many decades, the orthodox approach claimed that Republican literature was predominantly realistic and left-wing. The first full-length novel of the new literary movement, for example, Ye Shengtao’s *Ni Huanzhi* (1927), has hitherto been labelled a pioneering work of Western-style realism (and for that reason, now often neglected). In a re-evaluation of the novel, Wolfgang Kubin’s essay “The Bogeyman—German Melancholy and Chinese Restlessness: Ye Shengtao’s novel *Ni Huanzhi* ” reveals an acutely perceptive study of melancholy and ennui that brings Chinese and European modernism into the same spiritual universe. The predicament of the modern hero in Ye Shengtao’s novel is a kind of ‘transcendental homelessness’ in which the hero himself is a seeker, a wanderer, and a questioner of his own existence.

A different quest characterises contemporary writing by Chinese women, according to Jin Siyan’s essay, “Rigidity and Disappearance of the ‘Self’ as the Main Theme in Modern Chinese Women’s Literature”. This study combines three approaches: textual analysis, historiography and cultural criticism. Taking inspiration from her own subjects Xiao Hong, Zhang Ailing and especially Lin Bai, Jin sets up a multi-layered space in which critics of various languages and cultures may engage in debate or

reflect on common issues together unrestrained by any boundaries.

Among the many writers such as Lu Xun, Mo Yan and Yu Hua who dwell on physical suffering and illness as a metaphor for Chinese society in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it is also worthy of note that other voices have also been raised to express the philosophical values of religious belief. Such writers as Shi Tiesheng (1951- ) and Haizi (1964-1989) represent a spiritual renewal based on Christian inspiration and Chinese spiritual traditions. Liu Guangyao shows in his article “Two Ways of Development for Christian Poetry in Post-Haizi China: Between Chinese Tradition and Modern Westernization” that these voices can still be heard above the cacophony of mass literary production in China today. After decades of destruction, enslavement and consumerism, these examples show how Chinese writers strive to fulfill their role in revealing the human condition and finding an appropriate language to convey human feelings.

Finally, a unique feature of this collection is its investigations of literature in Macau and Hong Kong. Tudor Vlădescu intriguingly suggests in his “Literature as Phoenix: A Case Study of a Macau Book-lover’s Collection” that the literary culture of Macau can be traced through imaginative reconstructions of a private library established by a Macanese resident and subsequently bequeathed to a public institution. His curious glimpses into reading history demonstrate that a book’s date of publication is only the beginning of its social and individual impact. Leung Ping-kwan, a noted translator as well as a poet, essayist and academic, gives a vivid account based on his personal experience in “Poetry Writing and Translation”, revealing the process in which individual openness to other cultures can transform literary prospects in a closed, inward-looking society unsure of its own identity. In similar vein, Bonnie S. McDougall’s “Diversity as Value: Marginality, Post-colonialism and Identity in Modern Chinese Literature” shows how the marginality and diversity that mark Hong Kong society also make its literature a fascinating and productive subject of study. These same attributes both build on and contribute to Chinese and European humanistic traditions. As a bonus, Hong Kong fiction and poetry, whether in English or Chinese, can be an unending source of reading pleasure.



# I

PAINFUL BEGINNINGS:  
FROM THE VIOLENCE OF HISTORY  
TO A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE



中国现代文学中的  
个人与社会

CHAPTER ONE

FROM RED IDEALISM  
TO BLOODY ROMANTICISM:  
A STUDY OF OLD DEVIL'S  
BIOGRAPHICAL WRITING<sup>1</sup>

王晓渔 WANG XIAOYU

杨沫 Yang Mo and her son 老鬼 Lao Gui (literally, Old Devil) are known for their novels 青春之歌 “Qingchun zhi ge” (The Song of Youth, 1958) and 血色黄昏 “Xuese huanghun” (A Bloody Dusk, 1987). They describe in these two autobiographical works the initiation processes experienced respectively by a young woman and a young man, 林道静 Lin Daojing and 林胡 Lin Hu.<sup>2</sup> These protagonists, although separated by an interval of nearly thirty years, share similar experiences. In Yang Mo's novel, Lin Daojing took part in the December Ninth movement of 1935 whereas Lin Hu, in Old Devil's *Bloody Dusk* took part in the Cultural Revolution. Their initiation in both cases represents a thorough spiritual transformation.

Yang Mo is best known as an orthodox but sentimental novelist of the 1950s. In 母亲杨沫 “Muqin Yang Mo” (Yang Mo, My Mother, 2005), Old Devil states that his mother was always in search of a “father figure”. According to Old Devil, “Yang Mo was like an orphan when she was

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<sup>1</sup> The author is deeply indebted to Professor 林岗 Lin Gang for his kind suggestions in the revision of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> In the “Foreword” written in 1996 for the revised edition of *A Bloody Dusk*, Old Devil says that “Comrade 冯牧 Feng Mu, a veteran writer and literary critic, suggested that I avoid using rare characters for names of the protagonists. That is why I have changed the name of the character Gong Linhu 公林胡 to 林胡 Lin Hu.” See Old Devil, “Forward” in 血色黄昏 *Xuese huanghun*, revised edition, Beijing, Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1997.

young”. The word “orphan” (an identity commonly held by revolutionary youth) does not necessarily imply that the person thus called must have lost his or her parents. Instead, it is used to refer to the spiritual nihilism prevalent at that time. The young people who took part in the December Ninth movement are confronted with a double deprivation: the possible subjugation of their country and the destruction of their families. These factors prompted them to seek a spiritual father, who also embodies communist ideals. Both novels conclude with the protagonists sacrificing themselves for the sake of this political and spiritual father. In *The Song of Youth*, Lin Daojing seeks a man who will be a husband as well as a father figure, moving from the poet 余永泽 Yu Yongze to a communist revolutionary, 卢嘉川 Lu Jiachuan. In *A Bloody Dusk* a young man deeply attached to his mother makes a voluntary decision to settle down in the frontier area. There, his ideals are replaced during the course of a torrid romance by the vision of a goddess, and although he comes to understand that his new ideal does not correspond to the reality, his love is unshaken.

The outcomes in the two novels are very different: Lin Daojing finds both romance and revolutionary ardor, while Lin Hu loses both. As the authors of these novels, the son is more reflective than his mother, but his self-criticism is still linked with the logic of “complaint”.

## On the Way

### (1)

Early in the morning, a through train bound eastward from 北平 Beiping to 沈阳 Shenyang was rattling through the vast green country. Lush crops, clear rivers, yellow mud houses and tall electric poles ... flashed past as the passengers looked out of the windows.

Having breathed an abundance of fresh air, and getting tired of looking out of the windows, the passengers began to pull back their heads. Some were yawning; others started to look for fresh things in the carriage. Soon all their eyes fell on a small roll of luggage, because wrapped in the bundle were a two-stringed fiddle, a vertical bamboo flute, and a horizontal bamboo flute carefully folded in a piece of beautiful white silk fabric. Next to the bundle were neatly arranged a guitar, a mandolin, a lute and bamboo pipe.... Some kind of music instrument peddler? The eyes of the passengers were raised to the owner of the luggage. To their surprise, the owner was not a peddler, but a student, probably in her late teens, who was sitting alone by these elegant things. She was wearing a short machine-woven white dress, white cotton socks and white sports shoes, and was holding a plain white handkerchief in her hand. In short, she was dressed from head to foot in white. Without any companion, she was seated

alone on the hard wooden seat in the corner of the carriage, gazing quietly out of the window. Her face, in contrast with its big shining black eyes, looked a bit pale. This simple, solitary beautiful girl caught the attention of the passengers, especially the men, who began to whisper to each other about her. But she didn't seem to have noticed anyone or have felt anything, engrossed as she was in her long apathetic meditation.

The passengers in the carriage were all the more astonished by her strange appearance, startling beauty and odd conduct, not to mention her musical instruments. Gradually, she became the butt of their gossip.

...

When the train arrived at 北戴河 Beidaihe Station, she got off, carrying her musical instruments with her. She had no other luggage. The eyes of the passengers left behind on the train followed her with amazement and regret as she walked out of the station.

## (2)

### Late November, 1968

After getting off the train at 张家口 Zhangjiakou, we walked northward along the highway that extended as far as our eyes could see. Since the Red Guards started to travel throughout China, going to schools, universities and institutions to spread the teachings of Chairman Mao, we had learned to be more skillful at jumping aboard moving trucks for a ride. Whenever we could get a free ride, we took a ride. When we couldn't, we walked instead. Anyway, this was the way to ally ourselves with the workers, peasants and soldiers. It was absolutely correct to act this way. And we believed that with our skills, we could stop a truck sooner or later.

The distance from Zhangjiakou to 张北 Zhangbei was about eighty kilometers. After getting out of Zhangbei, we reached 坝上 Bashang on the Inner Mongolian Plateau, where we felt the immediate chill. All four of us wore the blue cotton-padded hats popular in the 1950s, our frost-covered earflaps pulled down over our ears. The wilderness beyond the Great Wall was as desolate we'd expected from its reputation. There were few people along the rugged sandy highway from Zhangbei to 宝昌 Baochang. All that met the eye in this bleak landscape were farmhouses among the barren hills.

We trudged along the bitter cold, carrying our backpacks. The winding highway seemed to have no end, and there was almost no traffic on the road. Suddenly we heard a vehicle approaching behind us. 雷厦 Lei Xia stood in the middle of the road, waving his hands. A Liberation truck screeched to a halt in front of him.

"You want to die?" the driver yelled.

"Comrade, please give us a ride," shouted Lei Xia, as he stepped toward the driver's cabin trying to keep his dignity.

“No way.”

So saying, the driver stepped on the accelerator and the truck roared past us. We spat angrily at the vanishing truck, calling the driver a bastard before we continued our march toward the distant north.

The sky turned darker. There was not a shadow to be seen in the wild country. Only the piercing wind and scattering snowflakes kept us company.

Initiation novels usually start with a stage where the protagonist (a Nora type figure) leaves home, followed by the second step: “on the way”. The passages cited above which open *The Song of Youth* and *A Bloody Dusk* respectively, show that the reasons for Lin Daojing and Lin Hu leaving home are not the same. Lin Daojing’s mother, a child bride, lost her husband before he came of age. Lin Daojing herself was fathered by a landlord who had raped her mother. According to the bloodline theory that was propagated in the first decades of the PRC, Lin Daojing has a mixed inheritance; she is the bastard offspring of town and country, peasant and landowner. According to this theory, the tension inherent in such offspring caused them endless conflicts as they grew up, compared with children born into a genuine revolutionary family. Lin Daojing is escaping a forced marriage. In addition, she has embarked on a journey to “search for a father or husband”.

Lin Hu leaves home as his parents come under attack. His father is suspected of being a traitor, and his mother is believed to be a fake Communist. In contrast to Lin Daojing, Lin Hu chooses to leave home out of misguided idealism. Born into a revolutionary family later accused of “political impurity”, Lin Hu is determined to break with his parents and dedicate himself to the cause of world revolution. Lin Hu opposes the bloodline theory on the one hand, because he is unhappy about being regarded as impure, but at the same time he also cherishes it because his family is still regarded as revolutionary. In this “dialectical” situation, people choose whichever alternative becomes more convenient.

Readers first see Lin Daojing through the eyes of her fellow-passengers. When she frees herself from the passengers’ gaze as she steps off the train, however, readers are presented with a different perspective on the fashionably dressed student. In *The Song of Youth*, Yang Mo has employed an omniscient narrative which allows her to have “a third eye” that follows her physical movements as it penetrates her inner world. This change in perspective reminds readers that “growth” is a process of self-denial. It also reminds them of the authority of the “third eye”. The purpose of Lin Daojing’s trip is to look for her cousin, only to discover that her cousin has moved elsewhere. Although she had had a

clear goal when she boarded the train, she is now totally lost, and the dangers that she is to experience afterwards are the consequences.

To Lin Hu, however, his ultimate goal is not a problem. The only approved way for his generation is “to take the path of combining with the workers, peasants, and soldiers”. Like Xuanzang and his three disciples in *Journey to the West*, he and his friends believe that their future is bright although the road to it is winding. It is because of this goal that he starts to wage a class struggle on 贡哥勒 Gong Gele, a meek landowner. But while Lin Hu is determined to catch and kill the landowner’s dog, a poor peasant stands up to take the landowner’s side. Discovering that the formerly clear categories in class analysis are blurred in real life, he loses his faith, and without consciously choosing to do so, he finds himself on the other side. Consequently, he is labeled an “active anti-revolutionary”.

### **Masturbation, Homosexuality and the Goddess**

“Who are our friends and who are our enemies?” These are the questions that need to be addressed on the revolutionary road. On his journey to India to seek the Buddhist scriptures, Xuanzang achieved his purpose thanks to the protection provided by his three disciples. His journey was a quest for both scriptures and comrades. Although Lin Hu had formed a bond with Lei Xia, 金刚 Jin Gang and 吴山顶 Wu Shanding before they went on their journey together, he was not very familiar with Jin or Wu, and following the interference of a third party his relation with Lei Xia had soured.

Lin Hu remained solitary for a long time. At first, he identified solitude with bravery and strength, but moral qualities such as bravery and strength cannot were not enough to overcome his physical needs. In contrast to Xuanzang and two of his three disciples, who practiced chastity with ease, Lin Hu discovered he had a growing interest in the opposite sex. In traditional Chinese culture, martial heroes are apparently impervious to lustful urges; only talented scholars consorted with beautiful women. In Maoist China, that kind of romantic relationship was regarded as petty bourgeois sentimentality. Considering his interest in the opposite sex as depraved, Lin Hu made a written self-criticism of his impure thoughts while he was still at high school. He discovered two main forms of distraction: masturbation and homosexuality; together, they occupied all of Lin Hu’s leisure time. One of the best-known sayings of Mao Zedong is “The meanest are the most intelligent whereas the noblest are the most stupid.” This statement is now generally regarded as perverse. For an idealist such as Lin Hu, however, his constant resort to masturbation and

homosexually was psychologically extremely damaging.

Of these two secret practices, masturbation seemed to him the more depraved, violating his original intention in coming to the borderland. In contrast, homosexuality, seen as a quest for comradeship, was a more effective and proper choice. It is no coincidence that the word “comrade” has gained a new usage in contemporary China as a form of address among homosexuals. The dual meaning was significant in the developing new relationship between Lin Hu and Lei Xia. The friendship between the two young men moved to a different level, for example, when they pledged not to form any new relationships with women. Lin Hu described their relationship as follows: “A mysterious feeling, just as in your first love, hovers over us.” Although there is no physical contact between them, their emotional life becomes wholly homosexual. When Lei Xia is about to give a present to one of their young female colleagues, Lin Hu tells him in a fit of jealousy that she does not like him. On another occasion, Lin Hu bursts into tears at the sight of a lavish meal, reminded of Lei Xia’s famished existence, with steamed buns and cabbage his only sustenance. His mother immediately suspected a homosexual relationship, which Lin Hu did not deny: “Indeed, he is the man I love the most in my life.”

In Chinese communist doctrine, homosexuality is negative while comradeship is positive. Homosexuality without physical contact, however, can still be included in the category of comradeship. As a result, masturbation became a far greater pressure on Lin Hu. While masturbation satisfied his biological need, homosexuality met his spiritual need. However, both practices led to his downfall when he was declared an “active anti-revolutionary” and arrested on a false charge. His diary provided evidence of masturbation, while his relationship with Lei Xia disintegrated under pressure of interrogations to force confessions from them.

At this low point in his life, Lin Hu resumed his former habit of fantasizing about women. 韦小立 Wei Xiaoli, daughter of a former provincial party secretary, was also an outcast, her father having died as a result of persecution and the family home ransacked by Red Guards. At a time when Lin Hu’s situation had taken a turn for the worse and neither masturbation nor homosexuality offered solace, she appeared to him as a goddess descended from heaven. As sexual fantasy requires an object for projection, Wei Xiaoli became Lin Hu’s “hope in a state of bitter suffering”. The privilege of imagination lies in the fact that it does not require the permission of the imagined person. Although Wei Xiaoli in reality remained unresponsive, her silence provided Lin Hu with an enormous space for imagination. In his eyes, Wei Xiaoli possessed

qualities that were entirely different from her other women colleagues. In the past, any woman would do as the object of Lin Hu's fantasies, including the wife of the local landowner. However, there was nothing sexual in his fantasies about Wei Xiaoli. He never touched her with lust in his heart, and her physical appearance was unimportant to him. Instead, he regarded her with the respect due to a goddess, and he would not dream of thinking her ugly, no more than if she were his mother.

Old Devil, when he was preparing a revised edition of the novel added an extra detail about Lin Hu's sexual life. Just before he left for the borderlands, Lin Hu had his first sexual experience with a young female student. This addition makes good psychological sense. The student and the goddess, like masturbation and homosexuality, provide relief for Lin Hu from the moral and spiritual problems that plagued his solitary existence. The division of labour is very precise, since the student, who is endowed with prominent sexual characteristics, had made the first move.

Lin Hu, however, had no particular sympathy for the student, using her only for sexual release. In *Yang Mo, My Mother*, Old Devil reveals that ten years after his mother left him, he still wore his mother's thick woolen hat in winter, occasionally put on his mother's nylon stockings and baggy underwear, and covered himself with his mother's big eiderdown jacket when he took his daily siesta; also, that he has kept his mother's lipstick since her death. This abnormal behaviour is closely connected to his Oedipus complex. There are distinct similarities in the appearance of Yang Mo and Wei Xiaoli: the former is featured with a "charming big moon face, protruding eyes, flat nose and big mouth" whereas the latter has a "moon face, small nose and short neck ... with a pair of very bright lips."

Although masturbation and homosexuality have no apparent connection to the goddess, they have a common source in the passion that lies deep within Lin Hu. When people lack proper fulfillment in their private lives, the only form of release in a sexually repressive society such as China during the Cultural Revolution is violence in the name of revolution. Since the release of passion in non-marital relationships was illegal, sexual activity was typically furtive and frantic. In other words, masturbation. Alternatively, passion could also be expressed as disguised desire. This would take the form of homosexuality. For Lin Hu, a naïve, idealistic young man, passion eventually crystallized into the image of a goddess, the only form of expression that might be connected to the ideology prevalent at that time. Although Old Devil has an instinctive understanding of these matters, he lacks a full comprehension of their complexity. Despite its accurate depiction of moral and spiritual conflicts,



therefore, the novel falls short of full psychological depth.<sup>3</sup>

### The Energy for Revolution

Along the way, blood is the driving force of revolution. In the first chapter of *A Bloody Dusk*, we see Lin Hu and his friends shouting “Long live hot blood!” Hot blood is the passion of youth expressed as romantic and sentimental revolution, violence and bigotry. Here, violence and bigotry are no longer derogatory terms but are celebrated. It is a common phenomenon for young people who have devoted themselves to a revolutionary cause to express passion in the form of romance, violence and bigotry, since all that remains to people classified as petty bourgeois is passion and sentiment, and violence and bigotry are regarded as necessary in revolution. It is true that there are conflicts among these qualities but they are more often found in concert. Only those possessed by passion can give full play to acts of violence and bigotry; only by romanticizing violence and bigotry can 知青 “zhìqing” (Educated Youth) justify their actions. The journey on the road meets all these requirements, as the prospect of a bright future provides the young with passion and romance, while the winding path stimulates their tendencies towards violence and bigotry.

Hot blood is not only a metaphor, but also serves as a link between spirit and flesh. The spirit and flesh, cut apart by masturbation and homosexuality, become fused again through hot blood. In the novel, we see the “letters written in blood” several times. The prelude to writing such a letter is to hurt oneself. Such an act requires one’s absolute loyalty to idealism rather than mere courage. At the same time, self-inflicted injury is also tantamount to dissipation of energy. Under a situation where masturbation is negated by the moral ethics and where the homosexual relation is shattered, the energy produced by the libido must be released in other ways. Lin Hu used to love wrestling, another form through which to divert his energy although lacking in spiritual significance. In contrast, writing a letter in blood can set free his physical energy through self-inflicted injury, which would not incur any moral censure at all in the first place but might lead to moral commendation for him. In traditional Chinese folk culture, there is a direct transformational mechanism between semen and blood, that is, “one drop of semen is equal to ten drops of blood.” In the era of asceticism, writing letters in blood has become a “bloodletting therapy”, which is able to transform physical desires into a

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<sup>3</sup> This passage is revised in light of Professor Lin’s suggestions.

spiritual pursuit, thus providing energy for the revolution. To Lin Hu, who leaves home due to his bad class status, letters written in blood can serve as magic weapons to overcome the bloodline prejudice against him. The writing of letters in blood can be controlled whereas the bloodline is predetermined.

The first letter written by Lin Hu in blood is to apply for permission to settle down in the Inner Mongolian grassland. Before that, Lin Hu and his friends went directly to the local relocation and settlement office, where they were told that there would be no settlement subsidies for them (a display of the fragility of idealism in the face of economic imperatives). As there was no way for them to “sacrifice themselves”, they handed their letter written in blood to the Commander of the Military Area and were granted their wish. In the second blood letter, we see the other side of red idealism. When the Sino-Russian relationship turned sour, one-third of the members in Lin Hu’s company wrote letters in blood, applying for guns to defend their country. At that time, there were four factions in the company: veteran soldiers, plus Educated Youth (EY) from 锡林浩特 Xilinhaote, 北京 Beijing and 天津 Tianjin. Although many of the EYs from Beijing had written letters in blood, none of them had a gun. On the other hand, although none of the EYs from Xilinhaote had written a letter in blood, most of them were given guns. It is for the sake of a change in his bad class status that Lin Hu leaves home, his hot blood as the propelling energy. But in the end, the letter written in blood has not helped him overcome the bloodline prejudice against him. By the time Lin Hu has to write his third letter in blood, he is almost driven into an impasse. As he is put into custody for his alleged crime of counter revolution, he has no way out but to resort to this magic weapon once more. From the purpose of “sacrificing himself” to “redressing a wrong against him”, the function of blood letters has undergone a fundamental change, and its effectiveness has been growing weaker consequently.

Hot blood is neither green nor clean energy. As the cost of producing hot blood is too high, it is not a suitable resource for the long revolutionary journey. Generally speaking, hot blood is required in the first stage on the journey. The second stage, however, requires another sort of energy. While the blood letters are losing their effectiveness, the goddess is bringing out Lin Hu’s human nature. He realizes that “although gales and tempests are majestically beautiful, you don’t see them everyday. If you were to see them on a daily basis, you would soon get bored.”

While *The Song of Youth* forcefully asserted the value of red idealism, *A Bloody Dusk* tried to reflect on its value. This is one of the most significant differences between the two novels. The sanguine side of red

idealism presented by Old Devil reveals that while the Educated Youth were working in extreme conditions out of doors, the cadres in the regiment were seated in warm offices playing cards; some cadres even embezzled the EYs' food supplies, while others profited in buying and selling public property, and still others were engaged in promiscuity....The greatest absurdity, in the end, was that the EYs' eight years of effort not only turned out to be useless labour, but also caused unprecedented havoc to the grassland's ecology. However, Lin Hu's analysis of red idealism is limited. He has questioned the "winding path" but declined to criticize the "bright future". Unaware that the two concepts are inseparable, he tries to distinguish between them.

Lin Hu held fast to his faith in his goddess:

The love in my heart for my goddess cannot be affected by the real-life Wei Xiaoli. My goddess is sacred above all, and I will love her forever even though my love is unrequited.

This kind of thinking also applies to Lin Hu's attitude to red idealism, which similarly cannot be destroyed by sanguine romanticism. Lin Hu's treatment of sanguine romanticism does not originate from rational reflection; it is because he has been hurt. Lin Hu's unrequited love for red idealism has not been affected by sanguine romanticism. Although he has expressed infinite regret for the waste of hot young blood, he is still attracted to red idealism. His unrequited love (of which masturbation and homosexuality are also a part) for the goddess replaced hot blood as the source of his revolutionary aspirations, because it is more sustainable. As sources of revolutionary energy, hot blood and unrequited love are not mutually exclusive but wholly compatible. Looking at his youth in retrospect, Lin Hu makes the following reflection:

The madness aroused emotionally by these memories, no matter how hysterical, is not sufficient to make me condemn the Production and Construction Corps in Inner Mongolia. Despite the fact that the Corps has treated me as a class enemy, I have never wanted nor intended to treat the Corps as a class enemy. I don't have enough reason to condemn it.

It can be seen that Lin Hu is still following the path of historical teleology. While denying that he has taken a "winding road", he does not deny that the "road is winding" or give too much thought to "the bright future" either. In this situation, due to a serious lack of reflection on the relationship between means and ends, he thinks that it is a good therapy to "use poison as an antidote for poison". It does not occur to him that such a therapy is also a symptom of the disease.

Why does Lin Hu, who has personally experienced a spell of sanguine romanticism, still regard red idealism with such respect? It is difficult to provide a clear-cut answer to this question. His analysis remains at a superficial level because he is unable to condemn his former passion. Another factor is that for most of his journey he has been travelling alone, apart from his brief homosexual attachment and his imaginary goddess. His enforced solitude has adversely affected his thinking:

His deficiencies in thinking have made him less proficient in speech. He prefers to speak in simple sentences and make simple judgments about right and wrong. He rarely uses adjectives or adverbs, and he does not formulate proper sentences before he speaks, so his command of syntax and vocabulary is rapidly deteriorating.

After a long period of living alone, however, Lin Hu becomes aware that solitude in itself does not amount to bravery or strength. Instead, he comes to believe that it might also be “licentious, cruel and ugly”. Generally speaking, most of the EYs who lived at close quarters with each other remained capable of rational thought, while the EYs who were isolated tended to lose this capability. This was not only true of Lin Hu but also of his author, Old Devil, and many other EYs who shared a similar fate.

The omniscient narrator in *The Song of Youth* made readers see Lin Daojing through the gaze of her fellow-passengers. This is a common technique in fiction on the theme of “reformation”. This kind of fiction starts on the premise that the self must take the form of an Other. In contrast, the first-person narrative in *A Bloody Dusk* is more appropriate to confessional or complaint fiction. It is also appropriate for a protagonist whose life has accustomed him to solitary monologues, and who is given to recalling past suffering and present joy. Despite his experiences, in consequence, Lin Hu is still able to say:

Thank you, my Inner Mongolian Corps, for the long and bitter suffering you have inflicted on me. It is for me a kind of wealth.

In this sense, we may conclude that although *A Bloody Dusk* is superior to earlier fiction in the “scar literature” genre in its use of language and telling detail, its thinking remains at the same level. *A Bloody Dusk* is therefore best described as “late scar literature”.

Translated from the Chinese original by 郭颐顿 Guo Yidun

CHAPTER TWO

UTOPIAN FICTION  
AND CRITICAL EXAMINATION:  
THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION  
IN WANG XIAOBO'S *THE GOLDEN AGE*<sup>1</sup>

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While a serious examination of the Cultural Revolution remains impossible in Chinese historiography,<sup>2</sup> literature has presented, since the late 1970s, the only public venue for reflection on the significance of the events of 1966-1976. Writers were the first to question the necessity and even the rationality of the persecutions to which almost all of them had been subjected and to call for a public form of commemoration. 巴金 Ba Jin (1904-2005) addressed this subject in many of his essays in 随想录 “Sui xiang lu” (Random Thoughts), one of which called for 文革博物馆 “Wenge bowuguan” (A Museum of the Cultural Revolution, 1986), openly referring to the example of the Auschwitz memorial. Two accounts by 杨绛 Yang Jiang (b. 1911) of her experience in a May 7<sup>th</sup> cadre school, 干校六记 “Ganxiao liu ji” (Six Stories from a Cadre School, 1981)<sup>3</sup> and 丙午

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<sup>2</sup> History writing continues to be subject to the policy outlined in 关于建国以来党的若干问题的决议 “Guanyu jianguo yilai dang de ruogan wenti de jueyi” (Resolution on certain questions in the history of our Party since the foundation of the People’s Republic), adopted 27 June 1981 at the 6<sup>th</sup> plenum of the 11<sup>th</sup> Central Committee. See Guo Jian, Yongyi Song and Yuan Zhou, *Historical Dictionary of the Cultural Revolution*, Lanham, Scarecrow Press, 2006, p. 245.

<sup>3</sup> Translated by Howard Goldblatt under the title *Six Chapters from My Life “Downunder,”* Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1984.

丁未年纪事 “Bingwu dingwei nian jishi” (Chronicle of the Bingwu and Dingwei Years, 1987) use the same detached irony as Ba Jin to underline the irrationality of the cycle of historical events in which she was caught up. The fictional genre of “scar literature” (伤痕文学 *shanghen wenxue*) emerged around the same time with the publication of 伤痕 “Shanghen” (The Scar) by 卢新华 Lu Xinhua in 1978 and 班主任 “Ban zhuren” (The Class Teacher, 1977) by 刘心武 Liu Xinwu, and flourished in the first half of the 1980s.<sup>4</sup> This genre, though initially daring, came to be seen as aesthetically unsatisfying and historically limited to the lamentation of individual suffering, lacking both a reflection on the responsibilities of various actors in the Cultural Revolution and a sharper analysis of its collective, institutional dimension and historical significance.<sup>5</sup>

The decline of this genre at the end of the 1980s did not mark an end to writing on the Cultural Revolution. Indeed, interest in the era was rekindled as the survivors among the cadres who had been the first victims of persecutions in 1966 neared the end of their lives and as the Red Guard generation reached the highest level of political responsibility. The 1990s thus saw the publication of what might be considered the most reflective and provocative fictional works devoted to the Cultural Revolution: Wang Xiaobo’s 黄金时代 “Huangjin shidai” (The Golden Age, 1992) and 高行健 Gao Xingjian’s 一个人的圣经 “Yige ren de shengjing” (One Man’s Bible, 1998).<sup>6</sup> Gao Xingjian, born in 1940, is one of the youngest members of the generation of cadres persecuted and sent to May 7<sup>th</sup> schools, while 王小波 Wang Xiaobo (1952-1997) belonged to the subsequent generation of Educated Youth (知识青年 *zhishi qingnian*) and spent three years (1968-1970) on a collective farm in Yunnan. He was then transferred to Shandong and eventually returned to Beijing in 1972, where he worked for

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<sup>4</sup> I have benefited considerably from reading 张业松 Zhang Yesong’s paper, 打开伤痕文学的理解空间 “Dakai shanghen wenxue de lijie kongjian” (Opening up a space for the understanding of scar literature), “The Individual and Society in Modern Chinese Literature”, MRI symposium, November 2007.

<sup>5</sup> There are, of course, exceptions in the 1980s, such as 余华 Yu Hua’s novel 一九八六年 “Yijiubaliu nian” (The year 1986, 1987).

<sup>6</sup> Other works of the 1990s could be cited, such as 王朔 Wang Shuo’s 动物凶猛 “Dongwu xiongmeng” (The Cruelty of Animals, 1993), famously adapted by 姜文 Jiang Wen as 阳光灿烂的日子 “Yangguang canlan de rizi” (In the Heat of the Sun, 1994); 苏童 Su Tong’s 刺青时代 “Ciqing shidai” (Tattoo Age, 1993); and 格非 Ge Fei’s 傻瓜的诗篇 “Shagua de shipian” (Poem to a Fool, 2000). None of these works enjoy the cult status of Wang Xiaobo’s novella.